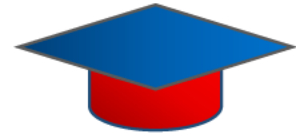


The UoS Postdoctoral Network
“Continuing Success”



RESEARCHER-LED INITIATIVE FUND
END OF YEAR REPORT

Report written by [REDACTED] on behalf of the core members of the Postdoctoral Network.

2 August 2017

BACKGROUND

The Postdoctoral Network (PDN) is a platform for early-career postdoctoral staff at the University of Sussex (UoS). The network facilitates knowledge transfer and collaboration between different schools and departments across the university. Run for and by postdoctoral staff, the content of events is aligned with the interests of the group, allowing an emphasis on issues which concern all postdocs, such as employment security, career development, and innovation. As such, the PDN allows early-career staff to network, share experiences, exchange ideas and build collaborative efforts.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

A total of four events were carried out between January and July 2017. This included a “Scientific Speed-dating” event, where postdocs from different schools would come up with ideas for innovative research collaborations in a fun setting, with symbolic prizes for the most ingenious and interesting projects handed out afterwards. Further events included networking meetings without fixed agenda for discussing current issues impacting on early-career staff, such as the possible ramifications of Brexit on future research funding, or the problem of building up a pension whilst in fixed-term employment. The final event conducted was a barbecue. Attendance varied between events, with 8-12 people attending the smaller meet-ups, and 22-30 booking places for the larger events.

In line with the future objectives set out in last year’s report and with the kind support of the Research Staff Office, a website was created to better represent and publicise information about the network and inform the target audience about upcoming events (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/pdn>).

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The feedback received was very positive throughout, continuing the success of the previous year - as was the mission of the initiative. On the first event, attendees were asked to provide formal feedback. Of those who filled in the questionnaire (n=17), the vast majority (15+) agreed that the event was *interesting, enjoyable, and engaging*, and the remaining attendees somewhat agreed. Most people thought the event was *relevant* to them (89% agreed or somewhat agreed), and that it *provided an opportunity to network with others* (82% agreed and 12% somewhat agreed). Most importantly, all attendees were *satisfied* with the event and the Postdoctoral Network as a whole, of which 71% and 59% respectively were *very satisfied*. It remains a strong conclusion that many people are interested in the cross-school networking aspect offered by the PDN which is something they do not find elsewhere. In subsequent events, feedback was also elicited informally through conversation with attendees, which generally affirmed our initial results.

See below some thoughts expressed by attendees provided with the written feedback:

“Want more events! Thanks.”

“Thanks a lot guys. Second prize was not bad. Nice biscuits!”

“This was a great event! Keep up the good work.”

“I didn’t win but it was a great experience!”

“Very fun event – it was interesting to meet people from the other schools and think of collaborations. Do more events like this one!”

BUDGETING

A total of £821.10 was awarded. The spend for all events were kept within budget (See Appendix A for a breakdown of costings).

REFLECTION & FUTURE OUTLOOK

1. Timing of the events and coordination with RSO/RDU. Considering the feedback previously received, events were scheduled around lunchtime or early afternoon, which seemed to work reasonably well. However, due to the varying schedules and duties of postdoc staff, it remains difficult to find a time that suits everyone equally well. There was also one occasion where a small event coincided with a researcher development event - in future, greater care should be taken with scheduling to avoid clashes.

2. More networking opportunities. The second major event originally planned was split into 2 smaller events to facilitate this. We found that these were effective in attracting not just previous attendees but also new postdoctoral staff who joined the University during the year and just wanted to get to know other post-docs in an informal setting. Still, maintaining an up-to-date register of all postdocs at the University remains a challenge. For the time being, we are advertising the mailing list more actively on our website and provide instructions on how to join it.

3. Recruiting new committee members. As postdocs progress in their career, their activities and focus change and so, there is a need to recruit the next generation of people to help carry the network into the future. This need has become somewhat more obvious this year, were active involvement of some of the previous committee members ceased and the load of organising and supporting events and activities rested on fewer shoulders than before. It will be a challenge for the coming year to get new postdocs to take on committee roles. For now, a dedicated section on the website has been created with information for other postdocs on how to get more actively involved.

4. Continued funding and support. Although the PDN was able to continue the success of the previous year, it cannot be understated how important the availability of funding has been to this. Whilst it is the voluntary engagement of the individuals that make “the network” happen, continued financial support would go a long way in sustaining the initiative, and more institutional support might help secure further growth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank the University of Sussex Doctoral School for funding the PDN. A special thank you to Laura Chapman, Natalie James, and Kirsty Bridger for their guidance and support throughout the year.

APPENDIX A: COSTINGS OF PDN EVENTS 2017

Item	Quantity	Price	Total Price	Running Total	Funds Remaining
<i>Cross-School Scientific Speed-Dating, Thursday, 23 February 2017. 12:15 - 13:45. FUL-202</i>					
Finger-food buffet	30	£ 7.50	£ 225.00	£ 225.00	£ 596.10
Tea and Coffee	20	£ 2.50	£ 50.00	£ 275.00	£ 546.10
Water, juices, biscuits (coop)	1	£ 14.30	£ 14.30	£ 289.30	£ 531.80
<i>Postdoc Lunchtime Get-together, Thursday, 30 March 2017. 13:00 - 14:00. FUL G15</i>					
Water, juices, biscuits (coop)	1	£ 11.16	£ 11.16	£ 300.46	£ 520.64
<i>End-of-term Postdoc Meet-up, Thursday, 25 May 2017. 12:00 - 13:30. FUL G15</i>					
Water, juices, biscuits, sandwiches (coop)	1	£ 31.82	£ 31.82	£ 332.28	£ 488.82
<i>Postdoc Network Summer BBQ, Thursday, 27 July 2017. 14:00. Sussex campus, Falmer Bar</i>					
BBQ catering	30	£ 10.50	£ 315.00	£ 647.28	£ 173.82
Drinks (50 vouchers)	1	£ 146.10	£ 146.10	£ 793.38	£ 27.72
TOTAL SPENT: £ 793.38			TOTAL REMAINING: £ 27.72		