The background image is a photograph of a modern building with large glass windows. The glass reflects the sky and surrounding environment. Inside the building, some interior details like ceiling lights and a person walking are visible. A large, semi-transparent green diagonal shape covers the right half of the image, serving as a backdrop for the text. The text is in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

University of Cambridge Postdoc Academy

Foreword

In 2020, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs changed its name to the Postdoc Academy. This signifies not only the ever-expanding offerings of the Academy and its importance in the development and shaping of policy, but also the ways in which we support, alongside our national and international partners, the next generation of researchers to adapt to the challenges facing the planet today.



These challenges will be considered against a backdrop of deep, sustained financial and societal uncertainty, including the likely emergence of other novel pathogens and the realities of climate emergency. We cannot plan for the unknown, but we can make ourselves ready. We will all be required to meet new challenges with wit, wisdom and intelligence; to unencumber ourselves from traditional academic configurations; and to deploy solutions with great agility. Our leaders will need to be adept at rapid, informed decision-making in the face of radical uncertainty. As it steps into the future, then, the Postdoc Academy is primed to play its part in developing the programmes, policies, partnerships and, above all, the people who will solve our global challenges.

It is now seven years since I was first invited by Professor Jeremy Sanders and Professor Chris Abell to discuss what we might do to better support the then 2800 postdocs in Cambridge. A year later, in 2014, the first Postdoc Centre was launched at 16 Mill Lane.

Since then, we have opened two further centres and created programmes that range from College affiliations and fellowships to enhanced support for young entrepreneurs. Our flagship Postdoc Centre at Eddington is fully embedded in the local community, which houses 750 of our staff and their families.

We have seen our population of postdocs grow to over 4200, a reflection of a trend across the UK, where there are now estimated to be 75-80,000 postdocs nationwide. To put this in perspective: the entire US boasts between 80-100,000 postdocs. The UK is clearly a hub for young talent - something we must work hard to maintain in the years to come.

Our success would not have been possible without the work of a truly dedicated team of staff and volunteers, strong local postdoc societies, and hundreds of supportive colleagues within and beyond Cambridge. It has been the highlight of my professional life to lead a project which, at its core, supports young people to achieve their potential. Nothing could be more rewarding.

Karina Prasad FRSA
Head of the Postdoc Academy

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Vice-Chancellor’s Message

Over generations, researchers at Cambridge have changed the way we understand ourselves and the way we think about the world.

Our postdocs are a vital part of this great tradition.

They are the engine that drives much of the research that takes place here, and they are our research leaders of the future.

At Cambridge we want to ensure a supportive and inspiring environment for this diverse and highly motivated community of researchers. The Postdoc Academy exists to ensure that these young researchers are able to realise their potential while contributing to the University and to society.

The Postdoc Academy’s mission is to ensure that the next generation of research leaders can thrive from the moment they set foot in Cambridge, and that they remain part of our community even when they move on to pastures new.

It is fantastic to see how much has been achieved in support of the postdoc community since 2014, and I am personally excited to see what the next chapter will bring.



Professor Stephen Toope
Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge

In Memoriam Professor Chris Abell

Chris Abell was the University’s first Director for Postdoctoral Affairs and, latterly, when he became Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Chair of the Postdoctoral Matters Committee.

Chris was kind and compassionate, and the Postdoc Academy is a fitting legacy for a man who went out of his way to champion the postdoc community. He brought to bear his knowledge, reputation and energy in order to make change happen in the labyrinth that is Cambridge. There would be no Postdoc Academy and no Postdoc Centres without him.

Chris will be greatly missed, and generations of Cambridge researchers to come will be a little less fortunate for not having known him.

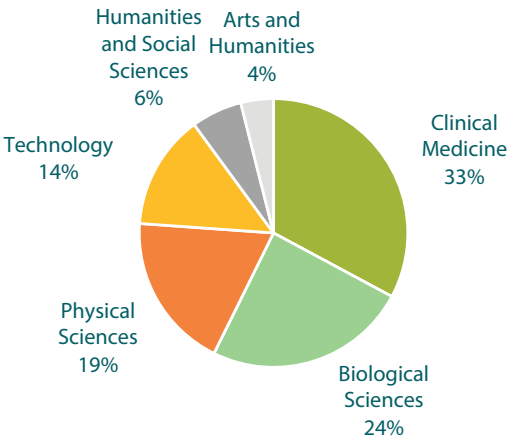
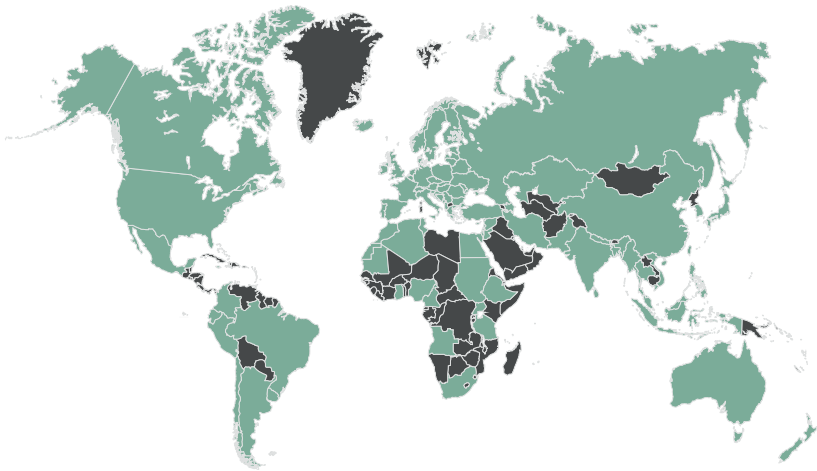
The pages that follow serve as a tribute to a man dedicated to his institution, the furthering of knowledge, and the mentorship of so many.



