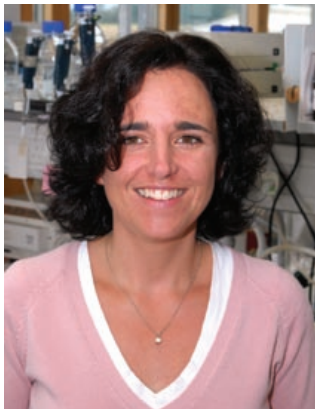


Postdoctoral careers at the Babraham Institute

In addition to our research Group Leaders, around 90 PhD scientists work in the Institute ranging from postdoctoral positions on grant-funded contracts to career positions on indefinite contracts. The Institute has long recognised that the excellence of our postdoctoral researchers is critical to overall scientific success. We ensure that our research environment and our policies and opportunities for training and career development serve to attract, develop and retain the very best postdoctoral scientists from around the world.



Becky Gilley, 2008 SRA awardee

The Institute operates a comprehensive career progression scheme from first postdoctoral position through personal Fellowships to Group Leader status. To enhance the career progression of our very best postdoctoral scientists, the Institute supports internal Career Progression Fellowship (CPF) and Senior Research Associate (SRA) positions awarded through a competitive annual application and promotion procedure. The SRA position is an alternative career route specifically for those postdocs who do not wish to become independent group leaders but who

are exceptional individuals possessing a high level of widely applicable skills desirable for the Institute's science, who are skilled at training others and who will maintain a strong professional reputation. An SRA position in each of the Institute's main science areas is ultimately envisaged, to sustain and continually develop requisite high level technologies and to train others in these skills, particularly grant-funded staff and graduate students. There are eight SRAs currently in post.

The CPF scheme provides two years of funding as an early bridge to a career as an independent group leader, primarily through awardees obtaining external fellowship support. The scheme has been noticeably successful to date; all seven of our earlier CPFs have been awarded external fellowships

to further their careers at the Institute with two subsequently moving on to other senior positions. In 2008 we are hosting 8 externally funded Senior Fellowships which confer career-track Group Leader status at the Institute.

For mentoring of career development, all our postdocs have full access to the University of Cambridge Careers Service where there is specialist expertise in postdoc career opportunities. In addition we provide dedicated postdoc intranet webpages with news, career information links, training and development courses, and details of our internal International Conference Travel Fund specifically for postdocs; over 70 awards have now been made from this fund since it was created in 2001. A committee of representative postdocs plus senior staff members discusses issues raised by the postdoc community and manages the Travel Fund awards and has had a significant input into defining the Institute's training, mentoring and career development provision for postdocs.

The Institute offers a substantial menu of over 30 training and personal development courses suitable for postdocs. The nature and content of these courses are regularly reviewed and individual, specific needs are also taken into account. Uptake and investment in training courses for postdocs has risen year-on-year since 1998 and currently equates to more than £1200 per postdoctoral scientist. In line with RCUK policy for skills training funding, training courses at Babraham Institute are open to all postdoctoral researchers, irrespective of whether they are Research Council funded. Whilst the Institute tailors courses to incorporate the needs of postdocs, none are restricted to postdocs alone to enable wider benefit. To spread the uptake and use of current research technologies, the Institute's SRAs offer at-the-bench training in one or more of their advanced technical specialities through the in-house Advanced Research Training Scheme (for example 3D DNA immuno-FISH, viral transduction systems, protein-protein proximity ligation).

We monitor the first destination employment of postdocs leaving the Institute as a measure of their overall employability but also as a reflection of their levels of transferable skills. In the years 2006 – 2007, out of a total of 30 postdoc leavers who remained in the UK, 57% moved to positions in academia with 43% moving to industry.



Elena Vigorito (left) and Cameron Osborne (centre) are recent winners of external Fellowships via the CPF scheme. Rui Zhao (right) was awarded a CPF in 2007.