

Minutes from the Extraordinary ECR Liaison Forum (Exeter)

Wednesday 26 June 2019 at Streatham Campus

Harrison 209 9.30 am-11.30 am

Attendees:

- Dr George De Ath, ECR (CEMPS, Computer Science)
- Dr Jonathan Doney, ECR (SSIS, Education)
- Dr Helen Fones, ECR, rep to DCSB (nee Eyles) (CLES Biosciences)
- Dr Ben Gardner, ECR (CEMPS, Physics)
- Dr Yolanda Hill, ECR (CEMPS, Maths)
- Dr Annie Knight, ECR (Institute of Biomedical & Clinical Science Research)
- Dr Jonathan Locke, ECR (College of Med & Health)
- Dr Pablo Martinez Pancorbo, (CEMPS, Physics & Astronomy)
- Dr Tim Wikinson, ECR (Politics)
- Kate Foster, Doctoral College (Careers Coach)
- Charlotte Juggins, Doctoral College (PGR and ECR Experience Officer)
- Dr Chris Wood, Doctoral College (Researcher Development Manager) - Chair
- Juliet White, Doctoral College (Administrator) – Secretary to the meeting
- Lorna Barnes (present for part of the meeting, Research Services)

Apologies:

- Dr Jan Bagelman, (Lecturer in Human Geography)
- Dr Kate Baker, ECR (CEMPS, Engineering)
- Dr Greg Colyer ECR (CEMPS, Maths)
- Dr Anna Harper ECR (CEMPS, Maths)
- Prof Andrew McRae (Dean of the DC)
- Dr Lisa Price (CLES, Sports & Health Sciences (SHS))
- Prof Kim Soin (Associate Dean of the DC)
- Dr Charlotte Tupman ECR (HUMS, Classics and Ancient History)
- Dr Rebecca Wheeler ECR (CLES, Politics)

1 Welcome & Introductions

Dr Chris Wood opened the meeting explaining what the Forums are about and what we hope to cover in this Extraordinary Meeting.

2 Planning for the ECR Researcher Development programme and initiatives in 2019-20 (feedback on proposals as well as call for new content)

Chris Wood spoke about the successes and areas for improvement, over the last academic year. The 'ECR Orientations' had now started as part of the 'Welcome to the University' Event and a new ECR leaflet which had recently been produced handed out to detail our provisions, competitions and initiatives. He also reported that the 'Images of Research' Competition had gone well and had been accessed by approximately 24K people as part of the University Open Days. He explained about the Researcher-led Initiatives and that attendance numbers were looking positive and in-line with the previous year. Chris also reported that over the last academic year, more networks had been created. At Penryn, a specialist programme of stats training had been rolled out and had been extremely well attended. The 'Core ECR Programme' had received a 'recommended to colleagues' feedback

of 99.4%. There were not as many sessions run in Exeter campuses, due to a number of factors:

- no external presenters were booked this year;
- changes in University structures - therefore staff resource was more challenging to recruit;
- did not run programme in the autumn term as it was felt that this was a busy time for ECRs, with the intention of running more sessions during the summer term;
- difficult to recruit trainers during summer term to run sessions due to annual leave.

Chris Wood also spoke of the Concordat Consultation; a focus group of ECRs commented on this and their views were incorporated into the institutional response. Finally, he reported that Kate Foster's careers coaching had proved an incredibly popular resource with a growing waiting list, and would form the basis of a presentation at the Vitae International Conference in September.

Chris Wood then handed out 'ECR Development: options and opportunities' forms for individuals to discuss in groups for 30 minutes. Chris Wood encouraged attendees to capture thoughts and score accordingly. This formed the basis of focus group discussions to determine where the central ECR training, provisions, initiatives and competitions would be 'steered' for the next academic year.

During discussion, the following main comments were made:

- It was felt that course titles need to be made more appealing. It was felt that some were vague and difficult to know if they applied to specific subject areas;
- It was suggested that the ECR Networks be asked what they require in terms of courses for next year, and then feedback;
- It was also suggested that non-academic trajectories need to be covered for those not wishing to remain within academia;
- One person suggested that we run sessions entitled 'Making the most of your Post-Doc' whilst another said that 'Writing Grants' should be run more often.

Action: Chris Wood - agreed to circulate key points from this focus group via the Networks to obtain further feedback.

Action: RD - Circulate Options and Opportunities form to Networks for feedback.

3 Issues from and to take to the DCSB

Chris Wood circulated a paper entitled 'DCSB April '19 – ECR Actions'. He explained that the issue of email accounts being deleted as soon as ECR contracts' ended and which is not convenient, is being looked into in the hope that an extension to email accounts can be agreed.

It was discussed that the matter of receiving an end of contract 'goodbye' letter from the University when between short-term contracts proved disconcerting to some ECRs.

Chris Wood reported that some facilitators need to be paid for work and the 'Above & Beyond Rewards' system had proved a very useful and effective tool for doing this.

Chris Wood explained that the Researcher-led Initiative Awards would continue next year as they prove to be a very valuable and impactful way of delivering training to peers. It is hoped that a post-doc representative will sit on the RLI decision making panel in the future.

