

A Short Guide to the Postdoctoral Research Associate Programme



Trinity Hall is one of Cambridge's oldest colleges, with a rich history spanning 670 years in its beautiful setting on the banks of the River Cam. College life is made not by ancient stones alone, but by the people who live and work here. Trinity Hall is renowned as a warm and friendly community. We are a small college of approximately 650 students, approximately 40% of whom are postgraduates, along with around 60 Fellows, and a professional team which maintains the College.

The College has a community of around 40–50 Post-Doctoral Research Associates (PDRAs). Each year, the College seeks new candidates to join the programme. This document outlines the programme, what it offers associates, as well as how PDRAs contribute to the life of the College. There is further information about Trinity Hall on the College's website (www.trinhal.cam.ac.uk) including a [virtual tour](#) of our three sites, details of all our [Fellows](#), College [music](#), and our famous [gardens](#).

Trinity Hall's PDRA programme

Who is involved

Trinity Hall has two programmes for post-doctoral researchers.

The College currently has 40–50 Post-Doctoral Research Associates (PDRAs). They are unpaid associates of the College, and have no administrative or teaching responsibilities. PDRAs are members of the Middle Combination Room (MCR) along with the College's postgraduate students.

The College also has six Research Fellows (RFs), with two new RFs recruited each year. These are paid research roles with other responsibilities in College. The RFs are members of the Senior Common Room along with the College's other Fellows.

This short guide is for candidates applying to the PDRA programme, **not** the Research Fellow programme.

The purpose of the programme

The Trinity Hall PDRA programme has two goals.

The first is to provide post-doctoral researchers throughout the University with the opportunity to participate in and contribute to college life. In particular, Trinity Hall seeks to include some of those who are new to Cambridge and have never

experienced College membership. With a few with limited exceptions, PDRAs enjoy the same privileges and facilities of the College granted to postgraduate students, including:

- attending social events, including formal College dinners, subject-based dinners and High Table dinners on select dates during the year
- participating with postgraduates in events in the Middle Common Room (MCR)
- seminars and professional development events run by the College's PDRAs
- using the College's facilities—including the Middle Combination Room, library, dining hall, chapel, cafeteria, bar, sporting facilities, punts, and the College's beautiful gardens and grounds
- the College's clubs, societies, and sporting groups
- possibly contributing through mentoring, College administration and academic teaching, although this is not expected nor required.

Events, activities and facilities that PDRAs often engage in are described in more detail below.

The programme's second goal is to create a community for PDRAs, providing mutual support in their research and university careers. Throughout the year, the PDRA community organises academic, professional and social events for its members to encourage social and professional interaction.



There are no compulsory activities or a minimum threshold for involvement in the PDRA programme. However, the programme is most successful when its members actively organize and participate in activities, and the College encourages PDRA to contribute to both of the programme's goals.

Who is eligible to join the PDRA programme
 At the time of their appointment, candidates must hold a doctorate and be employed on a contract by the University or a University-affiliated organisation.

Candidates may be graduates of any university; graduates of Trinity Hall or the University of Cambridge will not be given preference. There are no conditions of age or subject. Candidates will be selected for their potential to contribute to the intellectual, educational and social life of the College. Trinity Hall also welcomes partners of PDRA as guests to the College and to select events.

Trinity Hall seeks candidates who will value their association, and contribute to the PDRA community and the programme's goals. PDRA who have enjoyed the programme the most are those who have been able to be part of the college life to enjoy events in Cambridge. The expectation is that your day-to-day place of work is normally in Cambridge and you would usually be able to participate in PDRA activities.

Duration of association

Post-doctoral researchers are offered an affiliation for two years initially, with the possibility to renew their

affiliation on a yearly basis, so long as they remain employed in a postdoctoral research position with the University of Cambridge or its affiliated organisations and are actively involved in the programme. PDRA must be able to demonstrate that they have a contract with the University or its affiliated institutions for the duration of their associateship, however those who are on contracts that are shorter than two years or on renewable contracts may be offered a PDRA associateship for a shorter amount of time, concurrent with their University contract.

Postdoctoral researchers may resign from the programme at any time by emailing or writing to the College's Postgraduate Administrator. Either on withdrawal, or at the end of their PDRA term, all PDRA automatically become alumni of the College. This entitles them to various alumni privileges, such as dining at High Table several times a year and access to alumni events in College and outside Cambridge. Further details can be provided on request.

How the PDRA programme is run

The PDRA programme is largely run by the PDRA themselves. The success of the programme depends on members contributing. This is not intended to be onerous: with 40–50 PDRA, each associate only needs to arrange or help run one or two events over their tenure in order to provide a good variety of events each year. There is a small budget to support educational and professional events.

College facilities

The College is based over three sites in Cambridge.

The historic **Central Site** on Trinity Lane, beside the River Cam:

- Dining Hall and canteen
- College Libraries (Jerwood Library and Old Library)
- Red and Blue Rooms, which are the 'Middle Combination Room' MCR
- College administration
- Some undergraduate accommodation
- Chapel
- Fellows' offices
- Lecture theatre and seminar rooms
- Function rooms
- Music facilities, practice rooms, and the Wong Avery Music Gallery
- Coffee shop, Aula Bar and Crescent Room
- The courtyards, lawns, gardens and river terrace
- Punting on the river in summer months.