The Postdoc Academy 2014 - 2020

When the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs was established in 2014, there were 2800 postdocs at Cambridge. Now, the University of Cambridge and its partner institutes employ more than 4200 postdocs.

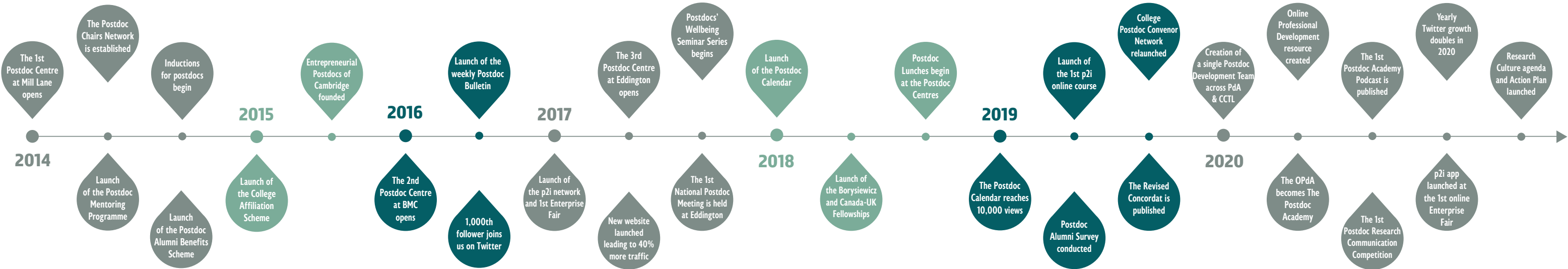
Postdocs come to Cambridge from more than 95 countries and represent 35% of total University staff. They conduct advanced research across a broad range of fields and make huge contributions to the teaching and mentoring of both undergraduate and graduate students.



The Postdoc Academy enables each postdoc to realise their potential through professional development, policy advocacy and pastoral services, as well as the provision of physical community-building spaces across the city.

The breadth and scope of our activities continue to grow year on year. These now include leadership and entrepreneurship training, mentoring, postdoc representation on University committees, a comprehensive communications programme, research culture agenda, and bespoke fellowship schemes.

The following pages highlight some notable achievements from the last six years.



Policy and Research Culture

The Postdoc Academy plays a crucial role in influencing and implementing national and local policy relating to postdocs.

Research Culture and the Concordat

Research culture describes the environment in which research happens, and includes the norms in behaviours, expectations, attitudes and values of our research communities. Driving positive change to research culture has become a major focus in the higher education sector. The pivotal *Changing Expectations* conference, held at the Royal Society in November 2018, initiated a sector-wide dialogue on the issues, and this was followed by the Wellcome Trust report *What researchers think about the culture they work in*, providing a body of evidence to back up what had long been understood anecdotally. In July 2020, the UK Government produced a Road Map for R&D which outlined plans to produce a people and culture strategy, and we expect UK Research & Innovation (UKRI), the Wellcome Trust, and other key stakeholders to produce similar plans in 2021.

At Cambridge, we want our research culture to be the very best it can be, because we know that a good culture will attract the best researchers, and in looking after those researchers, we empower them to do their best work. We know from surveys and mapping exercises that our research culture is not perfect. Some of the challenges we face are specific to our own institution; many are complex, systemic issues found in research communities across the world. As a next step, the Postdoc Academy is leading a cross-Cambridge working group to develop and implement an ambitious **Research Culture Action Plan**.

The Action Plan is built around the following six statements, which reflect our overall ambitions for the future of research culture at the University of Cambridge.