After discussion, Chris Wood agreed to take 'Q Step' to the Unified Development Group. The Exeter Q-Step Centre builds on the core disciplines of Politics and International Relations, Criminology and Sociology; programmes aim to increase the number of students undertaking quantitative methods training in social science by embedding research skills into substantive degree programmes and modules.

The question of ECR Mentoring was raised. Chris Wood explained the Doctoral College and HR are involved in discussions about the development, with a lead coming from SSIS.

Helen Eyles raised the inconsistent use of funding to support ECRs and the ECRNs. There is a need to formalise a consistent approach for ECRN's into colleges. The Researcher Development Programme will fund c. £2k towards supporting the ECRNs from the next academic year. However, it was felt that more institutional resource was required from individual colleges. There are still ECRs who are not aware of the Networks and the support they offer (the GSE, in particular, was highlighted) and therefore communications need to be improved around this.

Chris Wood reported that there had been an initial meeting with Neil Gow (Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Research and Impact), who is very supportive of ECRs. He has already expressed an interest for further meetings.

It was suggested that the importance of the Concordat/HR Excellence Awards needs to be raised amongst academics and connections need improving.

Chris Wood asked if there were any further matters which need to be raised to email him directly (c.b.wood@exeter.ac.uk)

Action: Chris Wood - agreed to take 'Q Step' to the Unified Development Group.

Action: Chris Wood - to incorporate the above comments in to a draft ECR paper for DCSB to be amended and approved by the ECR reps to DCSB

Short break for Coffee/Tea

4 Discussion on how the ECR LF's are going and our strategic representation – what is going well, what should we change?

It was generally felt that the Forums proved a useful group that 'works'. It was felt that DCSB meetings were mainly about student recruitment and ECRs feel very much on the edge of discussion. It was felt that ECRs need a higher profile and that there needed to be a greater focus/strategy about questions which may build on what is required.

Chris Wood explained that a light touch re-brand will hopefully make RD more recognisable to ECRs. Tim Wilkinson now sits on the Unified Development/Concordat Board and connections with Exeter Academic and this will hopefully mean that the ECR profile will become stronger. It was suggested Tim Wilkinson/Helen Eyles and Ben Gardner meet to discuss these issues. It was further suggested that an ECR Steering Group for the various reps

may be beneficial (meeting termly) and, if favourable, Chris Wood will ask Neil Gow for his support.

The use of the 'ECR' name was briefly discussed for re-branding. 'Post-Doc' seemed preferable but unfortunately this term does not capture all researchers.

It was suggested that some posters and an annual ECR Brochure which captures what has happened in the last 12 months to act as a reminder of the ECR presence at the University was raised as a good way to improve ECR profile.

ACTION: Tim Wilkinson/Helen Eyles and Ben Gardner - to meet to discuss connections with Exeter Academic.

ACTION: Chris Wood – to look at setting up an ECR Rep Steering Group and invite Neil Gow and Astrid Wissenburg to be involved

ACTION: Chris Wood – to look at the production of posters and an ECR Brochure that could be used to more effectively promote ECR related activities across the institute to PI's and colleagues

5 Feedback on the Research & Impact Strategy 'green paper' 2020 – 2025.

Lorna Barnes presented a power-point on the Research and Impact Strategy 'Green Paper' 2020-2025 and invited all participants to take part in the consultation which has 3 main aims, as follows:

- Enabling Distinctive, World Leading Research that Creates New Knowledge and Addresses World Challenges;
- A Strong Research Environment and Vibrant Research Culture;
- Maximising the Public Benefit of Exeter Research.

The consultation timeline showed that they were slightly behind with submitting the green paper which will be downloadable on the Research Toolkit website. She agreed to circulate her presentation and asked for feedback.

ACTION: RD - to circulate power-point presentation to attendees and for ECRs to e-mail Lorna directly with any comments.

ACTION: Lorna Barnes – to circulate the green paper across the ECRNs, when it becomes available.

6 Any Other Business

None

7 Close of Meeting (date of next meeting: TBC)

The meeting closed at 11.40 am.

Exeter ECR Liaison Forum - Action Points Summary

Item No	Action Point	Assigned to	Completed
2	Circulate key points from this meeting via the Networks to obtain further feedback on Options and Opportunities for next year.	CW	
2	Circulate Options and Opportunities form to Networks for feedback.	CW	
3	Take 'Q Step' to the Unified Development Group.	CW	
3	To incorporate the above comments in to a draft ECR paper for DCSB to be amended and approved by the ECR reps to DCSB	CW	
4	Tim Wilkinson/Helen Eyles and Ben Gardner meet.	TW/HE/BG	
4	To look at setting up an ECR Rep Steering Group and invite Neil Gow and Astrid Wissenburg to be involved	CW	
4	To look at the production of posters and an ECR Brochure that could be used to more effectively promote ECR related activities across the institute to PI's and colleagues	CW	
5	Circulate 'Research & Impact Strategy 'green paper' 2020 – 2025' power-point presentation to attendees.	LB/RD	