

Imperial College
London



PFDC ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



POSTDOC AND FELLOWS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Tailored support and development for postdocs, fellows and clinicians

PFDC ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Executive summary

The [Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre](#) (PFDC) has been providing an extensive programme of support for research staff at Imperial College London since 2009. The current report highlights both new and continuing activities that were delivered in 2022-2023.

1. Projects | With funding from Research England and core funding, the PFDC delivered several new projects, including a leadership network for fellows, improving the PFDC website and communications, and launching the new [Academic's Success Guide](#).
2. Events | The PFDC delivered events during Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW), Women@Imperial Week and Mental Health Awareness Week, as well as multiple welcome inductions, and the new [Awards and Celebration](#) and Networking retreat.
3. Courses and Workshops | The PFDC delivered 42 courses and 21 workshops, with satisfaction rates of over 90% across the board.
4. Individual Support | The PFDC provided 263 one-to-one consultations and 104 mock interviews, with satisfaction rates of over 89% across the board.
5. Leadership Development | The PFDC launched the new [Imperial Fellows' Leadership Network](#) and delivered leadership coaching for independent research fellows, as well as the Resilient Leadership in Action programme.
6. Support for Eric and Wendy Schmidt Fellows | The PFDC has a The Eric and Wendy Schmidt Professional Development Consultant who offers a variety of services and support to the Schmidt Fellows at Imperial.
7. Working Collaboratively | The PFDC met regularly with the Postdoc and Fellows Reps and Champions and ran writing sessions for researchers in the UK.
8. Funding | The PFDC ran various funds including the Dame Julia Higgins Postdoc Collaborative Fund, Seeds for Success, and Wings for Ideas, supporting collaborative research projects and career development.
9. External Work | The PFDC provided training, talks, and courses for external organisations, including KAUST, The Royal Society, and Queen's University Belfast.

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1. Projects

1.1 Projects facilitated by Research England funding

In 2022-2023, the PFDC received a total of £57,750 from Research England to deliver projects addressing the following goals:

- Tackling isolation & loneliness among research staff at Imperial;
- Supporting the career development of fellows through group coaching sessions;
- Fostering collaboration and exchange through the Imperial Fellows Leadership Network;
- Increasing awareness of the PFDC;
- Honing entrepreneurial skills through nine places on Wilbe “Become a science founder”;
- Offering three Enterprise courses;
- Increasing awareness of 10 development days;
- Celebrating achievements and awards;
- Enhancing a positive research culture through a PFDC Research culture event.

These were derived from the College’s obligations to the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#), and recommendations from the following scoping projects facilitated by another round of Research England funding in the previous year:

- Improving the wellbeing of early career researchers through tangible actions against bullying and harassment
- The Independent Research Fellows’ ‘Life-cycle’ at Imperial College London: A review of fellows’ experience of processes across departments
- Understanding ECR Career Perceptions
- Quantifying and describing the experiences of long-term researchers (LTRs) at Imperial

All projects were delivered before the end of July 2023, as follows:

Tackling isolation & loneliness among research staff at Imperial

This was delivered in the form of a networking retreat for postdocs between 12 and 14 July 2023. This event aimed to bring together one postdoc from each department at Imperial, to foster interdepartmental collaborations and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. The retreat took place at Cumberland Lodge in Windsor. 22 participants were selected to participate out of 80 submitted applications. 21 postdocs attended from as

many departments; Brain Sciences, Centre for Environmental Policy, and Dyson School of Engineering were not present.

The event received very positive feedback, with 100% of respondents strongly agreeing that they enjoyed the retreat. 94% strongly agree that they were satisfied with the trainers; 88% strongly agree or agree that they feel they have created connections with the other participants which will last beyond the retreat; 88% strongly agree or agree that they feel motivated to take advantage of the developmental opportunities available at Imperial; 88% strongly agree or agree that they feel motivated to collaborate with postdocs from other departments at Imperial; 77% strongly agree or agree that they feel motivated to facilitate events or activities for other postdocs at Imperial.