- 1** We will offer a world-class environment in which to do research and teaching, which embodies an open and collaborative, outward-looking culture, and which attracts and supports talented researchers from across the globe.
- 2** We will reward research teams as well as individuals, viewing success not just in terms of advancing academic knowledge and tackling global challenges, but in a way that recognises all contributions to the research endeavour, particularly those which uphold a positive research culture.
- 3** We value all of our researchers, and will provide them with an inclusive, transparent, safe and supportive environment, with zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour.
- 4** We acknowledge that many of our researchers aim to achieve research independence and lead their own teams, while others may have different aspirations, and we will manage and support them to achieve their own individual goals.
- 5** Professional development will be an integral part of all researchers' roles. We will provide a comprehensive range of opportunities to support researchers in their current role, as well as equipping them to make an impact throughout their career.
- 6** With colleagues from across the sector, we will collectively drive positive change to research culture, working closely with funders and other HEIs, industry partners and other external networks, and will not be deterred by the complexity of the challenges this will entail.

The Action Plan was approved by the Human Resources Committee and Research Policy Committee and is now being implemented.

Our work on research culture has grown out of our commitment to the **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**, which the University signed in 2019. Integrating this into our work on research culture has enabled us to join up the efforts on the Concordat with work on Athena SWAN, Race Equality and DORA, thereby linking HR and research strategy in the University.

Research Culture in the UK and Europe

Meaningful change can only be achieved when it takes place simultaneously across institutional, cultural and national boundaries. Hence the Postdoc Academy is involved in a number of collaborative ventures - working closely with funders, other HEIs, industry partners and external networks - to drive change as widely as possible.

On the national stage, the Postdoc Academy is actively engaged in the Wellcome Trust's *Reimagine Research* agenda and in culture change initiatives spearheaded by UKRI.

A standout example of our international collaboration is the *Transforming Research Culture* project, an ambitious culture change initiative focused on key transitions in academic careers. Cambridge will lead a network of research-intensive institutions in the UK and Europe, who are themselves well networked with relevant stakeholders in their respective countries. These include the University of Edinburgh, Universiteit Leiden, Freie Universität Berlin, ETH Zurich, and the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

The project will also explore why previous interventions and incentives - both those internally led by universities and those externally driven, e.g. by funders - have failed to make lasting change happen. The project will experiment with bold solutions such as contextual recruitment, narrative CVs, and 360 feedback for personal development.

HR Policies at the University of Cambridge

The Postdoc Academy continues to advocate for the postdoc community at Cambridge in matters of internal university policy. A major focus in 2019-20 was the review of the Senior Researcher Promotions process. The Academy facilitated a consultation with the senior researcher community, which drew a substantial response and was invaluable in developing the revised process. The next stage of the work is to look at the progression from Research Associate to Senior Research Associate, and the Academy will continue to ensure that researchers' concerns are taken into account. The Academy also input substantially into the consultations on the new mutual respect, grievance and redeployment policies.



Leadership Fellowships

The Postdoc Academy hosts unique fellowships for some of Cambridge’s most outstanding researchers as they reach the pivotal career transition to independence: the Borysiewicz Biomedical Sciences Fellows and the Canada-UK Fellows.

The vision for these schemes, launched in 2018, is to provide tailored, holistic support and development opportunities which enhance not only the scientific development and interdisciplinary training of the Fellows, but also their capacity to build creative solutions to global challenges.

Both Fellowships are highly innovative in structure. In the initial months, Fellows spend approximately eight hours per week participating in bespoke leadership training, personalised mentoring, exclusive networking, exchange visits, and ‘pod’ working – that is, small groups supported to design and implement real-world, outcome-driven solutions to global health challenges.

Thereafter, Fellows are able to bid for a period of fully funded independent time to pursue their novel ideas further. Fellows thus emerge from the scheme with the confidence, skills, knowledge, and ambition to make meaningful change in the world.



Global Challenges

A key aspect of the Fellowship is the opportunity to work together to tackle a global challenge. In 2018-19, Team DEPLOY developed a mobile diagnostic system which they pilot tested in Sierra Leone. They collected data on 100 fever cases, which has been written up for publication. Fellows in Team GC Connect created a purpose-built platform for connecting diverse networks of experts with community-scale problems.

The 2019-20 cohort developed two projects which examined the possibilities for drug development using natural resources in Sarawak, and a citizen science programme for the development and deployment of air sensors in Nairobi. All of the Global Challenge ‘pods’ have developed and sustained several key relationships with partners on the ground which will be taken forward for mutual benefit.

Several past and current fellows have enjoyed recent successes, including two independent academic fellowships, a lectureship at the University of Edinburgh, two UN policy roles based in Geneva and Argentina, and a Directorship at Amazon Diagnostics.

New Directions

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed the vulnerabilities in our globally connected world. The Postdoc Academy has used the time and space provided by lockdown restrictions to re-envisage the Fellowships programme to fit the new way of working and thinking imposed upon us all - the so-called ‘new normal’.

