Notes from the ECR Gathering Session
Date: 25th June 2009
Time: 10.30-11.30
Venue: Education 419

The first ECR gathering session was very meaningful and there was a lot of motivation and energy among the ECRs attending. There were 11 participants in this session.

Essentially the meeting was in two parts. First was a series of introductions in which participants raised a number of issues and questions about ECRs in the Faculty. Second was a brief presentation by Janette Bobis, Associate Dean, Research on Faculty Support Mechanisms. Aek Phakiti’s presentation on a 2008 survey he conducted with ECRs was held over until our next meeting due to time constraints. We had quite a strong response to our email advertising the meeting with 18 ECRs expressing interest, though not all could attend. The definition of an ECR for this meeting was broad, based on need or specific career trajectories rather than the narrow formula of 5 years post PhD. People who responded to our email represented a variety of job types and career stages.

Following is a list of points/ issues/ needs that were raised by attendees. These are listed here as a stimulus for thinking about how the ECR group might proceed.

- It would be useful to talk about research – simply finding spaces and places to have conversations with other ECRs about doing research and about our own research.
- A particular step in the research career that such a group might look at would be a transition from participating in others’ research projects to developing autonomy – and perhaps leadership, setting our own agendas.
- Developing a research program rather than ad hoc projects and publications.
- Building a track record.
- Writing and publishing!
- Balancing early career teaching – or any teaching – with research. This includes the need to frequently switch back and forth between the different ways of thinking and working required by teaching and research and writing.
- Work-life balance!
- The challenges of working in contract and casual positions which at times are ineligible for research support or formal career development.
- Developing links that might result in formal research collaborations. These might be with others at a similar level or with more experienced researchers.
- Ongoing development of research competencies including project management.

Future Plans: We plan to have a couple of gathering sessions more before each ECR individual and partner will proceed their goals as emerging from this ECR gathering activity. We will have a follow-up gathering session later in the year. There were some ECRs who would like to, but could not attend this first gathering session. Hence it would be great to have more ECR attendants in future sessions.
**Next Session:** Aek will present and discuss the ECR survey conducted in 2008. This will generate a meaningful discussion of how we should shape our future research goals. Further, here are four questions you should consider prior to the next session:

- What are your perceived research achievements since you have joined this Faculty?
- What are experienced difficulties/problems/burdens/limitations that may have affected your research career progress?
- What would we like to do (together) to develop our research capacity and impact?
- What could we contribute to our ECR group as peer mentors and to our Faculty?

**Date for the Next Session:** Wednesday August 19th 2009 between 10-11 a.m.

**Venue:** Education 551

Please RSVP Helen Proctor (h.proctor@edfac.usyd.edu.au) as soon as possible.

**Attachment:** A Power Point note on research support in the Faculty prepared by Janette Bobis.

Warm Regards,

Aek Phakiti and Helen Proctor