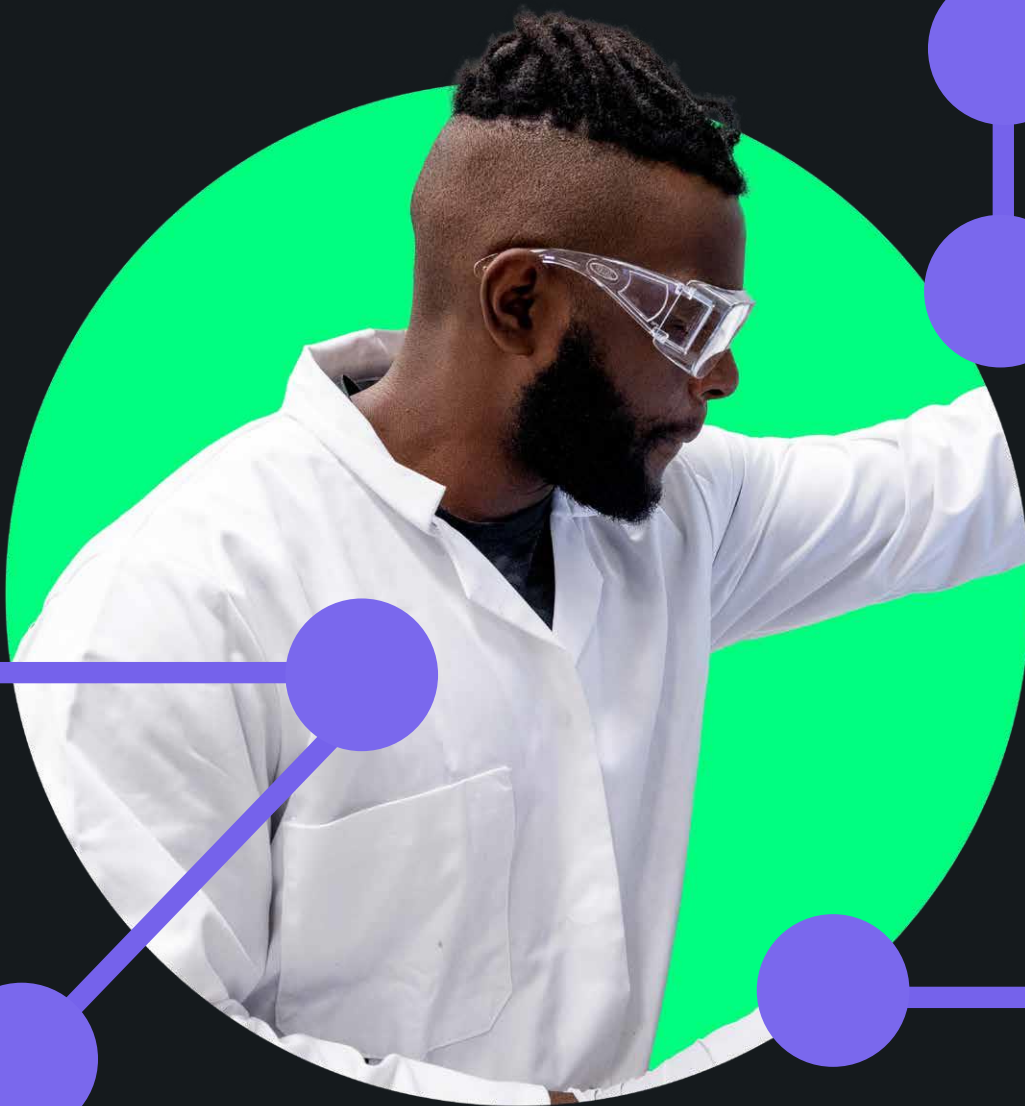


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Early Career
Researcher Institute



Postdoc and Fellows Champions Handbook

The Postdoc and Fellows Champions Handbook

This handbook is designed to tell you everything you need to know about the role of a Postdoc and Fellows Champion. It serves as a guide for new Champions, current Champions, and anyone who might be interested in the role.