The programme will reduce in length from 18 months to 12, in order to accelerate the exchange of knowledge and the development of new ideas, concepts and technologies. A salary buyout of 0.4 FTE over eight months followed by four months of fully funded independent time will ensure that Fellows have both the time to develop professionally as well as the space to ideate and innovate without sacrificing the quality of output.

‘Pods’ will work to create a portfolio of ideas called ‘foresight projects’. Rather than looking at today’s issues, Fellows will collaborate, and receive mentoring, in forecasting future challenges and planning accordingly. In this way, the Fellows will produce a portfolio of targeted concepts, innovations, and policies ready for real-world deployment. The foresight portfolio will be a living product that will evolve and be revisited by Fellows and partners on a regular basis.

As we have seen with COVID-19, higher education is powered by collaboration, and we propose to open the remodelled Fellowship to HE partners in the UK and EU, as well as those postdocs funded by industry - thereby creating a truly interdisciplinary cohort with in-built opportunities to co-develop practical solutions.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Ideas are at the origin of every successful innovation, and the ground-breaking innovations of the future will surely come from early career talent in higher education.

Cambridge is extremely well placed to build capacity and unlock the latent innovation potential in all early career talent through the University’s sensitisation and training programmes, which enable them to pursue successful careers as innovators - whether in academia, in industry, or through starting their own company.

The Postdoc Academy provides a range of activities to connect researchers to Cambridge’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, including companies in the Cambridge Cluster. These activities support innovation, entrepreneurship and translational activity by focusing on developing early awareness and facilitating access to wider research and innovation networks. Importantly, we aim to increase postdocs’ understanding of how entrepreneurial mindsets and skills can support future careers in all sectors.

By increasing the number and diversity of researchers that are able to successfully innovate in academia, start-ups, industry, government and the third sector, universities will grow their global reputation for developing innovators to address global challenges.

Postdocs to Innovators

The Postdocs to Innovators (p2i) network is an international collaboration of higher education institutions and major global companies. The p2i network supports researchers at all stages of the entrepreneurial journey - from those who know nothing about entrepreneurship, to those ready to launch their start-up.

The p2i programme fills a common gap in existing innovation and entrepreneurial training at the partner organisations by focusing on the very early stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle: changing mindsets, awareness, inspiration and intention.

Early evidence of the programme shows that researchers who had never thought about themselves as entrepreneurs are now CEOs of start-ups or have joined start-ups; others reported that they were more prepared and more confident when they transitioned to industry positions; and others were applying their newly acquired mindset and skills to secure academic positions.

Based on the success of the pilot programme, the p2i partners renewed their commitment to the partnership for a further three years.



Feedback from programme participants

- “It is great to know that entrepreneurial skills are widely applicable, not just to start a company.” (Postdoc, Enterprise Fair)
- “I enjoyed the p2i online course very much. It certainly helps to have inspiration, mindset and knowledge for entrepreneurship. Even if I have no plans yet, it still helps to know the infrastructure of an industry and gain the confidence to present ideas no matter in or outside academia. This course bridges well between academia and industry. It encourages the researchers to innovate and to look at things broadly.” (Postdoc, Online Course)
- “This was my first real exposure to entrepreneurship so I really benefited from the environment and discussions with everyone in attendance. It has removed concerns I had about starting a company in terms of not understanding the language, etiquette and attitudes - the message I took away was that to try and fail is the first step toward succeeding, which is very motivating!” (Postdoc, Enterprise Fair)





Researcher Development

Training and development for postdocs has always been a collaborative endeavour across the collegiate University, particularly drawing on the expertise of the Postdoc Careers Service, Researcher Development, and the Centre for Teaching & Learning (CCTL). Since its establishment, the Postdoc Academy has played a crucial role in coordinating these initiatives, in order to identify gaps and duplication of effort, facilitate joined-up communications, and make it easier for postdocs to find the support they need.

Over the last year, we have worked to formalise this cooperation by creating a single postdoc development team, working across the Postdoc Academy and CCTL. The team have launched new webpages, which signpost relevant professional development resources, and initiated new collaborations with strategic research services to enhance postdocs' awareness of the support available.

In keeping with the Postdoc Academy's mission to provide postdocs with bespoke, structured support throughout their journey, a priority for the current year is the redesign of a suite of career development interventions, building on the successful welcome event for new postdocs. Six months after attending the induction, postdocs are invited to complete *Map Your Postdoc Journey Now*, which encourages strategic reflection and direction setting. A *Mid-Contract Check-In*, approximately twelve months later, acts as a stock-taking opportunity and a reminder of key support services, and an event for senior researchers will provide a chance for guided career reflection amongst those who have completed multiple contracts. In so doing, the team are maximising the creative and collaborative benefits of the Academy's position as the linchpin of postdoc development in Cambridge.

