



CONNECTIONS

OxRSS provides Oxford research staff with a voice and networking opportunities

WWW.OXRSS.OX.AC.UK ■ JULY 2016 ■ VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Recap of Staff Dinner at St John's	1
Forthcoming Events	1
Personal Development Review	2
New to Oxford?	2
News from Your Divisional Representatives	3
Featured Events	3
Featured Events Continued	4
Useful Links	5

CONNECT WITH US

Receive up to date information on staff events! Sign up to the staff list by sending a blank email to our [mailing list](mailto:committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk) or follow us on social media.

✉ committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk

 @ResStaffOxford

 [OxRSS Connections](#)

STAFF DINNER AT ST JOHN'S



On June 22nd, research staff gathered at St John's College for the second OxRSS dinner. Here is what one of the attendees had to say about the event:

"The St John's College dinner organised by OxRSS was a fantastic event. We had welcome drinks in the garden in the sunshine, followed by a formal meal in the main dining room and heard more about the college from one of its fellows, Dr Louise Esher. The setting was beautiful and the food was delicious. It was such a lovely way to meet new people from around the university. I really enjoyed talking to people that I would never have normally come across in my day to day work. Everyone seemed so friendly and there was a real sense of camaraderie in the air. It was also a great to catch up with old friends I have made through the society."

-Stella Botchway

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 12 July, 18:00-21:00, Wine tasting, Oxford Wine Café
- 23 July, morning, Walking tour of Oxford city and colleges
- 28 July, 19:00-21:00, OxRSS Annual General Meeting, The Mitre

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Chances are, your department has started, or is planning, a formal personal development review (PDR) scheme for research staff. PDR is simply what many effective PIs do naturally: they listen to their staff, they find out what's going right and wrong, and they try to help keep things going smoothly, whether that's through helping you to learn something new, by finding ways for you to explore a role you'd like to get into, or just saying, 'Thank you. Well done.' But even good PIs forget, and not every PI is a good manager. Few, if any, became a PI because they wanted to manage; many wanted to do research at a very high level, so being an effective manager is something they may well be learning, just as you are continually learning in your research role. Having a PDR system provides a framework for PIs to help them manage staff, and to help them give you the support you need, but bear in mind that PDR may be as new to them as it is to you.

PDR can be particularly useful to research staff because many are on fixed-term contracts and need to compete in a tough market for jobs. Whether you want to stay as a researcher in academia, move into industry, or move into teaching, it is vital you look at the broad range of skills you will need in order to succeed.

Put simply, PDR ensures that important conversations take place about work, about you,

and about any areas where you need support, or development or where you have good ideas on how to do things better. The PDR meeting is a review point: a time to sum up the year gone and look forward to the year ahead, and a chance to plan and prioritise. Your performance will come into it, but in a way that sums it up over the year, highlighting strengths and identifying areas that need strengthening. You should receive a PDR preparation form in advance of the meeting; you could also consider using Vitae's Researcher Development Framework to think about areas you want to focus on.

PDR can easily become a box-ticking exercise. But take the time to prepare and it can be a very useful space to step back and think about what you want and where you're heading. Overall, PDR is for you – so make the most of it!

If you're not sure whether you are eligible for a PDR, speak to your Departmental Administrator. All researchers in MPLS and Medical Sciences divisions should be in departments where PDR schemes are in place.

This article is based on the Guidance for PDR for Research by Dr Bill Dunn, Oxford Learning Institute – see the [full guide](#) and its companion Guidance for PIs.

NEW TO THE UNIVERSITY?



The University hosts a welcome event for research staff three times per year. Meet other researchers, and get information on support and career development for staff! You may also find useful information regarding the University, welcome events, accommodation, and other general information [here](#).

NEWS FROM YOUR DIVISIONAL REPS

As part of our effort to provide research staff a voice within the university, OxRSS has set up representatives to liaise with administration to learn about divisional strategies that affect staff, and to promote research staff interests at the divisional level. Here are updates from the representatives of Humanities and of Medical Sciences.

