

## Notes from ECR Liaison Forum Meeting held 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018 in LSI, Seminar Room B

### Present:

- Andrew McRae, Dean of Doctoral College (Chair)
  - Zoltan Gombos, ECR (CEMPS, Engineering)
  - Oluwafunmilola Ola 'Lola' ECR (CEMPS, Engineering)
  - Yolanda Hill, ECR (CEMPS, Mathematics)
  - Ryan Ames, ECR (CLES, Biosciences)
  - Helen Eyles, ECR (CLES, Biology)
  - Eric Lybeck, ECR (SSIS, Sociology)
  - Emma Hudson, ECR (CEMPS, Engineering)
  - Kitty Adhamy-Nicol, Senior Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Advisor
  - Karen Leslie, Head of Researcher Development & Research Culture
  - Chris Wood, Researcher Development Manager, ECR Lead
  - Kate Foster, Researcher Development Careers Coach
  - Lorraine Devlin, Administrator, Researcher Development and Research Culture
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### Welcome

KL welcomed all to the meeting, including Professor Andrew McRae, who acted as Chair. AMcR suggested that for future Liaison Meetings, the Chairperson should be an ECR.

### Terms of Reference

KL commented that the ToR were submitted to the Doctoral College Strategic Board (DCSB) in January and were agreed with the following comments:-

- a) The DCSB wanted to ensure that the ECR Liaison Forum remains open to all ECRs, not just ECR Reps from the ECR Networks
- b) There was a general discussion regarding the ECR Representative and how often the Representative should be changed. It was decided that the duration should be 2 years with overlap where possible between the outgoing and incoming ECR Representative.

### Updates from ECRs/ECRNs

CEMPS ECRN – Emma Hudson provided an update on a presentation to the CEMPS ECRN about the promotion process and ECRs experiences of this. It was well received and attended by approximately 15 people.

Emma also opened a discussion about the structure of an ECR Network, how to make it work well, making sure all work does not fall to one person and sharing the load, for example, having a dedicated ECR looking at communications.

Ryan Ames commented that there had recently been a meeting of the ECRN in LSI, with 30-35 people in attendance. This had been run as a Researcher-Led Initiative. Chris asked the Forum if there were any other ECR groups meeting and Ryan responded that he was not aware of other groups, but there may have been some 'pop-up' groups who had come and gone previously.

Chris Wood commented there was a need to consider how ECRNs are supported in the long-term.

Karen commented that there were plans from Eric Lybeck to try to set up a HASS-Wide ECRN.

Helen Eyles commented that she had received RLI funding for a series of meetings about career development for ECRs in CLES.

### **Update following Doctoral College Strategic Board Meeting – January 2018**

KL updated the group following DC Strategic Board. The ECR Representative on the DC Strategic Board, Eric Lybeck, had been present at the DCSB meeting in January.

Key points were ECRN funding, the ECR Liaison Forum Terms of Reference, development work with PIs, work with HR and the Vitae Concordat Group chaired by Kate Lindsell and demonstrating through the HR Excellence in Research Award the commitment to the Concordat. The mental health and wellbeing of ECRs was also raised. CW had attended a Vitae workshop which looked at the wellbeing of ECRs.

### **ECR Wellbeing – update from meeting**

CW and Tristan Snowsill (ECR Rep in UEMS) had attended a meeting with the Wellbeing Team (Karen Griffiths and Kim McNicol) regarding support for ECRs and their common concerns. The Wellbeing Team now had a better understanding of ECR-specific issues and it was commented that on future staff surveys, there will be a wellbeing question directed at ECRs. Karen suggested that there should be a wellbeing section on the ECR Hub pages of the Doctoral College website. It was decided to bring this subject back to the Liaison Forum and for the Forum to discuss and decide most effective next steps regarding wellbeing.