Responses to COVID-19

Since March 2020, the postdoc development team has responded rapidly to move activities online by virtually delivering pre-scheduled workshops and inductions, creating new online resources such as podcasts, and curating content from LinkedIn Learning to offer relevant training for postdocs.

Creation of an online professional development resource on the Postdoc Academy webpage and a summer Twitter campaign have directed postdocs to services currently offering online resources that can be freely accessed at any time.

Although the face-to-face provision is temporarily suspended, the RD team has set up one-to-one coaching sessions to ensure postdocs have an opportunity to meet confidentially to discuss any aspect of their professional development.

Additionally, there have been regular COVID-19 Q&A sessions with the Postdoc Academy, Researcher Development, Postdoc Careers Service, and Equality & Diversity to address questions and concerns from postdocs including issues about lockdown, contract extensions/furlough, working from home, return to work, and maintaining good mental and physical wellbeing while at home.

Leadership

Every generation of postdocs comprises the new leaders who will transform not only our knowledge but also the ways in which future research is carried out. For this reason, leadership development is at the core of our training and coaching. A step-change in our work in this area will be the launch, in October 2021, of a brand-new PGCert in Research and Innovation Leadership, in collaboration with the Institute for Continuing Education.

This course will equip emerging research leaders with the knowledge, skills and tools required to turn their research vision into reality, maintaining the highest academic standards, leading inclusively and with integrity, and building the kinds of multi-sectoral collaborations which will be key to successful, socially engaged, globally impactful research for the future.

Postdoc Welcome Events

Cambridge postdocs come from more than 95 countries, and many are both new to Cambridge and the UK when they take up their first contract at the University. Thus, proper induction - in order to share key information and signpost support provided to them by the University - is vital to enable them to flourish.

The Postdoc Academy runs six welcome events per year, and all new postdoc arrivals are automatically invited. Attendance averages 80%. The format has been a success both in person and, recently, online, offering postdocs a forum to learn, ask questions, and meet the colleagues and services who are here to support them.

Mentoring

Since its inception, the postdoc mentoring scheme has been a popular option for postdocs looking to access additional support. The programme has successfully paired over 300 mentees with mentors across academia, industry and other relevant sectors, providing the mentee with an objective space in which to discuss career planning and goal setting. Feedback shows that 95% of participants would recommend the programme to their peers, and this year's call drew over a hundred new mentees for the first time.

Mentoring is a key part of the Postdoc Academy's approach to improving research culture and creating a more open, supportive environment for all who work in the research area. This year, the training meetings were delivered virtually for the first time, an adaptation which has substantially extended the potential reach of the scheme.



Feedback from mentees

"I experienced the mentoring partnership as truly inspiring and helpful. My mentor helped me see the larger picture of my trajectory, helped me perceive the agency I have over determining future paths and look at it with joy and optimism, made me feel supported, and pointed to possible avenues I could explore."

"It was immensely useful to discuss any of my challenges and my paths to solve them without any ramifications or concerns that might have been present if I was in a programme in my workplace. Being able to freely disclose my challenges and have, in essence, a soundboard with some prompts to help me was extremely valuable."

"It was very useful to talk to somebody who had experience with both academia and industry, and knew what I was going through; it was also very useful that my mentor tried to put me in contact with people that could help with my research. I cannot think of anything not useful. I really loved this program"

Feedback from mentors

"The programme offered me an opportunity to reflect on my own strengths and career trajectory, as well as on my mentoring style. In addition, I met a wonderful colleague."

"I've found it a formative experience as a PI. It was also interesting to find out about postdocs' experiences in other departments."

"It was a delight to see my mentee explore possibilities, address and solve problems, and make substantial moves forwards on the issues she wished to address during the mentoring relationship. This was very satisfying. In addition, I learned about some research and career avenues I myself had not been aware of, which was useful"



Communication

The Postdoc Academy’s communications serve two main aims: to provide a clear point of information and regular updates to the postdoc community about the opportunities and resources available to them; and to promote and celebrate postdocs’ achievements. By communicating with stakeholders in the University and the wider higher education sector, we also advocate for the recognition of postdocs’ important contributions.

The Postdoc Academy Website

The Postdoc Academy website provides a hub for postdocs to find information and resources - signposting them to the support available from the Postdoc Academy and around the University.

The site provides information about:

- upcoming events and training for postdocs
- where to find funding, teaching opportunities, and postdoctoral fellowships
- opportunities to collaborate with industry or explore entrepreneurship
- opportunities to undertake internal research placements or internships
- Postdoc welcome events, mentoring, and College affiliations
- postdoc societies and committees, University clubs, and support for partners and families
- information about moving to Cambridge and where to go for advice about visas and immigration
- research culture at Cambridge and the wider higher education sector
- where to find HR support, staff benefits, and further services.

The website also provides a platform for postdocs to book the facilities at the Postdoc Centres for meetings, conferences and events.

