

**Imperial College
London**



PFDC Annual Report 2018-2019



POSTDOC AND FELLOWS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Tailored support and development for postdocs, fellows and clinicians

PFDC Annual Report 2018-2019

1 Introduction

The Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre (PFDC) was launched in 2009 and celebrated ten years of activity in 2019. It is a dedicated centre for the support and development of research staff and fellows at Imperial, a community of approximately 2,500 people.

The PFDC provides a bespoke programme of development opportunities that focus on multiple pathways for success and encourages early career researchers (ECRs) to take an honest appraisal of their skills, abilities and aptitudes, and help them identify how their skills can be translated into the skills required for a multitasking workforce.

The PFDC provides support to postdocs, fellows and clinicians through:

- Courses, workshops and events
- Individual support – One to one appointments and mock interviews
- Working with departments – Talks, training and PFDC Reps and Champions
- Online resources
- Support and development for fellowship applicants
- Resources specifically for fellows and clinicians

Key areas of focus include:

- Planning to succeed
- CVs, applications and interviews
- Enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Influence and impact
- Professional development
- Personal development and wellbeing
- Writing for publication

2 HR Excellence in Research Award

Imperial is dedicated to the support and development of all its research staff. The College's Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 states "we will build a supportive, inclusive and highly motivated staff community across all disciplines, functions and activities... to help us to attract and retain the talented and diverse staff we need to achieve our mission" to achieve enduring excellence in research and education in science, engineering, medicine and business for the benefit of society.

Imperial's Human Resources strive to attract, develop, reward and retain a diverse community of the highest calibre staff and to provide an efficient, effective and integrated service to all users of our services.

The College has been committed to the HR Excellence in Research since 2012, originally mapping the HR Excellence in Research Award against the 'UK Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers'. Imperial's new focus on The European Charter for Researchers & the Code of Conduct via the HRS4R implementation and continued commitment as a UK institution to the UK Concordat offers a dual focus strengthening the actions and aims of the College to continue being sector leading in the researcher development landscape enabling all researchers to excel.

Ensuring that actions and progress are made enables the College to contribute to making Europe an attractive place for researchers from across the globe, and these submissions form part of the responsibilities of the PFDC.

In 2018, the College completed a review of the HR Excellence in Research Award Gap Analysis and Action Plan and have conducted an Internal Review – fully endorsing and committing to implementing the European Charter and Code for Researchers.

In 2019, Imperial received assessor comments on the 2018 renewal – these have been addressed and submitted to the EU.

The College HRS4R commitment letter, and the 2018 Gap Analysis, Action Plan, and Internal Review documents are [available to view on the PFDC website](#).

3 Courses and workshops

3.1 Courses

The PFDC offers a [wide range of courses](#) grouped under the themes: Postdoc Essentials, Communication and Presentation Skills, Leadership and Management, Succeeding Now, Planning for Success, and Next Steps. The courses provided are free of charge to all Imperial postdocs, fellows and clinicians, including residential courses lasting two to three days.

Summary of provision

From August 2018 to July 2019, the PFDC offered 51 courses for 657 attendees. Of these, 6 were residential.

Participant satisfaction

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

Course survey questions

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Q1. I found this course useful | ⑤ Strongly agree |
| Q2. I know more about the subject having attended the course | ④ Agree |
| Q3. I learned things that will help me improve the way I work | ③ Neither agree nor disagree |
| Q4. I will apply what I learned on this course | ② Disagree |
| Q5. I am satisfied with the trainer/s | ① Strongly disagree |
| Q6. I am satisfied with the course materials | |



Overall satisfaction is 94.2%, well above the HR recommendation of 80%. Of all participants who responded to the survey between August 2018 and July 2019:

- 93.6% found the course they attended useful
- 94.3% knew more about the subject having attended the course
- 91.6% learned things that will help improve the way they work
- 95.3% will apply what they learned
- 97.8% were satisfied with the trainer/s
- 92.6% were satisfied with the course materials

A notable course run by the PFDC for all female staff at Imperial College is *The Springboard Women's Development Programme*. This is an award-winning international programme which allows women to identify the clear, practical and realistic steps they want to take, 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 three members of the PFDC team being qualified as Springboard tutors.