Group coaching sessions for fellows

This project was delivered from April to July 2023 and piloted facilitated peer support for personal and professional development towards research independence for 32 Imperial fellows. Three experienced external coaches facilitated a programme of a one-hour virtual session and three face-to-face lunchtime sessions (90-minutes each) to six groups of up to eight fellows at each of Imperial's three campuses.

The programme was evaluated via participants' self-assessment. 91% agreed that the coaching sessions increased their self-awareness. 75% stated that they benefitted from the opportunity to work in a group with their peers. 50% said they gained more clarity about their options.

Imperial Fellows Leadership Network

The Imperial Fellows Leadership Network took place between March and July 2023 and consisted of a programme of events enabling fellows to join peers at the same career stage. The network enabled participants to discuss and share knowledge, and build allyship and support around the following topics: Recreate and innovate; Building positive cultures; Influencing stakeholders; Motivate, inspire and empower; Building effective teams and collaborations; and Resilience, balance and the 'inner game'.

The live kick-off event in March 2023 was facilitated by an experienced leadership coach and was attended by 25 fellows. Following this, the network met for a series of six further one-hour webinars and interim peer-support sessions.

These sessions were regularly attended by 15-20 fellows and received positive feedback throughout. Participants stated that learning new leadership skills and making valuable connections with peers who they would not have met otherwise as the greatest benefits of the network.

As a result, the PFDC and the fellows co-created the Imperial Fellows Peer Mentoring Programme, which is launched in October 2023 and will provide fellows with further opportunities to build their network and enhance their leadership skills.

Increase awareness of the PFDC

Previous projects highlighted a lack of awareness amongst the research staff community of the extensive range of support offered by the PFDC. To better understand how to communicate the PFDC offer and increase engagement, an external consultant was commissioned to conduct a review of the PFDC communications in consultation with key stakeholders from across the College (research staff, support services, academics). The final report was shared with the PFDC team in July.

The PFDC has started to implement the recommendations, which have included updating our mailing lists and started a weekly highlights email, which reduced the number of emails research staff are receiving from the PFDC.

Nine places on Wilbe “Become a science founder”

Nine spaces were funded on three runs of the Wilbe four-week online Become a Science Founder course between January and July 2023, which enables ECRs to make the transitions to entrepreneurship and network with entrepreneurially minded peers from different disciplines. Attendants were from the faculties of Medicine and Engineering, with no participants from the Faculty of Natural Sciences. All participants thought the course was extremely effective and useful, and all participants would recommend this to their colleagues.

Three Enterprise courses

We also commissioned the following half-day courses from Enterprise: Introduction to entrepreneurship and innovation, Creative problem solving for innovation, Lean experimentation for entrepreneurial ideas.

Increase awareness of 10 development days

Research staff have ten development days written into their contracts, but across the community, there is confusion about what these days can be used for. Delivered between January and July 2023, this project allowed the PFDC to commission an external consultant to generate a comprehensive resource that will help both research staff and PIs have better-informed discussions on how to utilise this development opportunity. The online resource, which includes testimonials and recommendations from research staff, will be live in November 2023.

PFDC Awards and Celebration

The event took place at 170 Queen's Gate on 9 June 2023. It consisted of an award ceremony, with networking, food and drinks before and after. Over 80 people attended. Prizes were awarded to winners and finalists in the following categories: Creating a positive research environment, Supporting research staff and students, and The PFDC Reps Team Award. The winners of each category received a prize of £250 and a certificate. 66 nominations were submitted across the two individual categories, which resulted in 20 individuals being put forward for an award. The budget for this event was supplemented from the PFDC's core funding.

PFDC research culture event

The PFDC team went on a two-day event at the Brooklyn Hotel in Leicester on 20 and 21 July to learn how to work together more effectively to shape the Research Culture at Imperial. The first day was facilitated by an external trainer, where the team learned about their individual working styles and how to use them in their working relationships, applying the DiSC model. During the second day, the team worked collaboratively defining how an ideal service for Research Culture at Imperial would look.