In September 2017, we overhauled and relaunched our website to provide more accessible information and to reflect the main areas of provision for postdocs. This generated an increase of around 40% in postdocs’ use of the website, which increased further with the introduction of the Postdoc Calendar.

The Calendar, launched in October 2018, collates information on postdoc-oriented training and events from across the University’s services, departments, societies and Colleges. Currently, 20 different training providers, societies, and postdoc groups regularly submit events, and the calendar is consistently the most popular page of the Postdoc Academy website. To date, it has been accessed over 16,000 times.

We redesigned and updated the website in 2020, as part of the rebranding from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs to the Postdoc Academy. At the same time, the site was migrated to Drupal and various changes were introduced in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

We have recently developed an area of the site dedicated to promoting research placements or internships within the University. Throughout the pandemic, there has been an increasing demand to connect postdocs with departments and institutes seeking short-term help with funded research projects. This area of the site acts as a conduit, and it will be further developed to provide advice and guidance to those seeking to undertake or offer an internship.

The Postdoc Bulletin

In 2016, we developed our weekly Postdoc Bulletin email to provide coordinated, regular information from the services which support our postdoc community. These emails provide details of upcoming events, career development opportunities, updates from the University, and a range of other opportunities.

The audience for the bulletin has grown steadily and now has more than 3700 subscribers. We use the data collected about click-throughs to refine and tailor our communication, so that we send postdocs information about the things which they are most interested in.

As part of our 2020 rebrand, we moved over to a more sophisticated mailing system, allowing us to update both the appearance and accessibility of our emails.

At the start of the coronavirus outbreak, we started including video messages from the Head of the Postdoc Academy in these weekly emails. It was a time of great uncertainty, and many postdocs reported feeling unsettled about the consequences for their research and contracts, so we felt it was important to reach out to them in a more personal way. These messages were very well received and, for many, provided an important connection with the University when they were kept away by the lockdown.



Twitter

We use Twitter not only to help promote events and opportunities to postdocs, but also to showcase our postdoc community to the wider higher education sector.

In 2020, we ran two big social media campaigns: one to raise awareness of online professional development opportunities, and one to celebrate Postdoc Appreciation Week.

For the latter, we showcased profiles of Cambridge postdocs, and the Vice-Chancellor and other senior University figures shared video messages of thanks for postdocs' contributions. We produced two podcasts: one discussing research culture at Cambridge, and the other in conversation with former Cambridge postdocs. We ran a research communications competition and celebrated the winning videos, and we ended the week by announcing the winners of the Institute for Manufacturing's Postdoc Awards.

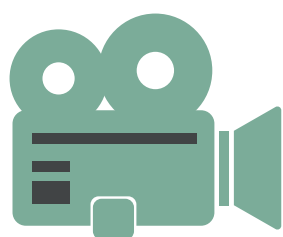
This campaign drove substantial positive engagement, and in collaboration with the University Social Media and AV team, reached a wide audience across the University and beyond. This, alongside our regular social media framework, doubled our follower growth in 2020.

Films and Podcasts

In 2019, we began producing our own in-house films within the Postdoc Academy in order to promote our programmes, engage postdocs on social media, and provide educational content. Our first set of films was aimed at raising awareness and promoting the impact of the Postdoc Academy Fellowship programmes. Another set of films provided educational resources for the new p2i online course.

In 2020, we began producing several podcast series, providing an innovative way to not only offer postdocs an accessible resource for their development, but also to engage them in the conversations about topics affecting their research and careers. Our first series, 'Postdoc Academy Podcasts', launched with a special episode produced for Postdoc Appreciation Week, with episodes discussing research culture, mentoring, and planning a career in the face of uncertainty.

Work is also underway on '1% Inspiration', a podcast for academic entrepreneurs, and 'The Proactive Postdoc', a Researcher Development podcast series.



Postdoc Networks and Societies

The Postdoc Academy supports a number of groups organised by and for postdocs themselves. This plays a vital part in building the networks that support interdisciplinarity, collaboration and embedding postdocs into the overall life of the University.

Postdocs of Cambridge Society (PdOC)

PdOC is managed by a committee of postdocs, with support from members of the Postdoc Academy. Currently, 2200 members receive the PdOC weekly newsletter, containing information and events from the University, Colleges and external partners. The number of members has risen by approximately 40% over the last six years, with an additional rise following the launch of social media profiles.

PdOC provides more than 40 social and networking events per year, which are free to attend and open to postdocs and their families. This has developed over the years through the creation of additional officers specialising in social events and wellbeing. Annual larger activities, such as the summer garden party and Christmas dinner, have become staple events in PdOC’s calendar, providing postdocs with an opportunity to dine in College settings with senior University and College leaders.

