

Minutes from the Cornwall ECR Liaison Forum
5th October 2018 in Penryn (1 pm – 3 pm)

Attendees:

- Anne Leonard, ECR (UEMS, Truro Knowledge Spa)
- Ajit Pillai, ECR (CEMPS, Engineering)
- JJ Valetta, ECR (CEMPS, Mathematics)
- Warren Tennant, PhD (CEMPS, CSM)
- Neeltje Boogert, ECR (CLES, Biosciences)
- Philip McBride, ECR (UEMS, Truro Knowledge Spa)
- Clemens Ullman, ECR (CEMPS, CSM)
- Carmen, Falagan-Rodriguez, ECR (CEMPS, CSM)
- Alejandro Roman-Gonzalez, ECR (CLES, Geology)
- Chris Wood, Doctoral College, Researcher Development Manager (Chair)

Apologies:

Prof Andrew McRae, Dean of Postgraduate Research and of the Doctoral College

Prof Kim Soin, Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research and of the Doctoral College

Drs. Astrid Wissenburg, Director of Research

Dr Karen Leslie, Doctoral College, Head of Researcher Development & Research Culture

Emma Stephenson, Assistant-Director of Research (Doctoral College)

1. **Welcome**

Chris Wood welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. **Matters arising from the Last Meeting, held 21.06.18, not already covered on Agenda**

Chris Wood reported the following:

- 2.1 A paper on Early Career Researchers – update on Activities went to the Doctoral College Strategic Board on 11th September (DCSB/18/20).
- 2.2 Possibility of an ECR rep from colleges to sit on Senate – this is to be included in a future paper as a consideration for the DCSB.
- 2.3 To identify post-docs attending developmental training and the possibility of linking sessions together – this matter has been taken to Concordat Working group.
- 2.4 Chris Wood and Tim Wilkinson had prepared a report following their visit to Cambridge University Office of Post-Doctoral Affairs. A summary of this report was included in the ECR update which went to the Doctoral College Strategic Board on 11th September (DCSB/18/20).
- 2.5 Tim Wilkinson, Chris Wood, Astrid Wissenburg and Kelly Preece attended the Vitae Conference held in Birmingham on 17/18 September 2018. Papers were presented at the meeting on the Researcher-led Initiatives and the work of the ECR Liaison Forums and institutional representation.
- 2.6 One Liaison Forum per year has been scheduled to take place at the St Lukes campus.
- 2.7 A more joined up approach to training and development (RD&RC, People Development/Academic Development Teams) is now being looked at via the Concordat Working Group.
- 2.8 Alumni status of ECRs – this was included in the paper taken to DCSB (DCSB/18/12).

Chris Wood had met with Astrid Wissenburg to discuss future ECR training activities for the forthcoming year.

3. Feedback from Doctoral College Strategic Board (DCSB)

Chris Wood explained that the formal governance structure is now in place and proving effective. The University is now providing places for ECRs to be represented. Ben Gardner and Helen Eyles share the representative position and they were part of the paper writing for DCSB on 11 September for the first time (See DCSB/18/20).

Helen Eyles attended the DCSB and Chris Wood read from her notes, in summary:-

- ECR focus at the meeting was limited with a very small number of first and second order priorities being ECR-facing. The explanation for this was that other areas of the university are involved in provision for ECRs, including HR and people working on the Vitae Concordat group, the HR Excellence in Research action plan and the "Exeter Academic". Helen made a suggestion that these bodies, and ECRs, be more joined up.
- Contrasting workloads and time constraints were noted between DC staff and ECRs.
- One issue highlighted was that communication with ECRs' experiences needs improving; better co-ordination between working groups so that this information can be cascaded to ECRs.
- Feeling of the Board being dismissive and complacent regarding support of ECRs.
- The Doctoral College Action Plan sets out first and second order priorities. For ECRs, the development of e-PDRs is a first order priority. The impression is that ECRs consider some of the second order priorities more pressing (research culture for example).
- It was felt that dialogue needed to be improved with the DC Strategic Board and that the ECR Liaison forum needs to be able to better communicate the needs of ECRs to the DCSB.

Action: It was suggested to invite these different groups to the ECR Liaison Forum meetings. Karen Leslie to be asked to illustrate governance structures and look at how effective representation into the right structures can be improved.

Action: Karen will circulate a DCSB paper to everyone which sets out ECR Activities.

Concerns around ECR e-PDR development were raised and the need for ECRs to have a visible presence/building at the University. It was recognised that the Liaison Forum offers ECRs improved support.

There was further discussion about the ePDR and that sometimes this is best not done with the current PI. It was also emphasised that the ePDR should be focused on the 'D' and 'R', not so much on the 'P' and that it is important to record plans and development using the process. There were some concerns about how the information about the new process was cascaded and that this could have been better in places.

Chris Wood reported that the DSCB had approved representation from Penryn Campus and it is hoped that this would lead to better conversation/communication/support for ECRs in the future across the University. The next DSCB meeting will take place on the 8th January 2019 and a paper will therefore need to be written in December; with key issues that need to be decided in order to improve support for ECRs.

Action: DC Staff and ECR Reps to ensure items for the strategic board are agreed at the next Liaison forum and a paper is written in December for DSCB January meeting.

Action: CW to ask ECR LF colleagues who would be willing to act as a rep for DCSB as select two people to support this activity from those who are interested.

Action: CW to bring to the Concordat Steering group the concerns about the PI not always being the best person to conduct an ECR's appraisal via the new ePDR system and concerns about comms.

