

Minutes from the Extraordinary ECR Liaison Forum (Cornwall)

Wednesday 27 June 2019 at Penryn Campus

Peter Lanyon Seminar Room 5 (12:00 Noon - 2.30 pm)

Attendees:

- Dr Sarah Bell, ECR (Truro Knowledge Spa)
- Dr Neeltje Boogert, ECR (CLES Biosciences)
- Dr Laura Colebrook, ECR (CLES Geography)
- Dr Carmen Falagan Rodriguez, ECR (CEMPS, Cambourne School of Mines)
- Dr Lata Palmer, ECR
- Dr Clemens Ullmann, ECR (CEMPS, Maths)
- Charlotte Juggins, Doctoral College (PGR and ECR Experience Officer) – Secretary to the meeting
- Dr Chris Wood, Doctoral College (Researcher Development Manager) - Chair
- Becky Owen, Doctoral College (Administrator) - Visitor
- Kelly Preece - Doctoral College (Researcher Development Manager, lead on item 6) – Visitor

Apologies:

- Dr Camille Coye, ECR (CLES Biosciences)
- Dr Matt Jones, ECR (UEMS)
- Dr Alejandro Roman Gonzalez, ECR (CLES, Geography)
- Dr JJ Valetta, ECR (CEMPS, Maths)
- Dr MD Sharma, ECR (CLES, Biology)
- Dr Jo Wood, ECR (CLES, Geography)
- Prof Andrew McRae (Dean of the DC)
- Prof Kim Soin (Associate Dean of the DC)

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. An alternative version of these welcome activities needs to be initiated for the Cornwall campuses. 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;
- Neeltje has been running fellowship training programme, which might be able to opened up wider
- Neeltje would also like to run interview techniques workshops for ECRs
- There should be space for sharing ideas from reps from the ECR Liaison Forums - this could be on the ECR hub share point

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.

Action: Chris Wood - to talk to the ECR Reps about a Cornwall ECR Induction alternative

Action: Chris Wood - to talk to Neeltje about the possible fellowship and interview workshops

Action: Chris Wood/Charlotte Juggins - to look at creating a specific ECR SharePoint facility

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.

Other issues that could be included in the next paper for DCSB, included:

Induction issues- not having a dedicated event in Cornwall

- ePDR issues- not easy to follow and can stall the open conversation that previously happened. Is the PI the person best placed to conduct the ePDR?
- Information on the number of days and hours you can spend doing development opportunities – this will help argue for more time to go to sessions with PIs.
- Having more time for ECRs to be PIs in grant applications rather than the standard 10% - this is in an Exeter based criteria, not based on those of the Research Councils – it was further agreed that the FTE allocation needs to be meaningful.
- Department notice boards to be dedicated to ECR networks - to help with the promotion of the ECRs. There are still ECRs who are not aware of the Networks and the support they offer 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 - 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.

It was suggested that a 'ECR Networking' conference would be a good avenue to pursue.

Due to increasing commitments to her research, Neeltje is standing down as one of the ECR reps to DCSB. Chris Wood thanked Neeltje for support and commitment to the ECRN and representation to the board.

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

ACTION: Chris Wood – to ask the ECRN in Cornwall for suggestion for a new DCSB rep to join MD Sharma

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

Chris Wood presented a power-point on the Research and Impact Strategy 'Green Paper' 2020-2025 (on behalf of Lorna Barnes) 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. He agreed to circulate the presentation and asked for feedback to be forwarded to Lorna Barnes (L.J.Barnes@exeter.ac.uk).

Initial feedback included:

- Online systems do not always work, choosing a mentor from a spreadsheet is not always that easy and often means coming to a road block
- If as an ECR part of your role is to look after PGRs or to teach this needs to be reflected in the contract- so contracts should be extended to reflect this and include this as part of the role descriptors

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 PGR Facilitators for the PGR Researcher Development Programme

Kelly Preece introduced the plans to include PGR facilitators for the PGR Development Programme and asked if anyone who knows of PGRs who might wish to teach on the RDP training courses to get in contact with either her or Chris Wood.

7 Any Other Business

None

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

The meeting closed at 14:30 pm.

Cornwall 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.	RD	
2	To talk to the ECR Reps about a Cornwall ECR Induction alternative	CW	
2	To talk to Neeltje about the possible fellowship and interview workshops	CW	
2	To look at creating a specific ECR SharePoint facility	CW/CJ	
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	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	
4	To ask the ECRN in Cornwall for suggestion for a new DCSB rep to join MD Sharma	CW	
6	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	
7	Circulate 'Research & Impact Strategy 'green paper' 2020 – 2025' power-point presentation to attendees.	LB/RD	