1.2 Projects facilitated by core funding

PFDC website

The PFDC commissioned an external Consultant who conducted extensive research and development to update the PFDC website throughout 2022-23. Following an evaluation of the existing website and recommendations from several researchers, the Consultant created a comprehensive report with a proposed new structure and improvements for the PFDC website. A new version of the PFDC website was launched after the end of the academic year, in August 2023.

The Academic's Success Guide

In March 2023, the PFDC in collaboration with People and Organisational Development (POD) launched [The Academic's Success Guide](#), a sector leading online toolkit, aimed at supporting Principal Investigators and newly appointed Lecturers in their roles as academic managers.

Developing the materials, we joined forces with more than 500 Imperial academics and senior managers from academic departments and professional services who contributed to the set of resources. The Academic's Success Guide provides helpful perspectives and relevant advice on the induction and probation process, as well as a wide range of tools and strategies to support new academics with establishing their career. The sections on managing projects and leading a research group cover processes and offer tried and tested models, along with useful tip sheets and templates to help navigate the day-to-day work of managing projects and people.

2. Events

2.1 Special events

9 June 2023 | The PFDC Awards and Celebration

The PFDC Awards and Celebration evolved from the PFDC Reps Awards, which were first introduced in 2015. The event aims to better reflect and celebrate the range of contributions that the research staff community make to Imperial (see more details about the event under the Projects facilitated by Research England funding section). The award winners this year were:

Creating a positive research environment

This award was established to recognise that many research staff members at Imperial are actively involved in creating and maintaining a supportive, fair, and inclusive research environment.

Winner: Othman Almusaimi, Chemical Engineering.

Finalists: Lucia Lombardi, Chemical Engineering and Alexis Barr, Institute of Clinical Sciences.

Supporting research staff and students

Being a supportive colleague, particularly to new researchers and students, can help to retain outstanding talent within the research sector. This award category was introduced to recognise that research staff regularly set time aside to support other researchers and students through a wide range of activities.

Winners: Nina Moderau, Surgery & Cancer and Francesco Leofante, Computing.

Finalist: Yubing Hu, Chemical Engineering.

The PFDC Reps Team Award

The Teams Award is to recognise the outstanding contributions that the reps make through teamwork in their department.

Winner: The Department of Chemistry.

Finalists: The Department of Chemical Engineering and the Imperial Academic Writing Sessions - Organising team.

9 June 2023 | Provost's Visiting Professors panel event

The PFDC invited the [Provost's Visiting Professors](#) for a panel event to share their career stories and experiences as academics. This was also an opportunity for the panellists to share their views on the differences between Imperial and own institutions.

20-22 July 2023 | Postdoc networking retreat

See Tackling isolation & loneliness among research staff at Imperial.

2.2 Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW)

Between 19 and 23 September 2022, the PFDC organised and delivered several sessions during [Postdoc Appreciation Week \(PAW\)](#). PAW is celebrated annually across universities in the UK and US. The 2022 PAW events at Imperial included:

- Welcome event: What the PFDC can do to support you
- Q&A with Vice-Provost (Research & Enterprise)
- Transition to independence (panel event)
- Where will your career take you? (panel event)

- Fellowship interviews (in-person workshop)

2.3 Women@Imperial week

The PFDC also contributed during [Women@Imperial week](#) (Monday 6 – Friday 10 March 2023) with the following events:

- Panel discussion: In conversation with academic women – Tuesday 7 March
- Springboard taster session – Thursday 9 March

2.4 Mental Health Awareness Week

The following two events were delivered during Mental Health Awareness Week (Monday 15 – Friday 19 May 2023):

- Webinar: Dealing with change – Tuesday 16 May
- Course: Wellbeing in research – Thursday 18 May
- Workshop: Navigating uncertainty in research – Friday 19 May

2.5 Welcome inductions

To help postdocs integrate into their new role, the Centre invites all new postdocs to PFDC welcome inductions. During the meeting, postdocs learn about the support and opportunities available to them at Imperial and have an opportunity to meet other recent joiners at the College. In 2022-2023, there were three welcome inductions:

- Monday 21 November 2022 – this was attended by 30 participants;
- Wednesday 1 March - this was attended by 32 participants;
- Tuesday 27 June 2023 - this was attended by 25 participants.