During the programme participants review topics such as qualities, strengths, networking, goals, assertiveness, dealing with pressure and managing image and visibility. As well as the opportunity to network with other colleagues, participants have the chance to hear women from across the College speak of the challenges they have faced during their personal and professional life.

The programme is open to all female members of staff and consists of four development days set over four months.

Summary of provision

Two Springboard cohorts were offered in 2018-2019, with a total of 64 participants.

Participant satisfaction

At the end of each course, participants are requested to fill in a survey asking a range of questions. Below is a selection of questions from the survey.

Question	Average score out of 7
I have clear work goals	5.52
I have clear personal goals	5.98
I now feel better able to voice my opinions	5.75
I now have more control over my future	5.67
This programme will enable me to make the best of myself	6.04

Delegates were also asked about their objectives, accomplishments to date, what they valued most, and what they plan to do now.

3.2 Pop ups

Pop up 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 skills and goals development sessions to guest speakers from across the College and relevant external initiatives – i.e. industry and funders.

They are open to all postdocs, fellows and clinicians from across the College.

Summary of provision

There were 36 pop up workshops with a total of 735 participants from August 2018 to July 2019.

Pop up topics include:

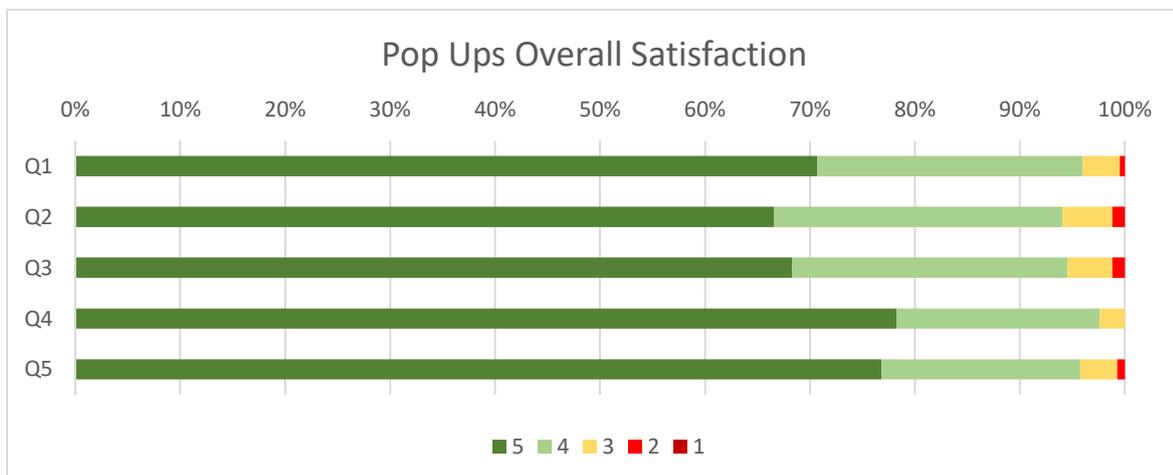
- Academic CVs
- Assertiveness
- Career goals
- Engagement and Impact
- Fellowship applications
- GDPR
- Getting media coverage
- Job search
- Lay summary
- Lectureship applications
- LinkedIn
- Research vision
- Networking for success
- Skills analysis

Participant satisfaction

At the end of each pop up, participants are requested to fill in a survey asking the following questions:

Pop up survey questions

- Q1. I found this pop up useful
- Q2. I know more about the subject having attended the pop up
- Q3. The pop up content was relevant to me
- Q4. I am likely to apply what I learned on this pop up
- Q5. I am satisfied with the delivery
- ⑤ Strongly agree
④ Agree
③ Neither agree nor disagree
② Disagree
① Strongly disagree



Overall satisfaction is 95.6%, well above the HR recommendation of 80%. Of all participants who responded to the survey between August 2018 and July 2019:

- 96% found the pop up useful
- 94.1% knew more about the subject having attended the pop up
- 94.6% thought the pop up content was relevant to them
- 97.6% were likely to apply what they learned on the pop up
- 95.7% were satisfied with the delivery

3.3 Funder showcases

The PFDC organises a series of funder showcases which highlight the fellowship opportunities individual funders have to offer, as well as providing the opportunity for current fellowship holders to share their expertise and experiences of the fellowship application process through to interview top tips. The funder showcases last about two hours and are open to all postdocs, fellows and clinicians from across the College.

