

Postdoctoral Development Centre: activity report 2023-24

The aim of this report is to communicate the main initiatives and projects provided by the Postdoctoral Development Centre to postdocs and research staff at Queen's over the academic year 2023-24. It also includes programmes run by other departments when they are highly relevant to this cohort and are advertised as core research staff provision on the PDC website. For transparency, we are including satisfaction elements such as attendance data, ratings and representative feedback when available.

The PDC's objectives for each year are for the most part aligned to Queen's institutional '[Researcher Development Concordat](#)' action plan. This plan was developed in consultation with research staff and revealed in October 2021.

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Key projects

Below are the main projects the PDC focused on for the academic year 2023-24. These include actions from our institutional [Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan](#), and priorities identified by research staff surveys or feedback. The PDC Representatives' Network ([list of current representatives](#)) was actively involved in shaping and delivering them.

Piloting and implementing an updated PDR form and process for research staff

During the 2022-2023 period, the existing Personal Development Review (PDR) process for research staff was reviewed through engagement with the Postdoctoral and Researcher Oversight Group (PROG), the PDC Representatives' Network and a small working group involving additional staff from People



& Culture. As a result of the collected feedback, new resources were designed, including a tailored PDR form for research staff, PDF guidance documents and a series of short videos. These new resources aimed to focus conversations during the PDR on researchers' development and career, notably by including planning and reporting on the use of research staff's allocated 10 career development days.

The resources were piloted with a small group of postdocs and their line managers from across the three faculties in Summer 2023.

Participants for the pilot were recruited from across all three faculties and at different stages of their career; 37 research staff-manager pairs were enrolled with feedback provided by 23 research staff and 22 line managers. The feedback received was overall highly positive and both research staff and their line managers found the updated process to be straight-forward, clear and beneficial.

The feedback highlighted how research staff valued the opportunity to focus discussions on career goals and professional development, including discussing and planning activities to make best use of the 10 allocated development days. The respondents also felt the accompanying guidance documentation, videos and the prompts on the new PDR form itself made it easier to understand what was expected

of them. Qualitative feedback stated that research staff benefitted from the process 'forcing them' to take time to reflect on their goals, plan their career, identify development gaps and by providing a sense of accountability to act upon what had been discussed.

Below is an example of research staff feedback:

“The new form is very much more directed towards career and personal development and I felt this helped to guide discussions away from hitting targets relating to my current project, for example, and towards what steps I should be taking to achieve my career goals. Having to explicitly record and reflect on how much of my 10 development days were used and how I would use the next 10 was completely new and a useful exercise. This is not something I would have considered or included in my previous PDR meetings”

Line managers also had a positive experience. They welcomed an enhanced focus on career development and felt that the process clarified their role as a sounding board, rather than a careers counsellor, thereby ensuring the onus was on the researcher to reflect and plan. Indeed, the line managers all felt comfortable steering the PDR career discussion by following the structure on the form. They also found researchers to be better prepared for the meeting due to the reflection triggered by the updated form, enabling more productive conversations.

Below is an example of line manager feedback:

“The guidance and the form itself was extremely helpful in guiding conversation and also allowing a focus on training and career goals, very important in particular in the context for PDRAs. It also provided structure around conversations on other career options, contracts etc.”

The response to the pilot has been overwhelmingly positive and the PDC recommended that the resources were rolled-out to all research staff in 2024. The new PDR form, guidance and documentation are now available and live on the [PDC website](#) and [P&C intranet](#) and should be used for research staff PDRs going forward.

Research-Only Career Pathway

After a break due to a change in leadership, a new working group was established to resume work developing a 'Research-only' career pathway, as part of the broader review of academic profiles and progression. The aim of this project is to provide a clear structure to roles in research and introduce a mechanism for research staff to apply for promotion. The PDC plays a key role in this project, and



collated regular insight and feedback from the PDC Representatives' Network and the Postdoctoral and Research staff Oversight Group. A postdoc representative is also directly involved as member of the working group. The group has developed recommendations relevant to the roles, grades and job titles for the new pathway, and the eligibility and process to allow research staff to apply for promotion. Criteria and profiles will be designed in 2024-25, with the expectation that refinement, sign-off and implementation will take place between 2024 and 2026.