3. Courses and workshops

The PFDC offers a wide range of [courses and workshops](#) grouped under the following themes: Academic career paths, Non-academic career paths, Communication and presentation skills, Leadership and management, Research skills, Enterprise, Networking, and Wellbeing. All of them are free of charge to Imperial postdocs and fellows.

3.1 Courses

In 2022-2023, **71% of the courses were delivered online and 29% were in person.**

Summary of provision:

From August 2022 to the end of July 2023, the PFDC ran **42 courses with 566 participants.**

Participant satisfaction:

At the end of each course, participants are requested to fill in a survey asking to rate the following statements:

- I found this course useful
- I know more about the subject having attended the course
- I learned things that will help me improve the way I work
- I will apply what I learned on this course
- I am satisfied with the trainer/s
- I am satisfied with the course materials

Overall satisfaction is 94% Of all participants who responded to the survey between August 2022 and July 2023:

- **95%** strongly agree or agree they found the course they attended useful
- **93%** strongly agree or agree they know more about the subject having attended the course
- **91%** strongly agree or agree they learned things that will help improve the way they work
- **94%** strongly agree or agree they will apply what they learned
- **96%** strongly agree or agree they were satisfied with the trainer(s)
- **92%** strongly agree or agree they were satisfied with the course materials

3.2 Development programmes

Springboard women's development programme

The [Springboard women's development programme](#) is open to all women employed by the College and consists of four development days set over four months. This is an award-winning international programme which enables participants to identify the clear, practical, and realistic steps they want to take for their professional and personal

development and allows them to develop the skills and self-confidence to take those steps. The programme is an important part of the College's commitment to the [Athena SWAN charter](#), with two members of the PFDC team being qualified as Springboard tutors.

Summary of provision:

The PFDC ran the Springboard programme **twice** in 2022-23, with a total of **68 participants**. The first programme ran online in September-December 2022, and the second one was in person in February-May 2023.

Participant satisfaction:

23 participants from the 2022-23 Springboard cohorts completed the programme evaluation survey. Here are their feedback highlights:

- **100%** feel more confident in the area of: Personal development
- **95%** feel more confident in the area of: Goal setting
- **85.6%** feel more confident in the area of: Own development needs
- **85.6%** feel more confident in the area of: Understanding own values
- **85.6%** feel more confident in the area of: Assertiveness
- **75%** feel more confident in the area of: Managing change

Beyond academia

The PFDC delivered this online programme for postdocs and fellows approaching the end of their contracts, who are considering making a transition in their careers. It consisted of four 90-minute synchronous sessions and a series of online activities via Zoom and LinkedIn. The programme took place during June and July 2023 and was attended by approximately 25 participants.

3.3 Workshops

[Our workshops](#) are brief, informal and interactive sessions designed to deliver timely, targeted information on a range of themes that will be helpful for personal and professional development. They range from focusing on skills and goals development, to hosting guest speakers from across the College and exploring relevant external initiatives, such as industry and funders. They are open to all postdocs, fellows, and clinicians from across the College. Most PFDC workshops were online in the 2022-23 academic year.

Summary of provision:

From August 2022 to the end of July 2023, the PFDC ran **21 workshops for 341 attendees**.

Workshop topics included (but were not limited to): academic CVs and cover letters, preparing for fellowship applications and interviews, lectureship applications, LinkedIn and career talks from people with non-academic research careers.