Summary of provision

There were 19 funder showcases in the 2018/19 academic year with a total of 326 participants.

Funders represented at the showcases:

- National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
- 1851
- L'Oreal
- Wellcome Trust
- Future Leaders
- UKRI Stephen Hawkins
- BBSRC
- EPSRC
- British Heart Foundation
- ICRF

4 Individual support

The PFDC provides individual support to postdocs, fellows and clinicians at Imperial ranging from interview practise to conversations about development opportunities.

4.1 One-to-ones

PFDC advisors and consultants provide coaching and advice to postdocs and fellows on an individual basis. These 45-minute sessions cover topics such as CVs, fellowship and 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 356 one-to-one meetings from August 2018 to July 2019, up 45% from the previous year (245 meetings in 2017-2018).

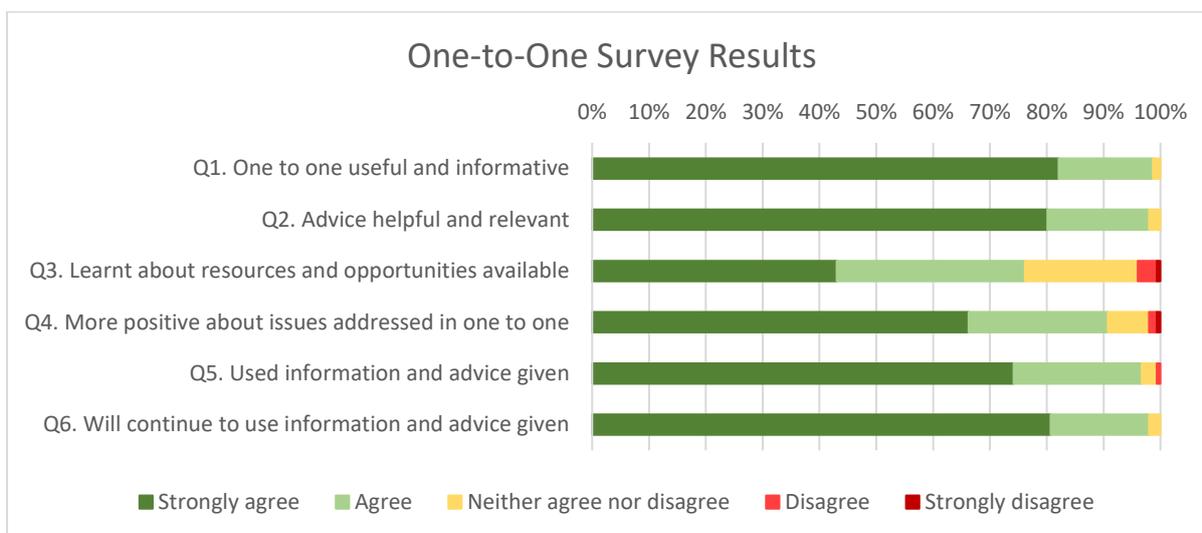
General area of advice	Total	Percentage
Fellowship Application	129	36%
Lectureship Application	73	21%
Careers advice	49	14%
CVs/cover letters	50	14%
Job Application	27	8%
Interviews	12	3%
other	16	4%

Faculty	Total	Percentage
Engineering	129	36%
Medicine	126	35%
Natural Science	96	27%
Business School	2	1%
External	3	1%

Title	Total	Percentage
Postdocs	234	66%
Fellow	95	27%
Clinicians	10	3%
Other	17	5%

Participant satisfaction

Having completed a one-to-one consultation session, participants are asked to evaluate their experience via an online survey. 151 participants (36% of the total) filled in this survey.



4.2 Mock interviews

The PFDC arranges 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 135 mock interviews from August 2018 to July 2019, up 43% from the previous year (94 mock interviews in 2017-2018)

Mock interviews, 2018-2019		
Total number	135	
Type of roles applied for	Total	Percentage
Fellowship	66	49%
Lectureship/Professor	64	47%
Scientist/Research	4	3%
Non-academic	1	1%

Interview outcome		
Result	Total	Percentage
Successful	45	33%
Unsuccessful	27	20%
Unknown	63	47%

Participant satisfaction

After they have completed the mock interview and attended a formal interview, participants are asked to evaluate their mock interview via an online survey and inform the PFDC if they have been successful. 83 participants (61% of the total) filled in this survey.



