CONNECTIONS

OxRSS provides Oxford research staff with a voice and networking opportunities

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WHAT'S NEW

Ever wonder how sensitive research at Oxford obtains ethical approval? Read page 2 for information on the different committees and for tips on submitting an application !

NEXT NEWSLETTER

November 2013

RESEARCH STAFF EXPRESS NEED FOR MORE NETWORKING EVENTS

During the summer, we sent out a consultation to you asking for input on the type of support OxRSS could provide, including networking opportunities. We thank the people who responded. It is clear from your responses about networking opportunities that you feel a need for both informal social events and more formal occasions to meet other research staff for professional purposes. Over the course of the year, OxRSS will develop a programme of events to meet both these needs by providing a mixture of social and professional opportunities. We will also schedule events for different times and days of the week, to fit the constraints of different groups of research staff; this will help us monitor how different types of events are received by you to better tailor future activities. If you would like to provide further input or have any suggestions, please contact us at committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk

-The OxRSS committee

FIRST OXRSS EVENT ON NOV 21

All research staff are welcome to attend the first OxRSS event at the University Club on November 21, starting at 5:30 pm. Participants will have the opportunity to meet other staff members in an informal environment. Register here.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- 12 November, 09:30-12:00, Interview Skills for Research Staff

- 13 November, 15:00-16:00, Social Sciences, Researcher Network Cafe

- 19-22 November, Leadership in Action, Lake District

- 22 November, Research Professional Training Session

- 2 December, 10:00-15:00, Conferences: Choosing, Funding, Networking

- 3 December, 19:30, Oxford Hub, Turl St., FameLab Sciences Competition

OBTAINING ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH

How does sensitive research at Oxford receive ethical approval? Co-Chair of OxRSS, Nikki Luke, recently joined the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in the Department of Education. Here, she provides an overview of how the research ethics procedure works in the University:

Any research involving human participants must be passed by at least one level of research ethics committee: the DREC, the IDREC and the CUREC.

- Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) generally approves research on adult participants and on children (if non-invasive methods are used). However, not every department has its own DREC—some will have a designated officer who reviews applications before submitting them to IDREC.

- Interdisciplinary Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) tends to approve research on more sensitive projects and/or those from departments who either have no DREC or whose DREC is not able to approve projects. Since IDREC has two divisions (Medical Sciences and Social Sciences), any projects from outside these divisions are categorized into one of these IDRECs for approval.

- Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) draws up the application forms and checklists for those making ethics applications. Full details of the procedure and protocols are available on the CUREC website.

In addition to these three committees, the Oxford Tropical Research Ethics Committee deals with medical research conducted outside of the EU.

Top tips for dealing with your ethics committee:

- Prepare your proposal as early as possible. Average turnaround from proposal submission to approval is between 15-30 days.

- Check for any research protocols listed on the CUREC website; these relate to typical research situations where CUREC has agreed on a particular procedure that addresses common concerns. Citing them on your form can speed up the process.

- Use the correct form! Proposal forms vary depending on research discipline and topic sensitivity.

- Committees tend to ask the same reviewer to look at revisions as the original proposal. Try to respond to all their queries and make it clear (e.g., using highlighting or track changes) how you've done this.

- Remember that your proposal is being read by another researcher for whom this is only a small part of their duties. The easier you make it for them, the quicker the response time.

DID YOU MISS IT? A LOOK BACK AT THE WELCOME EVENT FOR NEW RESEARCH STAFF

On October 4, 2013, members of OxRSS met with new research staff at the University's Welcome Event. Many attendees were interested in the Society and signed up to the Research Staff Mailing List.* After the event, about a dozen staff and OxRSS members went for lunch at the University Club. We talked about some of the leisure facilities the Club can offer for staff, as well as possibilities for future social events.

If you missed the welcome event, the next one is on February 28 at the Richard Doll Building. You may find other useful information regarding the University, welcome events, accommodation, and other general information here.

*You can sign up to the list by sending a blank email to researchstaff-subscribe@maillist.ox.ac.uk

FEATURED PROFILE

Professor Peter Holland

Linacre Professor of Zoology and Head of the Department of Zoology

As Head of Zoology, Peter Holland is responsible for the smooth-running of a Department that includes approximately 300 research staff, academic staff, support staff, and DPhil students He also runs a research group in evolutionary developmental biology and holds an ERC Advanced Investigator Award.

What is your research background?

After a degree in Zoology and a PhD in developmental genetics, I wanted to apply molecular techniques to classical topics in zoology, such as phylogeny and homology. Molecular biology was in its infancy when I started and almost all researchers focussed on tried on tested 'model species'. I tried to branch out and apply new tools to species chosen for their evolutionary interest, not their convenience. I have been pursuing that research agenda for the past 25 years.

What do you do as Head of the Department of Zoology on a typical day?

It is always a mixture. A typical day might include a University, College or Divisional committee meeting, discussion meetings with colleagues about their research, teaching or career plans, a couple of references to write, a raft of emails to deal with (hopefully one of which will be bizarre or amusing), a seminar to go to, and catch-up meetings with the postdocs and graduate students in my group. With a bit of luck, I might even squeeze in some writing, teaching or data analysis.

What are three things you would recommend for researchers in early career development?

First, avoid becoming blinkered. At conferences, and also within Oxford, go to talks and seminars on topics you don't know anything about, not just the ones in your own research area. Always think about how the approaches and techniques you hear about can be used in your work.

Second, keep an eye out for the unexpected. Although many experiments are confirmatory, be alert for an oddity or even a small sign that your treasured hypothesis might be wrong. The most exciting discoveries stem from something unexpected – so don't ignore strange results, chase them!

Third, use every opportunity to give a seminar or talk. In fact, don't wait to be asked. Tell your friends and colleagues, both here and in other institutions, that you have some really exciting results to talk about - and then spread the word about your research. Never say no!

What is your favourite place in Oxford and why?

That's a difficult question. Holywell Meadows, the Upper Libraries of Merton and Queen's, the gleaming Tinbergen Building or the Turf Tavern? All contenders, but I'll go for the Oxford University Museum of Natural History with its amazing entomological and zoological collections.

U S E F U L   L I N K S

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.

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.

C O N T A C T   U S

Call for Research Staff Profiles

We are very keen to hear from Oxford University Research staff about the work that they are involved in and would like to share these experiences through OxRSS with our audience. If you would like to feature in our profile section this can be organised as follows;

> *You can e-mail us your article (maximum 1 page A4 Size) as a word document and attach upto 2 photographs for inclusion.*
> *Contact us if you would like to be interviewed about the work that you are involved with.*

We would also be interested to hear from you about any hobbies or interests that you have. Please e-mail us using the contact address given below. We look forward to hearing from you.

E-Mail: **committee@oxrss.ox.ac.uk**

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