Career Sustainability Project

A working group was established to review the use of Fixed-Term contracts and propose initiatives to mitigate employment precarity for researchers. Engagement with research staff committees, unions and staff in relevant directorates and faculties led to a series of recommendations being submitted to the University Management Board, including i) not moving staff to open-ended contracts based on length of service, if the contract would be terminated once the grant supporting the member of staff would end, ii) enhancing career development support to enable researchers to find more sustainable employment, iii) introducing a transparent process to research staff contract extension when further funding has been applied for, and iv) investigating restructuring research teams to enable the creation of permanent research positions across research groups. Further refinement of these plans is ongoing.

Expansion of the PDC Team

The PDC team expanded in Summer 2024, in part due to funding received from Wellcome to support research culture activities. Alice Dubois, previously PDC Manager, is now Research Culture Manager and while she remains the lead for the Researcher Development Concordat implementation and policy initiatives for postdocs, her role now also encompasses broader research strategy for the University and delivery of the Research Culture NI project, funded by Wellcome. These changes have seen the addition of a PDC Officer, Lisa Douglas and a Research Careers and Employability Officer, Jill Wright. Erin Davidson remains the Project Assistant for the PDC. See more details on the expanded PDC team in their profiles below.

Dr Alice Dubois, Research Culture Manager (a.dubois@qub.ac.uk)



Alice holds a PhD on innate immune mechanisms and proteolysis from the University of Tours in France, and moved to Queen's University Belfast as a lung immunity postdoc in the Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine in 2014. After four years as a postdoc, she moved to an exciting administrative position, establishing a

brand-new hub to support postdocs and their career development: the Postdoctoral Development Centre. Initially based in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, Alice piloted some structures and policies for postdocs at Faculty level, and worked with colleagues across the University to widen the PDC to support all university postdocs, which was achieved in 2021.

As PDC Manager, Alice oversaw the general strategy of the PDC, its programme of activities (workshops, events, postdoc awards), delivered inductions, one-to-one career support, worked with postdocs and academic representatives from Schools, Centres and Societies, as well as with a range of collaborators in the university and beyond to improve our policies and environment for postdocs. She was notably involved in introducing the allocation of 10 career development days per year for postdocs, creating the PDC Postdoc Awards, the PDC website, the Postdoctoral Leadership

Programme, the PDC Representatives' Network, the Assistant Supervisor role and supporting the creation of the central Postdoc Society.

Since April 2024, Alice took on the new role of Research Culture Manager, which involves managing the Research Culture sub-team, including the PDC Officer and Research Careers and Employability Officer from the PDC. While she is still responsible for Queen's implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat, PDC strategy and work on policy applying to postdocs, her other former responsibilities are now held by other PDC team members, and she instead focuses on broader aspects of Research Culture. This includes the design and implementation of the university's Research Culture Roadmap, contributing to delivering the Northern Ireland Research Culture project (funded by Wellcome), and supporting institutional planning and submission to the 'People, Culture and Environment' section of REF 2029.

Dr Lisa Douglas, PDC Officer (l.douglas@qub.ac.uk)



Lisa joined the PDC in August 2024 and oversees the development and delivery of researcher development opportunities, training, events and guidance, ensuring these initiatives meet the needs of the postdoctoral researcher community at QUB. She also actively engages with the postdoctoral community through one-on-one support and collaborates with and supports the PDC Representatives' Network and Postdoc Society.