5 Working with Departments

The PFDC works extensively with departments in a variety of different ways, including delivering bespoke training courses for postdocs, fellows and clinicians. Bespoke training can either be requested directly by individual departments or through the departmental reps that make up the Postdoc Reps Network.

5.1 Postdoc Reps Network

The PFDC Postdoc Reps Network has grown significantly over the last decade from a handful of postdocs, to a thriving community of over 70 reps who now represent postdocs from every department across all campuses. Their hard work, commitment and creativity has resulted in significant culture change, not just in their own departments but across the College.

The reps are key to ensuring that the PFDC stays well-informed about the needs and issues facing postdocs in departments at Imperial. They form a crucial bridge between the PFDC and the postdocs. The reps can influence the nature of what the PFDC offers by being involved in planning and decision-making processes via the termly Reps Network Meetings and by also taking part in voluntary focus groups to discuss a range of topics and provide opinions and feedback.

The reps have been actively involved in a number key of projects such as:

- **Postdoc PRDP form:** A dedicated form for early career researchers was designed in 2018 with the help of the reps to ensure that the PRDP form and conversation focuses on their career development at Imperial.
- **Assistant Supervisor:** A new process which formally recognises the valuable contribution that postdocs make towards student supervision.
- **HR Excellence in Research Award:** The PFDC reps continue to play a significant role in all aspects of the ongoing review and Imperial's commitment to the award.
- **PFDC Course Categories:** The reps were consulted during a recent restructure of how the PFDC Courses were organised to try and make them more accessible to postdocs, fellows and clinicians.

- **Inductions:** The reps have been involved in instigating departmental inductions for new postdocs, fellows and clinicians. These inductions can include anything from welcome booklets or emails, to postdoc specific web pages, to meet and greets so that a new early career researcher is aware of all the different activities that take place in their department, as well as the different resources that are available to them.
- **Development opportunities:** The reps have been instrumental in bringing bespoke training and development opportunities into departments. These include events such as annual postdoc symposiums, career month and fellowship training sessions, as well as holding regular social events, such as coffee mornings, 'Friday Spotlights', and Pizza and beer evenings.

Reps Network meetings were held termly on the following dates:

- Wednesday 31st October 2018
- Monday 11th February 2019
- Monday 3rd June 2019

5.2 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.

Champions Lunches were held termly on the following dates:

- Thursday 29th November 2018
- Monday 18th February 2019
- Tuesday 4th June 2019

There have been new additions to the Champions at the end of the 2018/19 academic year, with new champions joining due to the Medicine restructure. The Business School also has a Champion now.

The full and up-to-date list of Champions can be found on the [PFDC website](#).

5.3 Departmental Events

From August 2018 to July 2019, the PFDC supported 22 events in departments for 626 participants. Evaluation data are not routinely gathered for departmental events.

Event category	Number of events	Attendees
Applications	7	109
CVs or Cover Letters	1	15
PFDC Briefing	9	381
Professional Skills	1	11
Other	4	110
Total	22	626

Example departmental events:

Applications

- Non-academic careers
- Fellowships

Professional Skills

- How to maximise your connections

PFDC Briefings

- Welcome Lunch
- Coffee and Cake
- Postdoc Symposium
- Postdoc Careers Day

Other

- PRDP Briefing
- Foster your networking skills
- Transition to Industry

5.4 Faculty of Engineering – Dame Julia Higgins Postdoc Collaborative Research Fund

The Faculty of Engineering Research Committee, together with the PFDC, is committed to promoting opportunities to aid postdocs. In 2017 the Dame Julia Higgins Postdoc Collaborative Research Fund was introduced to give engineering postdocs the opportunity to apply for and be awarded their own research funding, develop and deliver a collaborative research project and become independent from the research of their PI.

A total of £19,500 has been made available each year to fund collaborative research projects. This fund aims to promote collaboration between postdocs in the Faculty of Engineering, whereby funding applications submitted must involve a minimum of two postdocs from different departments in Engineering. To facilitate the interaction between the departments, an Engineering-wide networking event precedes the proposal deadline. The fund is run annually and on average 30-40 applications are submitted, with 5-8 proposals receiving funding.

