

Notes from ECR Liaison Forum Meeting held – 25th September 2017 in Building One, Streatham

Present:

- Karen Leslie, Head of Researcher Development and Research Culture (Chair)
 - Tristan Snowshill (UEMS)
 - Emma Hudson (CEMPS, Engineering)
 - Oluwafunmilola Ola 'Lola' (CEMPS, Engineering)
 - Ben Gardner (CEMPS, Physics)
 - Tim Wilkinson (SSIS, Politics)
 - Jessica Mansfield (CEMPS, Physics)
 - JJ Valletta- via Skype (CLES, Life Sciences, Penryn)
 - Chris Wood, Researcher Development Manager, ECR lead
 - Charlotte Juggins, PGR and ECR Engagement Administrator
 - Juliet White, Administrator, Researcher Development and Research Culture
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Welcome

KL welcomed all to the meeting

Researcher Development and ECR News

Roughly have 750 postdocs in the University (150 HASS based- 600 STEMM based) across 4 campuses, Streatham, St Luke's, Penryn and Truro.

Researcher Development Team includes: Karen, Chris, Kelly, Kate, Charlotte, Lorraine and Juliet

Strategic representation of ECRs on the Doctoral College Strategic Board

A paper written by KL and CW went to the Doctoral College Strategic Board (DCSB) - asking representation for ECRs on the Doctoral College Strategic Board

The strategic board has all the Associate Directors of Research for college on the DCSB

IT WAS DECIDED that an ECRN lead might be the best person to do this. To pick someone the best way forward would be to ask for an expression of interest.

Action: CW to put a call out to the ECRN leads and see who returns the expression, if more than one do, put into a hat and chose.

Creating a new interface for ECRs

CW described that other institutions have something similar- Bristol has – Research Staff Hub, Imperial- Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre and Cambridge- Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

CW also reported that all core RD programmes will be available on TRENT, rather than on My Career Zone.

To view the courses available please visit the Learning and Development pages, our events are under the prefix Researcher Development. This will help tie in with the PDR process.

A question was raised as to whether the ePDR have a list of all the RDP courses? This would make development conversations easier with PIs and will allow the ECR to book onto the courses whilst in those discussions.

ECR Webpage

Launch of a new ECR website on the Doctoral College webpages.

Action: All, please give your comments on what you think is good/bad with these pages? Anything you would like to see? If so get in contact with Researcher Development or Chris Wood.

Communications

Only one e-mail ECR Update will be sent out each month, rather than all the previous individual e-mail based adverts, this should reduce the amount of emails received. The ECRN leads will be encouraged to get people to open/read these.

ECR Liaison Forum

It was agreed that 'ECR Liaison Forum' was the most appropriate name and this is the best place to feedback information. **IT WAS AGREED** that it would be good to find out where ECRs are elsewhere across the University and invite them to attend future ECR Liaison Forums.

Careers and ECR Opportunities – needs and demands

What careers issues are the most pertinent and need addressing?

Life after postdoc. What options are available (industry vs academia). How to maximise your chances of landing a lectureship. There is an overwhelming amount of funding bodies, some of which are less advertised than others, where do you start?

What could the University be doing more of for ECRs?

Needs more of a focus on why people leave- even when you move internally they don't always ask you to complete an exit questionnaire? Lacking exit interviews in different areas,

Engineering have very low numbers of those taking an exit interview. What happens with the exit interview information? Is it acted upon? Reports that one person has had one but they feel that nothing was going to be done with their feedback.

What does career progression look/feel like at Exeter?

Not much progression from Postdoc to lecturer within Exeter University- normally they have to move to another university to get a lectureship- is there a way this can be further supported/changed.

Been told that internal candidates have a lower success rate than the other external to the University- however this might only be in certain departments.

Is there any specific training needed that is not currently available?

Concern about the listing of Careers beyond Academia and the listing on TRENT and how this might then affect the way their supervisors treat them.

Should we be running any more specialised events/initiatives/workshops?

Careers outside of academia events- support not available if you're not staying in academia

CEMPS- interview panel workshop run by Ken Evans?- difficult to organise these sorts of events, heads of department,- if we can help facilitate these sorts of events that would be great. The events were in things such as fellowship positions, lectureships etc...- really good to develop more of this type of session.

Careers sessions work best in small groups, and sometimes works better not having the PGRs in the room.

Career development can be such a personal thing – more 1-to-1 sessions would be useful

Action: CW to discuss this further with KF with a view to expanding 1-to-1 careers support for ECRs

Is there any specific training needed that is not currently available?

A view was expressed that training should be split into two areas: technical skills (e.g statistics) vs professions skills (e.g how to write a grant). A lot is offered for the latter but not enough on the former. For example, there are currently no courses on high performance computing; how to access clusters and run basic scripts. This is now a must for a lot of postdocs as the datasets we're dealing with cannot be handled by a desktop PCs. Most clusters that I know of are run by a small group of people and getting access to them is far from trivial, let alone learning how to use them properly. I'm sure if you ask other ECRs you'll find other technical courses needed. But importantly these courses should form part of a central repo so that they can be re-run updated over time, rather than re-inventing the wheel every time.

Are WEBINARS helpful/useful? Do you like to do WEBINARS?

Some like face to face session as it is a chance to meet other ECRs as often isolated

Webinars work best for delivering information rather than interactive sessions.

Date of next meeting

6th Dec, 10:00-12:00 Council Chamber, Northcote House