Lisa began her career in pharmacy, having qualified as a pharmacist in 2015. She later returned to QUB to pursue a PhD at the School of Pharmacy, earning her doctorate in 2019. Following this, Lisa spent nearly six years as a postdoctoral researcher at QUB, focusing on novel therapeutic approaches for chronic lung diseases, including cystic fibrosis and COPD.

During her time as a postdoctoral researcher, Lisa benefited from numerous development opportunities organized by the PDC. In 2022, she joined the PDC Representatives' Network and the Postdoc Society, where she actively contributed to supporting her peers. With firsthand experience of the advantages these development opportunities offer, Lisa is passionate about aiding other postdoctoral researchers in their personal and professional development.

Jill Wright, Research Careers and Employability Officer (j.wright@qub.ac.uk)



Jill is responsible for the career development and employability of postdoctoral research staff. This includes helping postdocs explore alternate career paths outside of academia, supporting with job applications and interview preparation. She will also focus on how we can better prepare postdocs for future transition through a suite of training and development opportunities to enhance skills. She will engage with employers across NI who are employers of postdocs and those that are new to the conversation to promote the talent pool of postdocs that we have in Northern Ireland across our two universities.

Before joining the team in June 2024 Jill worked in the private sector and brings with her extensive experience in early career development as well as running employability programmes in partnership with government bodies and local higher education institutions. Jill has established relationships with Queens and Ulster as a previous key graduate employer.

Erin Davidson, Project Assistant (e.davidson@qub.ac.uk)



Erin coordinates workshops and events for the PDC, supports the Representatives' Network and manages PDC communications. She also supports the wider Research Strategy & Engagement Team.

Erin joined the team in December 2021. Erin is qualified in CMI Project Management. She has extensive experience in event organisation, designing visual communication and promotional materials, and managing websites and social media communications.

Erin primarily supports the PDC but also provides support to the wider Research Strategy and Engagement Team with projects and events.

Before joining the PDC, Erin worked in the Staff Training and Development Unit (now the Learning and Development team in Organisational Development) for over 12 years, where she was responsible for organising training courses and events. She joined the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences as the Faculty Equality Coordinator and was responsible for the coordination and communication of all Gender Equality events

across the Faculty, before joining Queen's Gender Initiative as their Projects and Communications Coordinator.

Local initiatives in Schools and Centres

Postdoc and academic representatives from the PDC Representatives' Network ([see membership](#)), and/or other volunteers such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion representatives, have been involved in organising a range of activities locally, such as research symposia or seminars with postdocs presenting their work, informal gatherings (e.g. coffee mornings), career events, welcoming/buddy schemes for new postdocs, surveys or other feedback mechanisms to reflect local experience, provision of updates at local committees etc. Here are some examples (not an exhaustive list; other schools may also have similar initiatives that are not listed here):

- Wider committee / group of postdocs and potentially PhD candidates to oversee activities (e.g. SoNBE, SoEEECs, WWIEM, SoPharm, SoBS)
- Regular consultation meetings or townhall meetings to gather research staff opinion (e.g. SoPsy, SoMP, WWIEM, SoSSESW)
- Welcoming scheme or events (e.g. SoNBE, CPH, SoNM)
- Regular coffee mornings (e.g. SoPsy, SoMP, CPH, SoBS, SoNM, SoSSESW)
- Social events, including movie nights, game nights, football, bake-offs, international food festival, pizza networking, speed networking, Belfast food tour (e.g. SoMP, WWIEM, SoBS, SoNM, SoPharm)
- Seminar series or research symposia with opportunities for research staff to present (e.g. SoPsy, WWIEM, PGJCCR, SoNBE)
- Seminar series with invited speakers, including high profile (e.g. SoMP, WWIEM, PGJCCR, SoPsy)
- Career events, workshops and away days for postdocs and potentially PhDs (e.g. SoNBE, SoMP, WWIEM, PGJCCR, SoNM, SoPsy)
- Mentoring schemes for postdocs to mentor PhD candidates (SoMDBS, SoNBE)

Postdoc Society

The Postdoc Society was established at the end of 2022 and involves ~10 postdoc volunteers from across Faculties. The group receives funding, advice and administrative support from the PDC, but functions in autonomy in setting up and delivering a programme of activities related to promoting networking and social interactions between research staff across the institution, promoting and celebrating the importance of postdocs in the University and to the public, as well as engaging in outreach activities involving PhD students at Queen's.

