

Appendix 2 Good Practice Examples of Research Staff Forum

The Biology Post-Doc Society

<http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/postdocsociety/>

This society comprises all Biology and York Structural Biology Laboratory (YSBL) Postdoctoral Research Associates (PDRAs) and is organised by a committee of Post-Docs.

Aims of the Society

- Organisation and facilitation of informative sessions on issues regarding Post-Docs' careers, work and development.
- Facilitate integration and visibility of Post-Docs in the Department
- Organisation and facilitation of networking opportunities

Remit

To create networking opportunities and informative sessions on issues regarding careers, work and development of Post-Docs. Organise and facilitate integration and visibility of Post-Docs within the Department. Canvass opinions from the Post-Doc community of relevant issues relating to the induction, management, development and well-being of Post-Docs in the Department. Liaise with other groups in the Department. The committee members meet with the Head of Department; Chair of Board of Studies; HR Biology representative and researcher developers to discuss the issues which relate to post-docs. In addition the Society have representatives on departmental committees and these provide a contact point for post-docs and departmental groups/bodies to facilitate exchange of information.

Reporting Structure

Reports to: Post-docs, other relevant departmental groups
Consults: Post-Docs and any group that can contribute necessary information
Receives: Reports/feedback from Post-Doc Representatives on:

- Research Committee
- Biology Board of Studies
- Concordat Implementation Group
- Athena Swan Committee
- Staff Committee
- Outreach Committee
- Research Away Day Organising Committee
- Making the Difference Award
- Enterprise
- Social Committee

Document Policy

Post-Doc Society Committee will minute committee meetings which will be subsequently ratified by committee members, then posted online at:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/postdocsociety/committeemeetings/>.

Given the short contract time for Post-Docs serving within the Department, the shared nature of involvement and small membership the committee will be led by a Rolling Chair (to be confirmed in previous meeting). The Chair will set the agenda (with input from all members) for the preceding meeting, chair the meeting and record the minutes.

Membership

Efforts will be made to recruit from as many different research foci as possible. The upper limit of Post-Doc Society Committee members is seven. Post-Doc representatives of Departmental committees will serve for

three years with their places then being advertised to the Departmental Post-Doc community, this includes YSBL. They may serve additional terms if no other nomination is received. Candidates will be asked to submit a statement of interest and in case of multiple applications the PDSC will decide on the bases of suitability in a simple majority vote.

Eligibility

Every post-doc is automatically part of the society and postdoc community. There are currently about 82 post-docs in Biology and about 15 in YSBL which formally is a part of Chemistry, but with a lot of overlap with Biology.

Frequency of meetings

Every 2-3 months, with Ad Hoc meetings if required.

Committee (PDSC) members:

Jane Dalton (CII), Katrin Besser (CNAP), Liz Rylott (CNAP), Tim Ganderton (YSBL), Erica Kintz (CII), Fiona Frame (YCR CRU)

The PDSC meets every two months. Minutes of these meetings are recorded on the department webpages: <http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/postdocsociety/committeemeetings/>.

Activities include:

- Set-up and running of Post-Doc webpages linked to Biology Dep. (since Jan 2012)
- Initiation and organisation of listing Post-Docs under "Our Staff " (Research Associates) on the Biology web pages
- Advertising and filling vacant positions for Post-Doc representatives on several of the Departmental Committees (see current representatives below). Committee representatives play a vital role in allowing Post-Docs to contribute ideas and gain an understanding of the running of the department.
- Running of Buddy Scheme – new Post-Docs have the chance to meet another Post-Doc from the Department who knows the place for a little longer to help getting around more easily (on demand)
- Running of Coffee & Pastries – free to all Post-Docs in the Department (currently sponsored by Greiner), opportunity to network and share information (about 6 times per year)
- Organised and run careers events ("Coffee & Careers"-monthly; "Academic career series"-six sessions where academics gave information on each of the career stages and advice on preparation for them; Session with Sarah Blackford-Careers Advisor)
- Devised and organised lecturing series ("Bitesize Science", "Biology behind the scenes") for Post-Doc with an interest in gaining lecturing experience (not available in Biology Dep.). The lecture series were open to all undergraduate years and attendance was voluntary.

Measurable impact of the Society since 2011:

- the addition of post-docs to the biology staff list on the web pages as they did not appear anywhere as a visible group of researchers, post-docs have the opportunity to edit a profile helping to raise their professional profile and visibility
- we have been asked to help out acting as contact point for candidates during interview processes or be involved with the actual interview
- a welcome scheme is part of the induction process of new (post-doc) starters (we welcome any new post-doc by email and give information on our activities etc.)

- we made a difference to new starters with our buddy scheme where they could meet with someone already working here
- we are approached by departmental groups asking for help with filling representatives roles
- we are clearly a contact point ("link") for interaction between the Department and post-docs and vice versa (see our discussions with various bodies of the Department)
- we have organised events that were asked for by post-docs and not provided by anybody else
- there is a sense of community amongst researchers. People know each other better and the networking coffee mornings are well attended (usually above 20% of all post-docs and valued by our sponsor who attends these events with a stall)