Participant satisfaction:

At the end of each workshop, participants are requested to fill in a survey asking to rate the following statements:

- I found this pop-up useful
- I know more about the subject having attended the pop-up
- The pop-up content was relevant to me
- I am likely to apply what I learned on this pop-up
- I am satisfied with the delivery

Overall satisfaction is 95%. Of all participants who responded to the survey between August 2022 and July 2023:

- **93%** strongly agree or agree they found the workshop useful
- **92%** strongly agree or agree they knew more about the subject having attended the workshop
- **96%** strongly agree or agree they thought the workshop content was relevant to them
- **97%** strongly agree or agree they were likely to apply what they learned on the workshop
- **95%** strongly agree or agree they were satisfied with the delivery

4. Individual support

4.1 One-to-ones

The PFDC provides [one-to-one consultations](#) to postdocs and fellows. These 45-minute sessions cover topics such as CVs, fellowships, job applications, moving out of academia, issues relating to working in a lab/team, development opportunities, networking opportunities, career-related issues, and concerns relating to life as a postdoc at Imperial.

Summary of provision:

There were **263 one-to-ones** from August 2022 to July 2023. All one-to-ones were online this academic year.

General area of advice	Total	Percentage
Fellowship application	119	46%
Lectureship application	47	18%

Careers advice	34	13%
CVs/Cover letters	39	15%
Job application	8	3%
Other	16	6%

Faculty	Total	Percentage
Engineering	137	52%
Medicine	74	28%
Natural Sciences	43	16%
Business School	5	2%
External	4	2%

Title	Total	Percentage
Postdocs	175	67%
Fellows and clinicians	67	26%
Lecturer	6	2%
Other	15	5%

Participant satisfaction:

Having completed a one-to-one consultation, participants are asked to evaluate their experience via an online survey. **111** participants (**42%**) filled in this survey. Participants were asked to rate the following statements:

- I found the one-to-one useful and informative
- The advice I received during my one-to-one was helpful and relevant to my concerns
- I learned more about the resources and opportunities available to me as a postdoc or fellow during my one-to-one
- As a result of my one-to-one, I feel more positive about the issues(s) addressed
- I have used the information and advice I was given to make positive changes

Overall satisfaction is 94%. Of all participants who responded to the survey between August 2022 and July 2023:

- **99%** strongly agree or agree they found the one-to-one useful and informative
- **99%** strongly agree or agree they found the advice helpful and relevant to their concerns
- **75%** strongly agree or agree they learnt about resources and opportunities available
- **95%** strongly agree or agree they were more positive about issues addressed in the one-to-one
- **97%** strongly agree or agree they have used the information and advice given to make positive changes

4.2 Mock interviews

The PFDC arranges non-technical [mock interviews](#) for postdocs, fellows and clinicians who have been shortlisted for fellowships, academic positions, and positions outside of higher education.

Summary of provision:

There were **104 mock interviews** from August 2022 to July 2023. All mock interviews were online this academic year.

Type of roles applied for	Total	Percentage
Fellowship	42	40%
Lectureship/Professor	47	45%
Scientist/Research	5	5%
Non-academic	10	10%

Participant satisfaction:

After the candidates have completed the mock interview and attended their formal interview, participants are asked to evaluate the mock interview via an online survey and inform the PFDC if they have been successful. **54** participants (**52%**) filled in this survey. Participants were asked to rate the following statements:

- I had a better idea of what to expect from an interview as a result of the mock interview.
- I was more prepared for the questions that I was asked as a result of the mock interview.
- I received constructive feedback from the mock interview panel.
- I was more prepared for my interview as a result of the mock interview.

Overall satisfaction is 93%. Of all participants who responded to the survey between August 2022 and July 2023:

- **100%** had a better idea of what to expect from an interview as a result of the mock interview.
- **89%** were more prepared for the questions they were asked as a result of the mock interview.
- **94%** received constructive feedback from the mock interview panel.
- **89%** were more prepared for the interview as a result of the mock interview.

Interview outcome		
Result	Total	Percentage
Successful	43	41%
Unsuccessful	21	20%
Unknown/other	40	39%

To obtain interview outcomes, the PFDC admin team requests this information from the candidates in the mock interview evaluation survey. When a survey has not been completed, the PFDC team emails the candidate four months after the mock interview date to ask for their outcome.