Introduction to the Champions Role.....	3
Recruitment process for prospective Champions	4
1. Call for expressions of interest	5
2. Review of applications	5
3. Selection and communication of outcome	5
Induction for new Champions	5
Champions meetings	6
Meeting structure and frequency	6
Expectations for participation	6
Resources and key contacts	7
Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI)	7
Champions Network	7
Reps Network	7
Departmental Contacts	8

Introduction to the Champions Role

Postdoc and Fellows Champions are academics who:

- advocate for and provide support to postdocs and fellows
- ensure postdoc and fellows voices are well-represented at the departmental level
- act as connectors between departments and the [Early Career Researcher Institute](#).

Alongside [Postdoc and Fellows Reps](#), Postdoc and Fellows Champions provide support to early career researchers in their own departments.

The types of activities champions might be involved with include:

Career support

- Organising and signposting to upcoming training and development opportunities, career-focused workshops and seminars.
- Informal guidance and insights on career progression pathways.
- Promoting teaching opportunities available to postdocs and fellows within the department.
- Signposting to mentoring programmes at Imperial or recommending mentors as appropriate.
- Be familiar with and raise awareness of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Early Career Researchers](#).
- Promoting and encouraging the use of the ten development days written into research staff contracts.
- During Annual Review Conversation seasons, promote career development resources provided by Talent & Culture and ECRI to PIs, postdocs and fellows within the department.

Community and wellbeing support

- Promoting and proactively taking action to create a supportive departmental culture.
- Taking an active role, together with Postdoc and Fellows Reps and department staff, in organising social and networking events. Helping to foster community and reduce isolation.
- Encouraging and facilitating networking between postdocs and fellows from different research groups and other staff within and across departments.
- Championing early career researcher recognition within departments and making recommendations for ECRI's newsletter recognition feature.

- Signposting to wellbeing support and resources.

Advocacy and visibility

- When the views or feedback of postdocs and fellows necessitates departmental action, the Champion can coordinate and participate in meetings with postdoc representatives, the Head of Department, or other senior management to ensure the needs of ECRs are effectively met and their unique challenges addressed.
- Discuss with Head of Department and other senior management how Postdoc and Fellows Champion and Representative initiatives align with departmental objectives for ECRs, ensuring cohesive support efforts.
- Influencing and shaping policies and procedures to support postdocs and fellows both within the department and organisation wide.

Access to funding

- Promoting and signposting funding opportunities relevant to departmental postdocs and fellows.
- Liaising with the Head of Department and other senior management to advocate for a department budget for early career researcher events.
- Reviewing applications to ECRI funds, including Seeds for Success, Wings for Ideas and Julia Higgins Postdoc Collaborative Research Fund.

Other

- With departmental support, ensure a department distribution list for postdocs and fellows is maintained and regularly used to promote development and networking opportunities.
- Regularly attend the Postdoc and Fellows Champions meeting hosted by ECRI every term.
- Support new Postdoc and Fellows Champions via the buddy system.
- Keeping in regular contact with the Postdoc and Fellows Representatives within the department, with meetings taking place at least once per term.
- Work with Postdoc and Fellows Representatives to ensure all new postdocs and fellows have a departmental induction and are made aware of their Postdoc and Fellows Champions and Representatives.

Recruitment process for prospective Champions

The new recruitment process for Postdoc and Fellows Champions is being piloted in the 2025/26 academic year. The process is designed to identify dedicated academics who are

passionate about supporting researchers. This ensures that Champions are equipped to effectively represent and advocate for postdocs and fellows within their departments.

1. Call for expressions of interest

- A formal call for expressions of interest is issued across departments when a Champion role becomes available, outlining the responsibilities and goals of the Champion position.
- Interested candidates are invited to submit a brief statement expressing their interest, including:
 - **Motivation:** Why they are interested in becoming a Champion.
 - **Relevant experience:** Any past roles, skills, or experiences that align with supporting early career researchers.
 - **Vision:** Any initial ideas they have for enhancing support for postdocs and fellows within their department.