Wychfield on Storey's Way:

- Accommodation for Fellows, postgraduates and some undergraduates
- Lecture facilities
- Sports grounds and hardcourts (tennis, netball, basketball)
- Sports pavilion including changing rooms, squash courts and fitness equipment
- Extensive gardens.

WYNG Gardens and Bishop Bateman Court on Thompson's Lane:

- Undergraduate accommodation
- Conference facilities.

There is also the Trinity Hall Boat Club boathouse on Ferry Cutter Lane.

Events and activities

The College has a well-deserved reputation for its excellent dining. Formal dinners for postgraduates and PDRAAs are held on Wednesday evenings during term, and on Sunday evening for the College community. There are four subject-based dinners held during the academic year. One or two black-tie 'Super Halls' are also held each term.

PDRAAs are invited to dine with College Fellows at High Table three times a year as part of the programme, and join with the Fellows for after-dinner drinks and conversation in the Senior Combination Room afterwards.

PDRAAs may invite up to three guests to formal dinners, not including High Table and Super Halls.

On Sundays, the cafeteria offers brunch to all College members from 09:30–12:00. This meal is child-friendly and families are most welcome.

During the year, the MCR organises several dinner swaps with other Cambridge colleges, and hosts members of other colleges in return.

At the end of each academic year, the College holds the 'June Event'. This is a major celebration held in the grounds of the Central Site, with guests enjoying unlimited drinks, food, music and entertainment.

During the year, PDRAAs organise informal social activities, including brunches, movie nights, wine tasting, punting on the river, and barbeques.

Academic and professional

Each year, every PDRA may request a lunch with one College Fellow in their subject in the Senior Combination Room. Timing is by mutual agreement.



Every second Wednesday during term, the MCR presents the McMenemy seminar series. These feature seminars for the wider MCR community by postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers within the MCR.

The PDRA community also organizes some specific events specifically for post-doctoral researchers throughout the year, to help their professional development. Past events have included talks by alumni, workshops on applying for fellowships, and research talks. PDRAAs also arrange swaps with other colleges to present and discuss their research.

The PDRAAs may offer mentoring to postgraduates in college on topics such as careers advice, research skills, publishing research articles, and social support.

In the past, some PDRAAs have assisted the College with undergraduate student admissions selection in their relevant subject areas. Additionally, some PDRAAs have offered academic supervising (teaching) of students. Neither of these is guaranteed, nor are they expected: the ability to contribute to teaching or admissions is based on current needs in the subject.

College societies

Trinity Hall has over twenty formal Societies, spanning sports groups to history, music, poetry, and wine, through to origami and yoga.

Trinity Hall has many sports teams including cricket, netball, basketball, volleyball, tennis, football, water polo, frisbee, and pool.

The Trinity Hall Boat Club has a fully equipped boathouse on the River Cam, and is open to expert and novice rowers. The boathouse has hulls for eights, fours, pairs and skulls. The Club competes against other Cambridge colleges on the river.

Trinity Hall has an active Music Society, and membership is open to all members of the College. Members have access to the music library, use the practice rooms, perform with other musicians, or attend concerts. The Chapel Choir sings two evensongs each week throughout term and gives concerts at home and on tour.

Teaching and mentoring

The College does not offer teaching opportunities as part of the PDRA programme. PDRAAs interested in gaining experience in teaching and supervising are advised to approach the relevant Faculties and Departments directly. In past years, a number of

PDRAAs have used College rooms and facilities to run supervisions organised through their department. PDRAAs are welcome to approach Fellows directly to discuss opportunities for supervision, although opportunities are limited.

PDRAAs may also provide informal mentoring to members of the MCR. Mentors can provide advice on their subject matter, careers, and university life. Mentoring is organised by the MCR and PDRAAs themselves, not the College, and depends on the availability and interests of both mentors and mentees. PDRAAs interested in mentoring are encouraged to undertake training before volunteering (e.g. from the University's [LinkedIn Learning](#) modules).

Rules

Members of the PDRA programme are subject to the rules in the College's Student Handbook and the College's Rules of Behaviour while on College premises.

PDRAAs are members of the Middle Common Room, along with postgraduate students. Each year, the MCR elects a committee to manage its affairs and organise events. PDRAAs elect one representative to the MCR (or occasionally joint representatives). The PDRA Rep is the formal point of contact between the PDRA community and the College. The PDRA Rep also coordinates and helps organise events throughout the year.

Fees and charges

The College charges PDRAAs a fee of £200 per year for their association, as well as a one-off deposit of £100. This covers use of College facilities.

PDRAAs will be issued with a College account on joining. Membership fees, formal dining and food from the cafeteria will all be charged to this, and invoiced at the end of each term. Alcoholic drinks from the college bar cannot be charged to members' accounts and must be paid for at the time of consumption.

Fees for formal dining have yet to be confirmed for 2024–25, but PDRAAs can expect to pay £20–30 for a three course meal. There is no charge for dining at High Table up to three times a year. There is also a complimentary PDRA welcome dinner at the start of membership. Existing members are invited to attend this welcome dinner as part of their entitlement to three free dining nights per year.