Eight proposals were funded during the 2018 Dame Julia Higgins Postdoc Collaborative Fund (a total of £19,173.25 was awarded).

Summary of awards

6 Support for Fellows and Clinicians

6.1 Fellows and Clinicians Programme

A bespoke programme of support, including comprehensive induction and cohort building events, is in place for independent research fellows and clinicians actively pursuing academic careers at Imperial.

Funded by the Faculties of Engineering, Medicine, Natural Sciences and the Vice-Provost (Research and Enterprise), following recommendations from a scoping project “Assessing and addressing the development needs of early career fellows at Imperial” coupled with an extensive consultation across the College, the programme was launched in April 2018.

The programme comprises:

- Welcome induction and cohort building events
- Bespoke training
- Feedback: career trajectory reflection and review
- Networking: cross-discipline interacting and collaboration

The induction and cohort building afternoon, held twice annually, aims to help new starters to integrate into the College by providing a platform to access key information, network and build cross-discipline collaborations.

The Fellows and Clinicians Forum provides fellows and clinicians with a regular platform to interact, share expertise and build cross-discipline contacts across the College with the aim to enhance their

careers. It also gives them the opportunity to interact and learn from senior colleagues – senior fellows, deans, heads of departments, and diverse experts within the College and outside.

Summary of provision

From August 2018 to July 2019, the PFDC offered 17 sessions as part of the Fellows and Clinicians Programme, for a total of 220 participants.

Of these, three were writing retreats (one of which was one-day rather than residential), with a total of 50 participants.

Examples of bespoke training sessions:

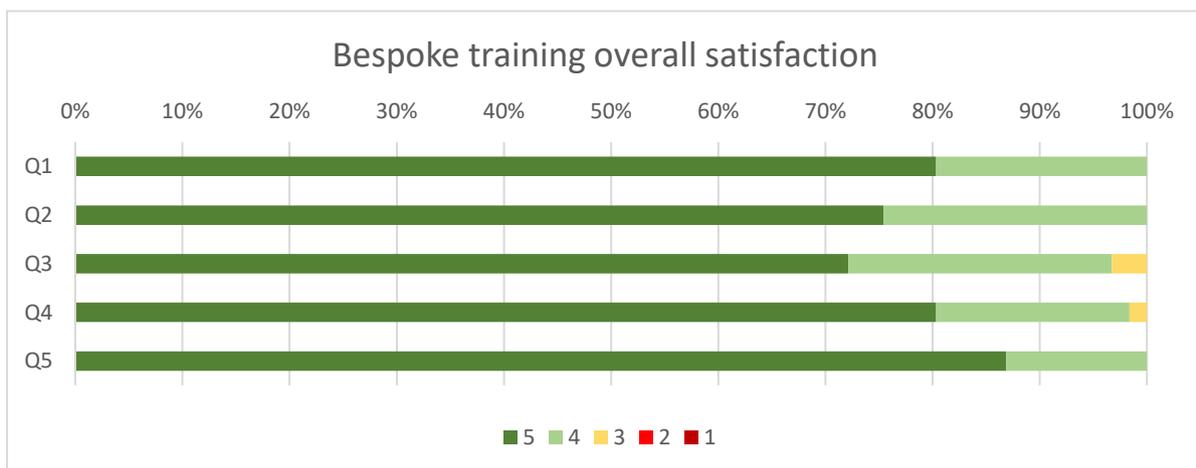
- Active Bystander
- Persuasive communication
- Starting to think about a fellowship
- In conversation with academic women
- Writing retreats

Participant satisfaction for bespoke training events

At the end of each bespoke training event (excluding the writing retreats), participants are requested to fill in a survey asking the following questions:

Bespoke training survey questions

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Q1. I found this pop-up useful | ⑤ Strongly agree |
| Q2. I know more about the subject having attended the pop-up | ④ Agree |
| Q3. The pop-up content was relevant to me | ③ Neither agree nor disagree |
| Q4. I am likely to apply what I learned on this pop-up | ② Disagree |
| Q5. I am satisfied with the delivery | ① Strongly disagree |