More information can be found on the [Postdoc Society website](#), and it can be contacted at PostdocSociety@qub.ac.uk and followed on X ([@QUBPostdocSoc](#)).

The Postdoc Society built upon the success of its first year by providing a range of successful activities in 2023-2024, including a pizza networking event, wellbeing events (including a mindfulness workshop, meditation session and wellbeing walk), a writing retreat and a family-friendly summer social. The meditation session and wellbeing walk were brand new events for the 2023-2024 period.

The Society is also organising the annual Postdoc Showcase in September 2024 (see [National Postdoc Appreciation Week](#)).



Event	Attendees	Rating	Recommended by
The MYND Movement (Wellbeing Event) (October 2023)	14	4.6/5 (9 respondents)	100%
Writing Retreat for Postdocs and Research Staff (November 2023)	NA	4.8/5 (4 respondents)	100%
Postdoc Networking and Pizza Event (January 2024)	55	4.9/5 (14 respondents)	NA
Writing Retreat for Postdocs and Research Staff (March 2024)	12	4.6/5 (9 respondents)	100%
Meditation Event (June 2024)	14	3.8/5 (4 respondents)	100%
Pub Quiz Social Event (May 2024)	6	NA	NA
Wellbeing Walk (June 2024)	4	5/5 (2 respondents)	NA
Summer Social Event (August 2024)	22	5/5 (5 respondents)	100%

“I was able to work on a paper I haven't been able to get to for over a year. Amazing! I made so much progress. Honestly my stress levels have gone down so much! Please do more! Carving out time for writing is so important and because I had to attend this event, I couldn't put it off like I would have done if I was working alone.”

Participant, Writing Retreat, 2024

"[I appreciated having] time to focus on me and learning that imperfect action is better than perfect inaction"

Participant, 'The MYND Movement' Wellbeing Event, 2023

Workshops and courses

The data below corresponds to 'core' workshops, organised at least once a year. Other 'ad hoc' workshops are provided by a range of university departments but are not featured here. Postdoc representatives contributed to a review of the 'core workshop' provision for research staff in 2023. While feedback on the current provision was very positive, a few gaps were identified including mentoring skills, having difficult conversations, proposal development and working with partners. These gaps were in part addressed by the introduction of two new PDC workshops; Managing Challenging Conversations and Introduction to External Research Funding (see also [Organisational Development](#) section for other new workshop provision).

While some workshops are provided specifically to research staff by the PDC, most of the [core workshops](#) are organised by Organisational Development (OD).

PDC workshops

Workshop	Attendees	Rating	Recommended by
PDC New Postdoc Induction (5 sessions: September & November 2023, January, March & June 2024)	50	4.9/5 (18 respondents)	100%
Storytelling for Researchers (September 2023)	25	4.6/5 (9 respondents)	100%
Lectureships: Ready, Set, Go! (November 2023)	17	4.1/5 (13 respondents)	86%



**Supervising Skills for
Assistant Supervisors
& Postdocs**

31

4.3/5
(10 respondents)

90%
(all bar one respondent)

(November 2023)

**Time Management
for Productive Work
and a Happy Life**

6

5/5
(4 respondents)

100%

(January 2024)

**Engaged Research &
Impact – Why are
they important?**

9

4.8/5
(6 respondents)

100%

(May 2024)

**Managing
Challenging
Conversations**

12

4.6/5
(5 respondents)

100%

(May 2024)

**Postdoctoral
Leadership
Programme**

21

5/5
(12 respondents)

100%

(May & June 2023, 2-day
programme)

**Introduction to
External Research
Funding**

23

5/5
(2 respondents)

100%

(June 2024)

**Applying for
Fellowships:
Networking with
Successful Fellows**

37

4.9/5
(14 respondents)

100%

(May 2024)

(PDC, OD & RD)



“Very good style of presentation, very good interactions, course provider provided a great atmosphere where I felt safe to ask questions. It was a very very good course. Very practical, hands-on and just what I needed. Thank you.