2. Review of applications

- This review process will assess candidates' commitment, experience, vision, and understanding of the role.
- The Associate Director of Early Career Researcher Development and ECRI staff will review the EOI against the criteria outlined above.

3. Selection and communication of outcome

- Candidates will be notified of the selection outcome by the Associate Director of Early Career Researcher Development.
- The chosen Champion(s) will receive an official welcome from ECRI outlining the next steps in their induction.

Induction for new Champions

To make sure new Champions are well prepared and supported in their roles, they will undergo an induction process which provides an introduction to the role, key contacts and resources.

The new induction process for Postdoc and Fellows Champions is being piloted and implemented, if successful, in the 202/256 academic year.

The induction will include:

- A copy of this handbook highlighting key information about the Champion role;

- A one-to-one induction meeting with the Associate Director (Early Career Researcher Development);
- Introduction to the departmental Postdoc and Fellows Reps;
- Being added to the network's MS Teams channel
- Receiving calendar invites to upcoming Champions Meetings

Champions meetings

Champions meetings are an essential part of the role, providing an opportunity for Champions to connect, share insights, and discuss ways to enhance support for postdocs and fellows across Imperial. These meetings foster collaboration, address challenges, and ensure that Champions are aligned in their roles and responsibilities.

Meeting structure and frequency

- **Frequency:** Champions meetings are held three times per year, with a mix of in-person and online formats to ensure accessibility across departments and campuses.
- **Locations:** For in-person meetings, locations rotate between South Kensington and White City to increase accessibility and encourage attendance from all departments.
- **Agenda:** Meetings include departmental updates, strategic planning, discussions of current challenges, and best practice sharing among Champions.

Expectations for participation

- **Preparation:** Champions are encouraged to come prepared with updates on their departmental activities, challenges, and any suggestions or questions for the group. In advance of the meeting Champions may be requested to submit this information to ECRI to help inform the agenda.
- **Active engagement:** Champions are expected to attend every meeting if possible. They should actively participate in discussions, providing input on agenda items and contributing to collaborative problem solving.
- **Follow-up:** After each meeting, Champions are expected to review any circulated materials, implement relevant ideas or practices, and follow up on assigned action items within their departments.

Resources and key contacts

Early Career Researcher Institute (ECRI)

Established in October 2024, the [Early Career Researcher Institute \(ECRI\)](#) delivers inclusive and comprehensive support for Imperial's community of early career researchers (from postgraduate research students to research staff).

The institute supports Imperial in creating a healthy, supportive and productive research environment for early career researchers. ECRI staff are always working with key stakeholders across Imperial and externally to enhance the support provided.

As a Champion your main contacts in ECRI are:



Dr Liz Elvidge

Associate Director
(Early Career Researcher
Development)

[Send email](#)



Jenna Collinson

Project Manager

[Send email](#)

Champions Network

A complete list of all [Champions](#), including their departments and contact details, is available for reference to facilitate cross-departmental collaboration and support. Champions can also interact with one another on the MS Teams channel.

Reps Network

The Champions work closely with the Postdoc and Fellows Reps Network to ensure cohesive support at the departmental level. The Champions and Reps should communicate and collaborate regularly to align on activities, share updates, and support joint initiatives for postdocs and fellows. Here is a [complete list of all the Postdoc and Fellows Reps](#).

Departmental Contacts

Champions are encouraged to connect with key departmental contacts to ensure alignment with departmental priorities and access to resources.

Key contacts:

- **Head of Department (HoD):** Champions should liaise with their HoD for guidance, support, and endorsement of initiatives related to postdoc and fellow development.
- **Research leads:** Research leads oversee research priorities and development within departments. Connecting with them can provide Champions with insights into research goals, collaborative opportunities, and resources that benefit postdocs and fellows.
- **Departmental administrators:** Administrators often assist with coordinating events, managing communications, and maintaining up-to-date mailing lists.
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) leads:** EDI leads can provide resources and guidance on creating inclusive practices and aligning with department-level EDI initiatives.
- **PI contacts:** Champions may also benefit from maintaining connections with principal investigators (PIs) to support postdoc career development and support integration.

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