5. Leadership development for postdocs and fellows

Leadership development for postdocs and fellows is a priority for the PFDC, with a special focus on supporting the research leadership capabilities of independent research fellows. At the start of the academic year 2022/23, the PFDC launched a unique bespoke development programme exclusively for fellows. The programme includes development opportunities to enhance research leadership skills, create routes for collaboration and exchange, and advance their careers. Overall, between 20-30% of all Imperial fellows have taken up one or more of the new development opportunities throughout the year, which exceeds the sector average (15-20%) for similar programmes and remits. Evaluation data shows high satisfaction rates for both, group and individual learning opportunities.

5.1 The Imperial Fellows’ Leadership Network

One of the main ingredients for professional success, in any field, is an ability to forge and maintain a strong and supportive ‘net’ that ‘works’. In March 2023, the PFDC launched the Imperial Fellows’ Leadership Network with a live kick-off event, followed by a series of online workshops that provided the fellows with regular opportunities to join

peers who are at the same career stage to come together as a group of emerging new leaders who want to lead well, discuss and share knowledge, and build allyship and support.

The webinars and interim peer-support sessions covered topics such as ‘Building positive cultures’, ‘Influencing stakeholders’, ‘Building effective teams and collaborations’ and ‘Resilience, balance and the ‘inner game’’. The sessions were attended 15 fellows each, with a total of 45 fellows joining the network. Evaluation data shows increased networking has led to better peer relationships and emerging new collaborations.

Based on the success of the network initiatives, the leadership development sessions will continue throughout the academic year 2023/24 with a bespoke peer mentoring programme and leadership development workshops.

5.2 Leadership coaching for independent research fellows

Building on the highly successful leadership coaching pilot programme for Future Leader Fellows (FLFs), the PFDC extended the leadership coaching offer throughout the academic year 2022/23 to all independent research fellows at Imperial. 36 fellows made use of the opportunity to have up to three confidential one-to-one coaching sessions, to work through current and general challenges they face and to find sustainable and motivating ways forward. Participants noted significant improvements relating to interpersonal and communication skills, as well as their work/life balance.

As a result, 94% say they have gained confidence and insights and have implemented plans for improvements. The leadership coaching offer is ongoing, and fellows can apply at any point of their fellowship.

5.3 Resilient Leadership in Action programme

Resilient Leadership in Action (RLiA) is a national flagship programme through which participants gain hands-on leadership experience and get the opportunity to explore their leadership qualities through group activities and expert coaching. Since the start of the programme in 2021, 78 Imperial postdocs and fellows successfully took part.

In February 2023, the PFDC secured 12 places to join five other UK universities to offer an online version of the programme for postdocs and fellows. In May 2023, the PFDC and People and Organisational Development (POD) ran the RLiA programme over three days in person on campus at Imperial. Over 20 postdocs and fellows attended the programme together with new lecturers and senior technicians.

Participants greatly enjoyed these excellent networking opportunities, working with colleagues across institutions, disciplines, job types, and level of seniority. The course evaluations evidence significant individual growth in the areas of self-awareness, leadership presence, resilient decision making, and gaining clarity of direction.

6. Support for Eric and Wendy Schmidt Fellows

In April 2023, the PFDC team was joined by the Eric and Wendy Schmidt Professional Development Consultant, who provides support to the Schmidt Fellows at Imperial. The Consultant has been offering services and support in line with the proposal for the Schmidt Futures AI in Science and Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme. The Consultant works closely with the PFDC and Imperial-X, drawing on their expertise and resources.

6.1 Professional Development Appointments

The Eric and Wendy Schmidt Fellows have access to 30- or 60-minute one-to-one consultations, which they can book to discuss any career and professional development issue. These can be either in person or online, depending on the Fellows' needs.

Until 31 July 2023, **20** one-to-one consultations were delivered. These covered the following themes: Time management, Grant writing and job applications, Developing independence from PI (Leadership), Networking and how to do this authentically, Career options and Finding opportunities in industry.

6.2 Bespoke Training

Several fellows pointed out that long training days are a significant investment of time so they would prefer shorter, bite-sized, training sessions.

In July 2023, the bespoke Creating your research vision session was delivered to 4 Eric & Wendy Schmidt Fellows with this acting as a successful first session ahead of a wider expansion in bespoke offerings next year.