Participant, ‘Lectureships: Ready, Set, Go!’ 2023

Duncan was an amazing facilitator! He is so enthusiastic about his training and kept us all really engaged! The workshop was great, there was so much to take away and bring into my work.

Participant, ‘Storytelling for Researchers’ 2023

The course was very structured and gave detailed insights on the whole concept of leadership. There were a lot of things that were completely new to me and was a big addition to my knowledge base. I feel much more confident after knowing my strengths and weaknesses. A big shoutout to Louise for being a supporting and thought-provoking coach, I would definitely vouch for everyone to attend this course.

Participant, ‘Postdoctoral Leadership Programme’ 2024

Organisational Development (OD, P&C) workshops

Workshop	Attendees	Rating	Recommended by
The strategic researcher (October 2023)	27	5/5 (3 respondents)	100%
Project management in a research environment (2 parts) (November 2023)	14 (average over 2 parts)	5/5 (1 respondent)	100%
Developing your research career (3 parts x 2) (November 2023 and June 2024)	21 (average over 3 parts)	NA	NA
Writing for Publication (x3) (November 2023, February 2024 and May 2024)	28	4.9/5 (11 respondents)	100%
Mastering Academic and Non-Academic CV Writing (November 2023)	7	NA	NA
Effective Use of Voice (December 2023 and June 2024)	13	4.5/5 (8 respondents)	
Writing for Publication: Researcher Writing Retreat (2 parts) (January 2024)	19 (average over 2 parts)	5/5 (1 respondent)	100%
Refine Your Interview Skills for Academic and Non-Academic Success! (January 2024)	14	4.6/5 (3 respondents)	100%
Developing Resilience for those Working in a Research Environment (January 2024)	8	5/5 (2 respondents)	100%
Networking & Profile Building for Researchers (6 parts x 2) (February 2024 and June 2024)	8 (average over 3 parts)	NA	NA

How to Become a Social Media Influencer (March 2024)	6	5/5 (2 respondents)	100%
Promoting yourself and your Research (March 2024)	15	4.7/5 (7 respondents)	100%
Project Management in a Research Environment (May 2024)	8	4.8/5 (4 respondents)	100%
Coaching & Mentoring for Researchers (June 2024)	5	4.6/5 (3 respondents)	100%

“The presentations were great, and the contents were highly educative. I learned important project management terminologies and concepts, gained new knowledge on how to apply these concepts in my research. The panel session was also great. The shared personal experiences of the two panel members provided a real life situation of applying project management principles.”

Participant, Project Management in a Research Environment, 2024

Hugh is an amazing speaker. He is to the point and his style is interactive. The talk is full of good tips and makes one think. Most useful workshop in ages.

Participant, ‘Promoting Yourself and Your Research’, 2024

It was helpful to be amongst colleagues and talk about my work in an informal environment. I also enjoyed the networking aspect of the sessions and met colleagues from other Schools and Faculties that I wouldn't normally have met in my current work routine.

Participant, 'Writing for Publication: Researcher Writing Retreat' 2024

Additional workshops and programmes

Innovation programmes (Innovation Programmes Team, R&E)

This year the [Innovation Programmes team](#) organised a wide-ranging portfolio of multi-disciplinary and discipline-specific innovation programmes to focus attention on the commercialisation of university research. Innovation Programmes are designed to capture wide-ranging research with a number which are generic and leading for the UK such as ICURe (which is led by QUB) and others which are based on emergent needs and funded by a range of sponsors including corporate partners like Kainos. The team delivered 5 cohorts of programmes especially relevant to research staff (with 8 Queen's teams led by research staff), including Kainos- One Health Programme, EIT Food Seedbed Incubator, BBSRC ICURe, ICURe, Engage, BioEngage, Future Leaders Fellowships and Techstars Startup Weekend.

