

Proposal to modify CUCBC race eligibility rules

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Background

The membership of the University of Cambridge is the most diverse it has ever been. In addition to 11,800 undergraduate students, 6,900 postgraduate students and 1,600 permanent academic staff, there are now 3,500 postdoctoral researchers, a number that has doubled in the past 10 years. These postdoctoral researchers fall outside the traditional university system, much like Ph.D. students at Cambridge did a century ago. The university is currently taking major steps to accommodate these new additions to its membership as evidenced, for example, by the recent establishment of the UK's first Postdoc Centre here at Cambridge. Furthermore, colleges are strongly being encouraged to offer new categories of membership to postdoctoral researchers and early career yet distinguished researchers in the wider Cambridge business and scientific communities so that, like the students they teach and their academic colleagues, they too may benefit from the collegiate system. In practice, many colleges are now admitting a wide range of members in to more varied classes of membership and from a plurality of backgrounds, to the benefit and at the behest of the University.

Around 1000-1500 of these postdoctoral researchers and equivalents are attached to a college in some way. However, the nature of these associations varies significantly between colleges. Approximately 200 are bye-fellowships and even fewer (~100) are research fellowships. Within these research fellowships, only a limited subset offer a place on the governing body of the college. The bulk of these postdoctoral and equivalent college attachments fall under a new category of membership referred to by a variety of names including: “postdoctoral affiliate”, “associate member”, “senior member”, “college research associate” to name but a few. The benefits associated with these positions vary between colleges, but usually include high-table dining rights, full use of college facilities, membership of college clubs and sports teams, and in some cases the ability to sit on college committees.

As postdoctoral members and equivalents become more involved in colleges, they become as much a part of college life as the students and fellows. This is particularly true of colleges with large graduate populations, in which postdoctoral members and equivalents mix seamlessly with the student body. In smaller colleges with relatively few fellows and students, these additional categories of members play a pivotal role in the functioning of the college. They are often asked to teach, to sit on committees or to assist sports teams and clubs. Without their contributions, students of the college may not be able to participate fully in college life – for example a rowing boat that is one short results in the disappointment of 8 others.

As members of the university, postdoctoral researchers and equivalents are entitled to join university clubs. The “Notes for the Guidance of University Clubs & Societies”, issued by the Junior Proctor, states that “A constitution should make clear that a society is open to all interested members of the University”. It is therefore important that intercollegiate sports clubs, such as CUCBC, make very clear in their membership eligibility rules that all

members of the university, including postdoctoral researchers and equivalents, are able to partake in club activities.

As discussed above, the varying definitions of such membership across colleges makes this difficult to define. However, it is noted that one common feature of all these postdoctoral associations is that they are *elected or appointed by the college governing body or council*. Using this definition to define eligibility for club membership or participation includes, for example, directors of studies and bye-fellows, but excludes alumni and supervisors. It also respects the autonomy of different colleges to determine their own membership structures, which is one of the most important aspects of the collegiate system.

The current CUCBC eligibility rules are not sufficiently clear and risk creating arbitrary divisions within colleges where they need not exist. For example, in the 2015 Lent Bumps, a Senior Member of St Edmund's College was not allowed to participate despite being, for all intents and purposes, equivalent to a fellow of the college. In the same term similar situations occurred at Clare Hall and Darwin College, in which college research associates were deemed ineligible to row at the last minute. Within these largely graduate colleges, there is little perceived divide between the various categories of senior membership, including postdoctoral members and equivalents, and students. It is unfair to then force an arbitrary division for the purposes of intercollegiate sport.

This re-definition of the eligibility rules for CUCBC may create concern that the CUCBC races, most notably the Lent and May bumps are in danger of drifting away from being “student focussed”. It should be noted that despite the increase of post-docs, they are still outnumbered 5:1 by students and so it unlikely that their presence will detract from the event. There may also be concerns as to fairness in the event that colleges draft in more experienced non-student rowers to fill their boats. In order to address these concerns it may be necessary to limit further the conditions under which college members who are not *in statu pupillari* are eligible to row. It is proposed that at most two such members should be allowed to row in any boat, and not normally in the colleges 1st boat. In the case where a college has only one boat, this definition would allow at most two non-student members to row in that boat to avoid it being scratched. This would certainly assist with achieving CUCBC Regulations for Racing: General, Clause 15 that states, “Every Men's and Women's College Boat Club have the right to at least one boat each on the river for the Lent and May Races.” In the 2015 Lent Bumps, St Edmund's College were placed in a situation where they were one short of having a full women's boat. Due to an unfortunate and unintentional gender imbalance in the college, it proved difficult to find a student to fill the place, but a Senior Member offered to assist and began to train with the crew. Following lengthy discussions with CUCBC, she was deemed ineligible and they searched in earnest for several weeks to find a rower from another college. In this case they were able to find a sub but only within days of the Lent Bumps. A subsequent poll of the CUCBC captains was conducted by St Edmund's and of 21 responses receiving, 14 were in favour of allowing a senior member to row in order to avoid scratching a first boat, 4 were unsure and 3 were against. Clearly, there is strong support amongst the constituent members of CUCBC for flexibility in this regard.

The graduate and mature colleges face problems not encountered by most of the traditional

established colleges. They typically have a smaller number of students, who often have complex course schedules and work commitments, for example in medicine or teaching. Finding the necessary time and commitment to train and participate is more challenging, and it is more difficult to build and sustain a viable boat club.

By including these simple and measured changes, CUCBC races will remain fair and student focussed, but the necessary flexibility to allow all colleges to participate using their own members will be introduced. College sport is ultimately about participation and the rules must be flexible to enable maximum participation of students and other members of the university. I trust the CUCBC will approve the proposed changes to eligibility rules for the long term benefit of inter collegiate rowing at Cambridge.

Proposed changes to CUCBC rules

General

This section concerns all CUCBC-run races.

1.
 - a. That only resident *bona fide* student members of the University who are also members of the CUCBC be eligible to row or steer in CUCBC races, except as specified in Regulations for Racing, Rule 2. For the purposes of this regulation a *bona fide* student is defined as one who is in *statu pupillari* and is therefore:
 - i. a matriculated member of a College; and
 - ii. currently reading for a recognised degree of the University; and
 - iii. fulfilling the University residence requirements in both time and place.
 - b. That other members of the University who are Fellows or Employees [or elected or appointed Members](#) of a college may compete for that college only after approval by the Executive Committee and that such approval should be sought within the first two weeks of term.
 - c. That such other members of the University will not normally be allowed to row in their College's 1st boat in the Lent or May Bumps, [unless the College has only one boat](#), or in the top Division of the University Fours. [That no more than two such other members of the University will be allowed to row in any boat](#). Exceptional cases may be permitted at the discretion of the Executive Committee. Exceptional rowers who are members of more than one college may row for any one college of which they are a member, but may row for only one college per term.