6.3 Newsletter

Fellows have been receiving the PFDC monthly newsletter with a round-up of relevant news and events. All information that is relevant to Schmidt Fellows is highlighted before being sent to them.

7. Working collaboratively

7.1 Research staff reps

The [PFDC Reps Network](#) is a thriving community of **80 reps** who represent research staff from every department across all campuses. The [list of PFDC postdoc reps](#) can be found on the PFDC website. The reps continue to ensure that the PFDC stays well-informed about the needs and issues facing researchers at Imperial. The reps influence the nature of what the PFDC offers by being involved in planning and decision-making processes via the termly Reps Network Meetings, which took place in October, February and April this academic year.

Examples of their contributions include consultation on the [2023-25 Concordat Action Plan](#) and the College's 2023 Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy; the revamp of the PFDC website; and on how the PFDC could improve their communications with Research Staff. In April, the Reps Network had the opportunity to contribute to the College's Strategy through a meeting with the President, Professor Hugh Brady. This led to the network sharing their ideas on how Imperial could attract and retain talent.

7.2 Postdoc and Fellows Champions

The PFDC works closely with departments to ensure that the voices of postdocs and fellows are well-represented at the departmental level. [Postdoc and Fellows Champions](#) are integral to this effort.

During this academic year, the Champions meetings took place in October, April and July.

The [list of Champions](#) can be found on the PFDC website.

7.3 Collaborative writing retreats

Throughout 2022-23, the PFDC collaborated with other universities across the UK (including but not limited to King's College London, University of Cambridge, University of Glasgow and Ulster University) to host a series of dedicated writing sessions for researchers in the UK. These sessions gave researchers from the participating institutions a friendly and constructive environment in which to meet like-minded peers, discuss challenges and work in a focused way using the established Pomodoro technique.

8. Funding

8.1 Dame Julia Higgins Postdoc Collaborative Fund

The [Dame Julia Higgins Postdoc Collaborative Research Fund](#) (Julia Higgins Fund) was established to enable postdocs access to funding to develop and deliver collaborative research projects independently from the research of their PIs. Initially launched in 2017 by the Faculty of Engineering, the fund was expanded to include six Faculty of Medicine departments in 2022. The fund has £35K per year to allocate, £20,000 from the Faculty of Engineering and £15,000 from the Faculty of Medicine (£2,500 from each of the six participating departments).

Out of 44 submitted applications, [13 proposals](#) were funded: eight with an Engineering lead and five with a Medicine lead.

8.2 Seeds for Success

In 2023, the PFDC ran the Seeds for Success and Wings for Ideas funds again to support the postdoc and fellows at Imperial on their career development.

The aim of Seeds for Success is to allow postdocs to gather preliminary data for a fellowship application. Four projects were awarded up to £5,000 each, with a total of £18,297 being awarded. More information about the fund and its winners can be found on the PFDC website: [Seeds for Success Fund](#)

8.3 Wings for Ideas

The aim of this fund is to allow postdocs and fellows to work on research that might lead to a new venture, a product, or a prototype. There was a total of £7,500 available to fund projects, with up to £2,500 per project. Three projects were awarded. More information about the fund and its winners can be found on the PFDC website: [Wings for Ideas Fund](#).

9. External work

The PFDC undertakes work for external organisations, accepting requests for training, talks, and other services.

The PFDC delivered the following sessions:

9 August 2022 | Preparing Successful Fellowship Applications course for KAUST (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology)

18 August 2022 | Time Management for Postdocs course for KAUST (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology)

17 October 2022 | Managing your First Research Group course for KAUST (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology)

12 December 2022 | Leadership in Research: Vision, Strategy and Team Culture course for KAUST (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology)

23 February 2023 | Introduction to Management programme for fellows at The Royal Society

28 March 2023 | Lectureships: Ready, Set, Go! Course for Queen's University Belfast

15 June 2023 | Planning for Success Beyond your Postdoc for KAUST (King Abdullah University of Science and Technology)

4 July 2023 | Introduction to Management programme for fellows at The Royal Society