One of PdOC’s main achievements was, in 2017, hosting the first National Postdoc Meeting, themed ‘Postdocs, Policy and the Future’. The meeting generated important evidence and suggestions for the review of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*. Since then, PdOC have teamed up with several other universities and research organisations to co-organise a second National Postdoc Meeting in London. It is now hoped that these meetings will move onto a regular bi-annual footing.

In 2020, owing to COVID-19, PdOC launched other initiatives including a Slack group to mitigate the isolating effects of lockdown for postdocs, to allow postdocs to directly interact with each other as a community and to allow the rapid dissemination of useful information. The society also held multiple virtual events, regular virtual coffee mornings, and created an email helpline for those struggling during isolation.



Postdoc Chairs Network (PCN)

University departments and partner insitutes are encouraged to form their own local postdoc committees, and PCN is the forum for the Chairs of those respective committees. At present, 85% of our postdoc community are represented through this network. An early achievement was the identification of 14 postdoc priorities and needs. At termly meetings, each of the identified priorities are explored and reviewed. Through working with the Postdoc Academy, a number of these needs have now been acted upon, with resources in place to address them.

More recently, PCN produced a five-year progress review and held an event based around the history and future of the network. Many senior University leaders joined the event, providing an opportunity for postdocs to network with those they might not normally meet. In addition, PCN was able to map the postdoc needs to the three key principles in the Concordat, which had just been published.

A future aim of the network is to identify any further needs now that departments have experienced significant changes through COVID-19, increase representation of postdocs across the University to 100%, raise awareness of the Concordat, and contribute to implementing its objectives.

Fourteen Postdoc Needs



Research Excellence and Recognition



Strategic Career Plan and Progression



Leadership Opportunities



Teaching Opportunities



Representation at Department and University levels



Appropriate and Timely Mentoring



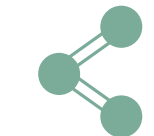
Meaningful Professional Review



Personal and Professional Development



Moving to Careers Outside Academia



Networking (Personally and Socially)



Timely Induction and Welcome in Cambridge



Alumni Benefits on Leaving Cambridge



College Affiliations



Wellbeing and Family Support



Entrepreneurial Postdocs of Cambridge (EPOC)

EPOC was formed in 2015 and exists to maximise the entrepreneurial and business potential of Cambridge's world-leading research community. To do this, EPOC develops and delivers initiatives to support Cambridge researchers in their pursuit of business and entrepreneurial ventures, and seeks to awaken them to the multitude of opportunities around them.

Membership is free and open to postdocs affiliated with the University and partner institutes. EPOC aims to provide monthly events to inspire an entrepreneurial mindset and workshops to improve the business skills of researchers, as well as monthly committee meetings where all postdocs are invited to join.

Since 2015, EPOC has hosted 47 events and activities for its members, and the plan is to continue providing these both in person and online. Each year, EPOC hosts the business plan competition for University of Cambridge postdocs in partnership with Cambridge Enterprise, where the winners receive investment from sponsors. Other initiatives throughout the year include consultancy projects, representing interests of the research community, and promoting the region's research excellence to the broader corporate world. From 2021, the competition will be renamed 'The Chris Abell Postdoc Business Plan Competition', to honour his enormous contributions to science, innovation, and support for the postdoc community.

EPOC has served as a blueprint for setting up postdoc societies at the p2i partner universities and the p2i Programme Manager works closely with the EPOC committee to provide guidance and support.

Colleges

The Postdoc Academy works closely with all 31 Colleges, and affiliation opportunities have expanded 33% since 2016. Now, more than 900 postdocs hold affiliations, which represents 25% of the overall community. The vast majority of affiliations are non-stipendiary, and typically last for one to three years.

In September 2015, the Postdoc Academy began a project to better understand how postdoctoral researchers can, and do, contribute to Collegiate Cambridge. As a result of this project, the Academy has sought, in partnership with the Colleges, to increase the resource available for developing new College affiliation opportunities for postdocs.

Currently, 16 Colleges receive funding to run facilitated activities and benefit from a network of College postdoc convenors. Recent activities include research seminars and other research-based initiatives, social sessions involving families, and events involving senior members and students.

In the 2019-20 academic year, the College Postdoc Convenor Network was relaunched with a number of successful meetings taking place. It was established that the group will meet to discuss and share issues or successes they are finding in their own Colleges and to seek advice from the Postdoc Academy and PdOC. The group have been meeting virtually throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to provide mutual support until College life resumes.



Pastoral Services and Postdoc Centres

Pastoral Services

The Postdoc Academy is committed to offering postdocs with families support and access to wider networks of the University and the city.

In 2017 we began two new series of events. The first was the 'Postdocs' Wellbeing Seminar Series', for which presenters and panels of speakers have been invited to discuss topics such as:

- balancing work and private life
- being an academic dad or mum
- navigating careers in research for you and your partner
- handling the issue of pregnancy and maternity leave as a postdoc
- the mental health stigma in academia
- failure and how to deal with it.

