

## Minutes from the ECR Liaison Forum

24<sup>th</sup> September 2018 in Physics 124 (11 am – 1 pm)

### Attendees:

- Robert Barnett, ECR (CLES, Geography)
- Colleen Deane, ECR (CLES Sport & Health Sciences)
- Ben Gardner, ECR (CEMPS, Physics) – Chair
- Zoltan Gombos, ECR (CEMPS)
- Pikakshi Manchanda, ECR (UEBS, Business, Management & Leadership)
- Oluwafunmilola Ola, ECR (CEMPS, Engineering)
- Tristan Snowsill, ECR (UEMS IHR)
- Tim Wilkinson, ECR (SSIS, Politics)
- Karen Leslie, Doctoral College, Head of Researcher Development & Research Culture
- Emma Stephenson, Assistant-Director (Doctoral College)
- Chris Wood, Doctoral College, Researcher Development Manager
- 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

Astrid Wissenburg, Director of Research

Ryan Ames, ECR (CLES, Biosciences)

Helen Eyles, ECR (CLES, Biosciences)

Luke Pilling, ECR (UEMS, Medicine)

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### **1 Welcome**

Ben Gardner welcomed those present to the meeting.

### **2 Matters Arising from the Last Meeting, held 24.07.18, 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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)**

Karen Leslie 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 and Helen share that representative position and the Reps 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 Ben Gardner 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 illustrate governance structures and look at how effective representation into the right structures can be improved.**

**Action: Karen agreed to circulate 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.

Ben Gardner felt that Reps should be able to go forward more positively into these Boards.

Karen Leslie reported that the DCSB 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 DCSB meeting will take place on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and a paper be 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 DCSB January meeting.**

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

The Concordat Steering Group met 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

Karen explained that careers support is covered under career support and training development. Karen reported on Action Plan priorities and e-PDRs which are top priority. She 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 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: 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: A small group of ECR Representatives are required to look at consultation and provide feedback. Chris Wood to send out the Concordat review inviting comments via email and subsequent meeting.**

## **6 Updates from ECRs/ECRNs**

Zoltan Gombos (CEMPS) reported that Ken Evans, Pro-VC, is very supportive of the ECRN and that recruitment of more reps was required. Bursaries are made available for travel awards. The annual conference will be held on an afternoon this year. Athena Swan submission will be made this week and Tim was asked to feed into one part of that. The National post-doc meeting was hosted by Cambridge University and it is hoped that the next will be at Exeter.

Tim Wilkinson (SSIS) and Rebecca Wheeler (CLES) are starting a HASS Network. First meeting 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to set out rationale and judge interest.

Colleen Deane (CLES) will be meeting with the head of department to establish what the ECR support priorities within SHS are. Chris Wood suggested she liaise with Tristian Snowsill for St Lukes based information. Tristan and Chris are both reiterated support.

Pikakshi Manchanda (UEBS) reported that there was no Business School representative and Chris Wood recommended she liaise with Tim Wilkinson re: HASS Networks.

Tristian Snowsill (UEMs) reported that there are been two HR business partners workshops re: how to get the most out of e-PDR as an ECR. Donna Poade's Academic Woman sessions had been well attended.

Feeding into Heads of Research Group meetings which has been positive in terms of getting the message out regarding ECR support from senior academics. The network to hold a series of seminars on fellowships looking at funders. Network reps are looking into improving quality of PIs in the future. ECRs expressed a desire for training to lead to more tangible outcomes – certificates, full programme attendance etc. which is better for the CV than short training workshops. Karen Leslie asked that details of programmes (Aurora/Springboard/Navigator) be looked into by Research Staff.

**Action: REF - rules of engagement, to be brought forward to the next ECR LF and possibly to invite an appropriate colleague to speak to this.**

**Action: KL to contact People Development about running ECR specific Springboard and Navigator programmes during the 2018-19 academic year**

## **7 Items to take to the DCSB in January 2019**

Next meeting of DCSB 8 January 2019.

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

## **8 Any Other Business**

ECRs were encouraged to apply for the Researcher-led Initiative Awards being launched Monday 1 October 2018. Deadline 25.11.18. Funding increased this year. Additional funding outside that of the RLI's may be available.

Meeting closed 1 pm.

## 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**