Fellowship workshops (Research Development Team, R&E)

The Research Development team continues to deliver a wide range of training, including highly specific in-depth programmes for specific fellowship calls. These involve small groups of applicants, involving several sessions including writing, feedback, peer-to-peer support and input from previous awardees. This is in addition to sessions designed for wider groups and applicants at every career stage.

Workshop	Attendees	Feedback
Leverhulme Trust Early Career Award Information Session (January 2024)	35	Positive (45 expressions of interest, 13 selected submissions & 3 awards)



UKRI FLF Round 9 Information Session (January 2024)	40	Positive (28 expressions of interest, 4 selected submissions)
School of Nursing & Midwifery Fellowship Information Session (February 2024)	15	Not Captured
Introduction to R&E Funding Opportunities (February, May, June 2024)	10	Positive (10 expressions of interest with ongoing support)
EPSRC New Investigator Peer-to-Peer Writing Workshops (Feb – May 2024)	13	Positive (15 expressions of interest with ongoing support)
RAEng Research Fellowship Information Session (March 2024)	17	Positive (10 expressions of interest, 3 selected submissions)
AHRC/ESRC Action Learning Programme (June – December 2024)	5	Positive (4 expected submissions with ongoing support)
African Scholars Research Network: Introduction to Funding and Fellowships (June 2024)	7	Positive
Royal Society University Research Fellowship Information Session (July 2024)	19	Positive (14 expressions of interest, 7 selected submissions)
British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowships Information Session (August 2023, August 2024)	20	Positive (3 final submissions; 5 expected submissions with ongoing support (2024))
Royal Society Faraday Discovery Fellowship (September 2024)	9	Positive (Closed session for those who submitted an EOI for an Oct-24 submission)

Recognition of teaching and supervision programmes

Over the academic year, the Centre for Educational Development has provided 7 Queen’s Merit Award (QMA) application writing support programmes for individuals applying for Associate Fellowship (AF) or Fellowship (F) of the Higher Education Academy HEA). EPS also ran 1 extra series of internal writing sessions. As a result, 23 research staff were successfully awarded AF-HEA, 8 F-HEA and 1 SF-HEA.

In 2023-24, the PDC also processed 22 Assistant Supervisor appointments, recognising significant contributions to the supervision of PhD students.

Information events

The ‘Postdoc Life’ series of information sessions was introduced in January 2023 and aims to highlight some internal and sector developments and initiatives to postdocs and research staff in order to help them better navigate their environment. This year, topics included maternity leave for research staff (to complement the enhanced maternity leave for research staff information provided on the [People & Culture Intranet](#) which was developed in 2023), pensions, the Queen’s Merit Award and career planning (which discussed the new PDR process rolled out in 2024). The ‘Postdoc Life’ series operates as lunchtime online seminars, with short online presentations and Q&A, and recordings are later made available on the [PDC website \(information section\)](#).

Event	Attendees	Rating	Recommended by
Postdoc Life Series: Maternity Leave for Research Staff (November 2023)	16	5/5 (4 respondents)	100%
Postdoc Life Series: Queen’s Pension for Research Staff (February 2024)	36	5/5 (4 respondents)	100%
Postdoc Life Series: Teaching Certification at Queens – a Postdoc View	25	5/5 (6 respondents)	100%

(March 2024)

Postdoc Life Series:

Career Planning

Tools – Research

Staff PDR and

Prosper

28

5/5
(3 respondents)

100%

(July 2024)

Great resources for postdocs. This session provided lots of information to support postdocs in their career planning

Attendee, Postdoc Life Series: Career Planning Tools – Research Staff PDR and Prosper, 2024

Personal support

PDC 1:1 support

In 2023-24, the PDC spent approximately 29 hours personally supporting research staff across 13 instances. This support included feedback on CVs and job applications and interview preparation, and was provided via in-person or online discussions, mock interview panels, or by email.