4. Update from Doctoral College (Vitae Concordat Group, Doctoral College Action Plan, Training)

The Concordat Steering Group met 30th August 2018. Kate Lindsell, Associate Director of HR, Chaired.

Information collated from the Liaison Forum, Employee engagement survey CROS and PIRLS surveys had been pulled together to form an Action Plan to meet the needs of ECRs.

Doctoral College, HR, People Development, Academic Development, Research Services and now Wellbeing are linking up to ensure that we are in a situation to create actions to meet ECR needs. It was suggested that an ECR Rep should also sit on the Vitae Group to allow greater ECR visibility/representation.

Chris explained that careers support is covered under career support and training development. Chris reported on Action Plan priorities and e-PDRs which are top priority. He highlighted that there were not a lot of ECR actions on the plan and that we need to build on ECR Forum discussions to work effectively to collect valuable and cohesive actions points.

In terms of ECR Training and Developmental needs, the feedback exercise from the last Liaison Forum went immediately into wider developments and had proved very useful. New links with IIB had been made as a result. Chris reported that some PGR sessions were open to ECRs and that a condensed ECR training programme will be available soon. Chris also highlighted the 'IIB Essentials' sessions were due to start. Concerns were raised about the amount of time that ECRs are allowed to participate in these activities and Chris agreed to mention this to senior management. Chris commented that future PI support was very strongly supported at the last RIEG meeting.

Chris also reported that the Researcher-led Initiative Awards (RLIs) were being run again this year and will be open from 1st October 2018. RLI timeframes had been extended to meet ECR requests.

Action: CW to raise concerns about being allowed time for development from ECRs at the next Concordat Steering Group.

Action: Ask Karen to approach Kate Lindsell re. ECR representation on Concordat Steering Group.

5. Revised Concordat Update

The [Concordat Review](#) is a 6 week consultation (date to be confirmed). It sets out recommendations to HEI's to support their ECRs. HR Excellence Awards are given to Universities which have a plan of action in place to implement the Concordat. Reps and other ECRs will be invited to comment on the consultation, initially by email. Astrid Wissenburg and Clive Betts will collate the final response. Recommendations include the introduction of Gold, Silver and Bronze standards for HR Excellence Awards based on how individual Universities are planning to meet criteria; definition of ECRs to now include research active staff and to focus on people returning to research; wishing institutions to do more to encourage future career paths and independent research; training of 20% should be allowed for developing independent research skills, including independent support (using apprenticeship models 80/20 split); language should be updated;

equality and diversity to be more integrated; development of a Communications Programme. Emma Stephenson highlighted that deadlines will be tight as the final response will need to be submitted to VCG for their support before submission. It was suggested that wider comments be captured at the same time.

Tim Wilkinson emphasised that good PI's are key to an individual's progression, training and developmental needs. He suggested a Code of Conduct be raised to meet the 20% suggested requirement highlighted in the Concordat Review.

Action: Chris Wood to circulate Action Plan website address.

Action: All to send Chris comments to include in the ECR LF response to the Concordat Review by Friday 12th October.

6. Penryn Stats training update

JJ briefly outlined how the training was funded from RD&RC, acknowledging the support received. JJ reported that the sessions have received a tremendous response, had just started and that uptake is very good. Issues around payment of the ECRs and PhD researchers supporting the training were being actioned by Karen. There was a small discussion about advertising and how both cohorts should be booking onto these events, with priority to PhDs and Research Staff from Cornwall.

JJ asked how the participants should be recording their learning activities so that they can apply this to future Aspire and HEA applications. Chris suggested JJ ask Karen Leslie what the recommendations should be.

JJ said that the all of the above would be evaluated before the Christmas vacation to ensure the training was being advertised, booked and evaluated correctly.

Action: JJ to ensure that sessions are advertised and booked via 'My Career Zone' for PhD researchers and via 'iTrent' for research staff. This is so that staff participants can have their attendance recorded properly against their ePDR training record. JJ to liaise with Juliet White about this.

Action: JJ to ask Karen Leslie about specific recommendations for participant evidence for Aspire.

7. Updates from ECRs/ECRNs

Anne Leonard reported that she is attempting to find more support for the Cornwall based ECRN and Philip was introduced and welcomed to the group.

Ajit reported that he will be moving into a permanent role soon, so we may need to find another representative from Engineering to support the activities of the ECRN and ECR Liaison Forum, although he is happy to still be involved.

Neeltje asked if the future training programme would be taking place in Penryn. Chris confirmed that at least one session from each area will take place in Cornwall, per term including the 1-to-1 careers coaching. Neeltje, stressed that the 'IIB Essentials' provision should be extended to Cornwall using the local support office.

Action: CW to ask Kitty if the 'IIB Essentials' could be rolled out to cover the Cornwall campuses on it next instalment.

8. **Items to take to the DCSB in January 2019**

Alejandro, raised that inductions for new staff could be significantly improved. Chris reported that this was currently under discussion as part of the unified provision meetings and was a priority.

Action: CW to raise at the next 'Unified Development' meeting

Next meeting of DCSB 8 January 2019.

Action: Emma Stephenson to send rolling deadlines for DCSB actions through.

9. **Any Other Business**

Concerns were raised about the impending Brexit date and institutional support for ECRs.

Action: Chris Wood to raise this with senior management to see if further support and information could be provided on Brexit and institutional support.

Meeting closed 3 pm.