Humanities

The Humanities Division training team included a Postdoctoral Training Coordinator for the first time this academic year. We have trialled an ambitious array of training and support initiatives, tailored specifically to the needs of early-career academics, of whom research staff of course make up a significant proportion. The aim has been to situate research-specific skills training in the much wider context of everything that contributes to our effectiveness and happiness as academics and human beings: managing time, giving good presentations, enhancing our online presence, developing a richer bodily awareness, challenging ingrained habits in the practices of academic writing,

talking openly about post and alternative academic career paths, and discussing the many ways in which feelings of academic failure can arise. The Division is always keen to hear your thoughts about how its provision can be further improved, including how it can be connected up better with initiatives in other Divisions. If you have an idea for something that would benefit any part of the research staff community at Oxford, and in which the Humanities Division could usefully be involved, please email training@humanities.ox.ac.uk.

Medical Sciences

In Medical Sciences we have met with a couple of departmental postdoc societies to hear about the issues that matter to research staff. We would like to hear from other postdoc societies, and from staff in departments that currently don't have a society. Our goal is to link up the different departments so that we can hear about common issues and help to share good practice.

You can get in touch with your divisional representatives at committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk.

FEATURED EVENTS

Monthly socials at the University Club

At a recent social in March, over 20 people discussed college affiliations and other issues a postdoc (Dr Niraj Welikala) had written about to the committee. We are working to address these issues and will keep you posted of any developments in these areas.

The regular socials at the University Club have often been very well attended. It is great to see

both new and familiar faces at these events, and often researchers meet others from their department whom they would never normally see! It is also an opportunity for people from different departments to meet and network, and opportunities may arise for collaboration. We plan to continue a regular meeting at the end of the month, although sometimes in different venues.

FEATURED EVENTS CONTINUED

OxRSS goes jazzy at The Spin



Oxford has one of the best jazz clubs in the UK. The Spin has been running for over 17 years and was voted the Best Live Jazz Venue in the UK in 2012. Over the last six months, we have organised a number of evenings at The Spin in

part because the club is run by OxRSS committee member, Mark Doffman, who works in the Faculty of Music. Each week, the club features a special guest - usually a top national British jazz artist. Special guests over this year have included Adam Glasser (award-winning South African pianist who has played with everyone from Sting to Joe Zawinul) and the great Robin Aspland (Van Morrison's pianist). On the nights when we organise a trip, the club offers Society members a big discount and you pay only **£6**. The club has a great atmosphere and is very friendly. Watch this space for more jazz evenings coming up over the summer and join us to listen to great music!

Grant writing workshop

On Wednesday 13th April, Professor Alan Silman led a workshop on the grant writing process, which was attended by more than 60 people. He gave interesting perspectives on funding applications from his extensive experience of sitting on grant panels, including NIHR, MRC and Arthritis Research UK. He discussed key issues, such as having a clear research question, having

an experienced team supporting junior researchers and having a feasible research plan. Following his talk a panel of OxRSS committee members from different divisions answered questions from participants. Given the popularity of the event, OxRSS hopes to run this workshop annually.

Wine tasting

OxRSS members recently attended a wine tasting evening at the Summertown Wine Café. The evening begins with the host introducing the wine type being tasted and providing some background to each bottle. A blind tasting of 5 or 6 different wines in that 'family' then takes place. On the night we attended, it was Pinot Noir.

If you are interested in learning about various wines, it is a wonderful opportunity to have a

sample and a fun evening in the process. We will be attending various Tuesday evening wine tasting events throughout the year, and will advertise this in advance so you can book a ticket.

The next tasting is on Tuesday 12 July and features English still and sparkling wines. Numbers are limited to about 40 people, so please book your **£10** ticket in advance by calling the Café on 01865 236 959.

USEFUL LINKS

Career development, workshops, fairs and personal development

[Careers Service](#)

For one-on-one meetings with a Careers Adviser, and workshops and events specific for research staff.

[Code of Practice for the Employment and Career Development of Research Staff](#)

The University's commitment to supporting the careers of researchers.

[Research staff groups by department](#)

This website contains information on research staff groups in each department.

[Oxford Learning Institute](#)

Obtain support for personal and professional development via courses and seminars on management, teaching, and personal development.

[Support for researchers](#)

This website contains information on support available to research staff from across the University.

[Vitae](#)

The national researcher development organisation.

Other resources

[IT services](#)

For technological and computing assistance

[New research staff](#)

This website provides information for research staff who recently joined Oxford.

Social opportunities

[Oxford University Club](#)

Members and staff of the University are welcome to this sports and social Club.

[Facebook](#)

Like the OxRss page for the latest news and events!

THE OXRSS COMMITTEE



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