Feedback shows that 100% of respondents having received interview preparation feel more prepared to attend their real interview, and 100% of respondents having received support with their CV or application feel it was improved as a result.

Support type	Beneficiaries*	Rating	Recommended by
Interview preparation (1:1 feedback or mock interview)	10	5/5 (2 respondents)	100%
CV feedback	3	4/5 (1 respondent)	100%
Other topic/ support	NA	NA	NA

*note: when the same individual has received support on separate occasions in the year (different kinds of support or for different positions), they are here counted several times

While we do not have outcome data for all the individuals we supported, we are delighted to report that at least 5 individuals we helped with a job application and/or interview were offered the job they applied for (and one support recipient was offered two separate positions!). Additionally, one support recipient achieved the reserve candidate position for the job they applied for and another had the company offer to hold their CV for future opportunities, demonstrating that these individuals performed favourably during their interviews.

“I was really satisfied with the service that Alice provided. Alice took me thoroughly through the job spec and my CV and helped me identify different skills/experience that I had that were relevant to the job. She introduced to me the CAR method for answering questions. She put me at ease overall did a superb job!”

Job interview preparation support beneficiary, 2024

“I truly appreciate Alice's help, which was sufficiently individualised and practical.”

Job interview preparation support beneficiary, 2024

Other 1:1 support

External career support (via OD programme)

The ‘Developing your research career’ programme of workshops, organised by the Organisational Development (OD) team, included a 1:1 career session with an external consultant for each participant. Over the academic year, 23 individuals benefited from these sessions.

Fellowship and funding support (Research Development team)

The Research Development team provided support to 119 applications for Fellowships and Early Career Awards between Jan 2023- June 2024, from postdoctoral researchers and eligible early academics. This support included (but is not limited to) selection and development of four applications for submission to Round 9 UKRI Future Leader Fellowships; selection and development of 13 Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship applications (with 3 awarded); organising a suite of mock interviews for 5 fellowship applicants; high-quality support for Future Leaders Fellowships and other major fellowship/ECR opportunities continued including in-depth support currently being provided to 4 internally selected candidates for Round 9. Further, there have been a number of significant successes since January 2024 including a Diabetes UK RD Lawrence Fellowship, an EPSRC Open+ Fellowship, an MRC NIRG, an ESRC NIA, and three Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowships. There are also a number of other significant fellowship/ECR applications where outcomes are awaited including a post-interview NERC IRF and EPSRC Open Fellowship applications.

Mentoring

The [Postdoc Group Mentoring Scheme](#), led by academic staff in all faculties, accommodated 15 groups this year, with 32 postdocs participating as mentees. Discussions within groups mainly focused on career planning and development, research funding, management and leadership development, and work life balance.

Mentees rated the programme 4.8/5 and 100% of respondents recommend it (8 respondents provided feedback). All respondents stated that the programme encouraged them to engage in personal and career development, with 88% (all respondents except one) taking the time to review their career development plan as part of the process. Participants reported benefiting from exploring different career options (including those in other sectors), receiving support in making a career plan, gaining insight into funding and fellowship applications and having a mentor who could offer impartial advice.

“It created a really invaluable support network and discussion space for ideas/issues/career planning, which helped me with some concrete activities (funding application, teaching, job applications) and was really beneficial in giving a space to discuss these things outside of colleagues or personal networks (both with my mentor and other mentees). It was also really beneficial to hear from the other postdoc

mentees about their concerns/issues/strengths and places where these overlapped with my own.”