**Action: ECR Hub webpages to be updated with clear signposting to Wellbeing support**

**Action: Wellbeing to be a focus for the next ECR Liaison Forum meeting and to invite Karen Griffiths and Kim McNicol from the Wellbeing team to attend.**

### **ECR Induction Information**

ECR Induction was raised as an important area that needs improvement. Discussion took place regarding the level of information currently given at ECR induction. This was generally considered inadequate and could be improved in the future. KL commented it was important to sign-post ECRs to relevant wellbeing information and resources and KF suggested the Induction Facilitator should have access to this information and disseminate to new ECRs accordingly. Karen commented there was a key piece of work here relating to the induction process for ECRs.

**Action: Karen Leslie to take the discussion re. ECR induction back to Clive Betts in People Development**

### **ECR PDRs**

ECR PDR processes were raised. There was a discussion regarding whether the PI was the most appropriate person to oversee the ECR PDR process, as there could sometimes be a conflict of roles here. This led on to a discussion around whether a monitoring and mentoring role should sit with the same person and Eric suggested the mentoring role should sit with somebody more independent. Andrew commented it was important to identify best practice here.

**Action: Karen Leslie to take this back to VITAE Concordat Group to look at good practice with PDR processes for ECRs**

### **Athena Swann/CROS AND Staff Survey**

Kitty Adhamy-Nichol circulated the 2017 Careers in Research Online Survey, split by gender and invited comments. Eric commented on work/life balance issues – issues around child care and issues around female staff leaving academia. Helen commented the reasons behind female academics leaving was not always associated purely with child care, but relating more to social gender roles and conflicts within these roles, e.g. nurturing and caring roles conflicting with an academic career. Eric asked a question about studies in HE and who leaves the profession and when. KL mentioned data from CEMPS which suggested that women progress to F Grade and then there is a drop off in progress. Chris commented that some of

these issues were discussed at the Vitae meeting as well as the wellbeing meeting recently. Chris suggested the issue around retention of female staff was a far-reaching one and commented that perhaps a focus group should examine this in more detail. Kitty suggested there should be ECR representation on the Gender Equality Group. Yolanda and Helen both stepped forward to join the group.

**Action: Kitty to link ECR reps into the Gender Equality Group, chaired by Linda Peka.**

### **Career Development: 1:1 Appointments – Exeter and Penryn**

Kate Foster outlined her role within the Doctoral College and the provision of 1:1 Careers sessions offered to all ECR staff, face to face, via the phone or skype, including for example, CV advice, career planning and job applications. KF asked the group to comment on whether there was a need to continue this service and the best way to promote and advertise the 1:1s.

It was agreed that 1:1 careers support is very beneficial to ECRs. It was suggested an email could be sent to ECRN members, or Kate could be introduced face-to-face with members at the ECRN meetings.

With regards to timings of 1:1s, CW suggested prioritising ECRs about to finish contracts or when fellowship applications are due. EL suggested looking at the life cycle of ECR contracts and at two thirds of the way through contract, ECRs should be encouraged to seek advice on career development through Kate.

**Action : Kate Foster to look at ECR lifecycle, and connections with networks**

### **Images of Research Competition**

CW reminded all that this year's Images of Research competition was now launched and outlined the aims of the competition and its role in public engagement. CW asked the Forum to encourage ECRs to apply and asked about the timings of this competition in future – is it launched at the right time? Where else could images be shown in the future? AMcR suggested the images could be shown at the winter graduation ceremony and another suggestion was a digital display of images on the screen at the LSI.

### **AOB**

AM asked the group if there were any other issues to be raised at the meeting.

### **Distribution of Information**

There was a discussion around obtaining mailing lists for ECRN members. Chris commented that due to the change in Data Protection Rules due to be implemented in April 2018, it was important that the transmission of confidential personal information across email adheres to GDPR. It was suggested that information could be sent from the Researcher Development team if it needed sharing widely.

### **Casual Teaching Systems**

EL suggested that the topic of casual teaching arrangements could be an item on the next meeting's agenda – looking at the arrangements across the Colleges at present and what is expected of ECRs, along with commitment in terms of hours, etc.

**Action: Andrew agreed this should be an item on the next meeting's agenda.**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

Provisional date – Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018, 10.00 am – 12.00 pm, XFi Conference Room 1&2.