This was quickly followed by postdoc lunches hosted at the Postdoc Centres, to talk about the facilities, what we offer as the Academy, and to create an environment where postdocs can meet each other and socialise.

In 2019, we held our first 'international bring and share' lunch, celebrating the rich cultural diversity of our postdoc community with delicious homemade treats from all over the world.

We work closely with other services to help provide pastoral support, particularly with Newcomers & Visiting Scholars, a volunteer group in the University. Together, we host and promote dedicated events for partners and families. We also provide the University Counselling Service with space at the Biomedical Campus and support for events at Mill Lane and Eddington.

The Postdoc Centres

The three Postdoc Centres - at Eddington, in the town centre (Mill Lane), and on the Biomedical Campus - offer a unique space dedicated to postdocs. They offer a clear point of contact for any postdoc needing help or advice, and free access to hotdesking workspace or meeting rooms for professional and social events.

In 2019-2020, the centres hosted over 1600 events, such as tailored training courses, networking sessions, careers events, seminars, conferences, and wellbeing and family events. In total, over six years, the Postdoc Centres have hosted almost 6000 events.



Postdoc Centres
opened



events held at the
Postdoc Centres

Looking to the Future

The UK higher education sector is increasingly recognising that, in order to attract and retain the best researchers from around the world, our research culture must be the very best it can be. As noted above, a crucial element is investment in our research communitiy, so that we empower them to do their best work. And because building a positive research environment is everyone's responsibility, the Postdoc Academy will continue to maximise its role as broker and advocate, involving as many postdocs as possible to achieve the ambitious plans for a step-change towards a better culture.

As a unit within the Human Resources Division, the Postdoc Academy is in a position to contribute to policy as it is developed, and to ensure that the voice of the researcher is prominent in all these developments. Our work with national and international partners will also help to drive this change.

Through these relationships, we will contribute to vital conversations about how 'success' in research can and should be measured - that is, not narrowly fixated on research outputs but, rather, encompassing the development of researchers who will be good colleagues, positive leaders, and globally engaged citizens.

UKRI Future Leaders Fellows Development Network, 2020-2023

In October 2020, it was announced that a consortium including Cambridge had successfully won a £3m contract from UKRI to establish the Future Leaders Fellows (FLF) Development Network. In total, 250 early career researchers and innovators, working in academia and industry, will be offered a range of personal and professional development opportunities – including structured workshops and events, 360 feedback, coaching, mentoring, and networking.

The consortium is led by the University of Edinburgh, and the partner institutions are the University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, the University of Leeds, University College London, the School of Advanced Study, and Queen's University Belfast. As such, the Network is a powerful partnership spanning all four nations of the UK and will connect the FLFs to an unrivalled network of local, national, and global leaders across the research and innovation landscape and beyond.

Underpinning the Network is a bespoke leadership capability framework to help the FLFs realise their fullest potential as innovators, collaborators, and influencers. This framework was designed by Cambridge's Head of Researcher Development, who leads the Academy's postdoc development team and will serve as Deputy Director of the Network. In addition, the University will contribute structured programmes in enterprise and innovation, and policy engagement.

The Network will last for three years in the first instance.

Corporate Engagement

The Postdoc Academy is continuing to grow its corporate engagement strategy. Many of the Academy's programmes are already prepared and delivered in collaboration with a range of companies. We are delighted that our corporate partners have taken such an interest in the work of the Academy and contribute through the p2i programme, the Borysiewicz Fellowship, mentoring, secondments, and Meet the Company events.

We are working closely with the Strategic Partnerships Office to expand these mutually beneficial links. Companies benefit through sending their own staff to participate in training and learning the latest advances in key fields, perhaps even meeting their company's future research stars; our postdocs receive valuable opportunities for career enhancement, and we are able to roll out innovative new programmes for the postdoc communitiy.

Postdoc Alumni Survey

In February 2019, the Postdoc Academy surveyed around 4500 of Cambridge's postdoc alumni to find out about their experiences as a postdoc at Cambridge, and what they moved on to after leaving.

The survey has provided us with a rich body of data, which will help to develop the future Postdoc Academy, as well as shape our thinking as we set out our ambitions for a positive and thriving research culture.

This postdoc alumni survey is the first of its kind to so extensively investigate the destinations and experiences of a large group of postdocs from one institution, and the data will be of interest to many stakeholders in the HE sector, including funders and other HEIs. In the coming year, we intend to engage with these stakeholders, as well as colleagues at Cambridge, to share our findings.

One of the most notable, and heartening, findings was how many respondents said they would be willing to give back to the postdoc community. Around 300 former postdocs expressed interest in supporting future generations by creating links with their workplace, speaking at events, or becoming a mentor.



University of Cambridge Postdoc Academy