Participant, Postdoc Group Mentoring Scheme, 2024

Funding

The extension of internal funding schemes’ eligibility to research staff a couple of years ago enabled 33 postdocs to receive some financial support to present at conferences, add value to a funding proposal, develop external partnerships etc. [See internal funding schemes for details on the programmes on offer.](#)

Funding	All applications	Funded applications
Research & Innovation conference fund	27	24
Engaged Research Seed Fund	13	3
Agility Fund strand i		
Development of external research funding applications	3	3
Agility Fund strand ii		
Support for interdisciplinary initiatives	1	1
Agility Fund strand iii		
Support for external research partnership development	1	1
Agility Fund strand iv		
Support for research engagement and impact	1	1
Agility Fund strand v		
Support for research culture, environment and people	1	0

National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW)

As [National Postdoc Appreciation Week](#) takes place in September, we here provide some information on the September 2023 iteration (part of the academic year), but also indication of the 2024 iteration, since most of the planning and organisation has taken place in the academic year 2023-24. Post-event information will be included in the 2024-25 report.

Postdoc Showcase 2023



The Postdoc Showcase 2023 was organised by the Postdoc Society on the theme of ‘Creating Impact Through Collaboration’. The theme in 2023 aimed to discuss how interdisciplinary collaboration can drive meaningful outcomes and create impact. An interdisciplinary panel of

invited guest speakers provided their experience of ‘creating impact through collaboration’ and organised flash talks and posters by postdocs were aligned with the university’s research strategies that are conducted across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There were prizes for best talks and posters and plenty of opportunities to network, including during a drinks reception at the end of the event.

	Attendees	Rating	Recommended by
Postdoc Showcase 2023 (Sep 2023)	82 (variable during the course of the day)	4.4/5 (29 respondents)	NA

“The organisation of the event was great. Spreading the showcasing from posters to presentations was awesome.”

“It was a really well structured event. Everything was well scheduled & flowed perfectly”

Attendees, ‘Postdoc Showcase 2023’

Postdoc Awards 2023

Similarly to 2022, Postdoc Awards were awarded during NPAW 2023, and were presented in person at the Postdoc Showcase. A total of 59 nominations were received (32 in MHLS, 18 in EPS, 9 in AHSS), including some of them submitted on behalf of multiple individuals.



Additional NPAW initiatives

Profiles were created for ~60 research staff and were shared on social media during NPAW, as well as displayed on screens during the Showcase, and saved on the PDC website ([‘Our postdocs’ section](#)).

Additionally, the PDC offered the opportunity to some postdocs to get a professional profile picture taken by a photographer, with 26 postdocs availing of this opportunity.

The PDC also supported a national online event organised collaboratively by postdocs from several institutions, ‘Creating connections and rediscovering joy’. This event explored the differences between postdocs across disciplines, how to communicate ‘across the divide’, break preconceptions and rediscover joy.

Plans for NPAW 2024

- Postdoc Showcase 2024: ‘Helping to Shape a Better World’

Organised by the Postdoc Society, the 2024 Postdoc Showcase will involve a panel discussion of guests speakers exploring the topic ‘Life After Postdoc’, a research display/poster exhibition, short accessible presentations by selected postdocs, a prize-giving for best poster/presentation and a range of networking opportunities, including a drinks reception.

- PDC Postdoc Awards

As usual, the PDC Postdoc Awards will be presented at the Postdoc Showcase. A total of 61 nominations were received (35 in MHLS, 19 in EPS, 7 in AHSS), including some of them submitted on behalf of multiple individuals.

- National Online Event

The PDC is again supporting an online event organised collaboratively by postdocs from several institutions, ‘Into the Postdoc-verse: building relationships across dimensions’.

- Professional Pictures Photoshoot

The PDC will offer the opportunity to some postdocs to get a professional profile picture taken by a photographer.

- Postdoc Profiles

Profiles of postdocs will be created and shared on social media, PDC website and during the Postdoc Showcase and throughout National Postdoc Appreciation Week.