

Notes from the ECR Liaison Forum held 24th July 2018 in the Old Library, Seminar Room A/B

Attendees:

- Lisa Price, Lecturer (CLES, SHS)
- Sarah Jackman, Lecturer (CLES, SHS)
- Luke Pilling, ECR (UEMS IBCS)
- Tristan Snowsill, ECR (UEMS IHR)
- Zoltan Gombos, ECR (CEMPS)
- Helen Jones, ECR (CLES)
- Tim Wilkinson, ECR (Politics)
- Becca Wheeler, ECR (Politics)
- Greg Colyer, ECR (CEMPS)
- Yolanda Hill, ECR (CEMPS)
- Tanimola Martins, ECR (UEMS IHR)
- Alex Hall, Equality and Diversity Team
- Kate Foster, Doctoral College, Research Staff Careers Coach
- Chris Wood, Doctoral College, Researcher Development Manager, ECR lead (Chair)
- Charlotte Juggins, Doctoral College, PGR and ECR experience officer
- Juliet White, Doctoral College, ECR Programme Administrator

Apologies:

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

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

Karen Leslie, Doctoral College, Head of Researcher Development and Research Culture

Welcome

CW welcomed those present to the meeting and reported that representation on key strategic boards across the University had increased significantly since the formation of the ECR Liaison Forums. The ECR Liaison forums have directly led to ECR representation on Gender Equality Group (led by Linda Peka), the Positive Working Group (led by Kim McNichol) and the Exeter Academic Group (led by Kate Lindsell). This represents a series of excellent first steps in engaging ECRs within the strategic management of the University.

Updates from ECRs/ECRNs

Zoltan Gombos (CEMPS, Engineering) – reported that Emma Hudson has stepped down as chair of the Engineering ECRN. A new chair has been found and Zoltan agreed to update the liaison with full details of the new leadership. CW thanked Zoltan and also acknowledged the hard work that Emma had contributed to both the formation of the Engineering ECRN and the ECR Liaison Forums.

Tristian Snowsill (UEMS) – reported that their recent RLI event (IHR Early Career Researcher Network Away Day_ went really well and that another 15-20 colleagues have been added to their ECRN.

Helen Eyles (CLES, Biosciences) - reported that their ECRN would be linking up with the ECRN in the Living Systems Institute, led by Yolanda Hill and Ryan Ames. This is part of their respective RLI activities and they will link together to organise a final event, the details of which will follow and advertised accordingly.

Lisa Price (CLES, SHS) – Asked if anyone would be interested to sit as an additional ECR representative with her on the Positive Working Board (encourages better work/life balance and support, helps wellbeing). Tim Wilkinson volunteered; presently there are only three academics on the board with good representation from professional services.

Tristian Snowsill (UEMS) – Asked if there was a possibility of an ECR rep from colleges to sit on Senate. It was discussed that this may be problematic for those on a fixed term contract and also clarified that this needs to be a

dedicated position which represents ECRs, as opposed to the normal staff member position, which is open for application.

Action: Chris Wood to raise this with Karen Leslie and Andrew McCrae to see if this opportunity exists or should exist, beyond that of the volunteer staff member position.

Kate Foster (Doctoral College) – promoted the 1-to-1 career coaching sessions for ECRs. More dates for St Lukes will be forthcoming.

Tim Wilkinson (Politics) – reported that he has attended some of the People Development training sessions and it would be good to be able to identify other post-docs attending such training courses. CW reported that this is part of the ongoing discussions about linking the various services together, which are part of our commitment to the Researcher Concordat.

Action: Chris Wood to take this comment to the next meeting of the HR Excellence/Concordat working group.

CW and Tim Wilkinson talked about their recent visit to Cambridge University's Office of Post-doctoral Affairs (OPdA). They met with James Brown, who is the Assistant Director and Alison Wood from CRASHH (Centre for Research in the Arts Social Science and Humanities) who advised setting up a HASS centric network. Cambridge have around four times the number of ECRs than Exeter and place an importance and intellectual value on their Post-docs realising that most do not go into academic jobs. Instead they provide the support and training in order to meet these wider needs. Alison stressed the importance of a culture shift for the University to engage with this change and that it will take time to develop a post-doc recognised office/unit.

It was suggested that if Exeter was to have its own HASS network, a different language may need to be used, compared to that of STEM.

If we are to go forward with offering Exeter's post-doc community with something similar we would need to re-brand with an identity that appeals and attracts post-docs to Exeter (possibly removing 'ECR' and replacing with something more recognisable). It was agreed that before forging ahead we need to identify our 'audience' before looking at a title. Helen Eyles and Greg Colyer commented that we should be as inclusive as possible and think about culture change and the problems associated with hierarchy/mature post-doc who has come into research later on in life. Talks with People Development re. Induction will certainly help ensure post-docs entering the university will know where to gain support.

Action: Chris Wood and Tim Wilkinson to prepare a paper that will be sent to the Doctoral College Strategic Board (DCSB) and will include appropriate recommendations from the meeting in Cambridge and discussion in this meeting (some of which form part of the next agenda item for this meeting).

Items to take to the DCSB

CW reported that the ECR Liaison Forums were now being held in Penryn and were very successful. We therefore need to ask for formal representation on the DCSB for Penryn.

Action: Chris Wood and Karen Leslie to include this in the next paper to DCSB.

Exeter based liaison forums should also be taking place on the St Luke's campus. It was agreed as suggested by Tristian that meetings at St Luke's be held at least once a year as the connection with Streatham based colleagues is preferable to a separate St Luke's based forum.

Action: Chris Wood to ensure that one the four Exeter based Liaison Forum meetings due to take place over the next academic year is based on the St Luke's Campus.

CW reported that discussions have started between Researcher Development, People Development and HR about providing a more 'joined up' approach to the development of research staff; from the post-doctoral level through to world leading expert. The first part of this was looking at how we can provide a comprehensive induction process for new research staff.

Action: Chris Wood and Karen Leslie to work with colleagues in People Development, HR and Research Services to implement these plans via the DCSB and 'Concordat Working Group'.

CW reported that the visit to OPdA had also raised the suggestion of whether ECRs would benefit from 'Alumni' status, which may secure more support for activities, social events or associated funding.

Action: Chris Wood to investigate this with the Alumni team and take any suggestions/recommendation to DCSB for consideration/approval.

Planning for ECR focused RD activities next year – what do you want to develop, take forward as initiatives and/or run as part of ECRNs activities?

The ECR members of the meeting were split into four groups. General areas of support were outlined and the groups were asked to discuss; rating sessions according to priority, comments on suitability and which would be best run via ECRN or as an RLI activity. These conversations lasted approximately 40 mins.

The associated paper work from this will be collated and distributed to members of the ECR Liaison Forums.

Action: Chris Wood to meet with Astrid Wissenburg to discuss the model for supporting development of the post-doctoral community and outline areas of need/focus based on the outcomes of the above exercise, via a more comprehensive joining of activities with Research Services/Innovation, Impact and Business to ensure that development across the 'post-doctoral' landscape is appropriate, seamless and well co-ordinated linking explicitly to the 'Exeter Academic' activities.

Any Other Business

None.

CW thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 3 pm.

Date of next meeting: TBC