The overall satisfaction for these bespoke training sessions is extremely high at 99%. Of all participants who responded to the survey between August 2018 and July 2019:

- 100% found the bespoke training useful
- 100% knew more about the subject having attended the bespoke training
- 96.7% thought the bespoke training content was relevant to them

- 98.4% were likely to apply what they learned on the bespoke training
- 100% were satisfied with the delivery

Participant satisfaction for writing retreats

The writing retreats are evaluated in a different way. Participants are each asked to set three SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound) aims for themselves at the start of the retreat, and at the end of the retreat they are asked to rate how well the writing retreat has supported them in achieving the aims that they set, from 1 meaning “not at all” to 10 meaning “completely”.

They are also asked to score their own progress on each aim at the beginning of the retreat and at the end of the retreat, from 1 meaning “not started” to 10 meaning “achieved”.

Overall, for the three writing retreats in 2018/19, 87.8% of participants rated the retreat 8 or above in terms of how well it has supported them in achieving the aims they set.

On average, the participants’ scores of their progress with their aims increased by 4.8 points during the retreat, from an average of 2.8 at the beginning of the retreat to 7.4 at the end of the retreat, indicating the highly positive impact of the retreat.

6.2 Fellows and Clinicians Seed Fund

The Fellows and Clinicians Seed Fund, which aligns with the College’s Strategy 2015-20 to encourage multidisciplinary research, offered seed funding to enable newly independent researchers to establish cross-College collaborations and investigate early stage research ideas that might not otherwise be funded. The intention was that the research findings will be used to apply for larger external grants, helping to raise the profiles of the fellows/clinicians involved.

The fund was used to promote and establish new multi-disciplinary collaborations between independent research fellows and clinicians from across the College. A collaboration event allowed the participants to meet and brainstorm ideas for projects that would align with one of the College’s four global challenge themes which are: Discovery and the natural world; Engineering novel solutions; Health and well-being; Leading the data revolution. Each fellow/clinician submitted a research summary and five keywords which were circulated prior to the event.

Four proposals were funded during the 2018-19 Fellows and Clinicians Seed Fund (a total of £19,472 was awarded).

7 Events

From August 2018 to July 2019, the PFDC held 33 events, including three Welcome Lunches, three Champions Lunches, and three Reps Network Meetings, all of which are organised termly. Other events included networking for Imperial College Research Fellows and a presence at the Careers@Imperial Week.

A highlight was the PFDC 10-Year Celebration held on Wednesday 5th June 2019, commemorating ten years since the Centre was first established and recognising the hard work and dedication of staff within the Centre as well as thanking all the postdocs, fellows, champions, and other members of staff around the College for their support throughout the years.

7.1 Welcome Lunches

To help postdocs integrate into their new role, the PFDC invites all new postdocs to the termly PFDC Welcome Lunch, held on the South Kensington Campus. During the meeting postdocs learn about the support and opportunities available to them at the Imperial and have an opportunity to meet other recent joiners at the College.

In 2018-2019, the three Welcome Lunches were held on:

- Wednesday 28th November 2018
- Monday 25th March 2019
- Thursday 25th July 2019

8 External work

The PFDC also undertakes work for external organisations, accepting requests for training, talks, and other services. From August 2018 to July 2019, the PFDC delivered sessions that amounted to a total of 15 days for the following external organisations:

- Trinity College Dublin
- National University of Ireland Galway
- CWI Amsterdam
- University of Bristol
- i3S - Instituto de Investigação e Inovação em Saúde
- IBMC - Instituto de Biologia Molecular e Celular
- Universität Hamburg - Center for Earth System Research and Sustainability
- Arthritis Research UK Fellows' Network

Examples of work undertaken:

- One-hour talk to fellows on research vision and career
- Half-day training including “Fellowship – What Now” and “Lectureship CVs”
- One day training on leadership
- Four days of career mentoring and effective communication

9 Summary

In the 2018-2019 academic year the PFDC organised nearly 150 courses, workshops or events for approximately 3100 participants. Additionally, 365 one-to-one meetings and 135 mock interviews were provided. Further funds, resources, networks and events were also created and hosted by the PFDC, which together made up the tailored programme of support for early career researchers and clinicians.