

PMA Forum Survey 2019

June 2019

Background

The PMA Forum Organising Committee (the Committee) ran a survey of members in April 2019. The aim was to help guide the new Committee on what members wanted from the forum and how they'd like it to see it run. The survey widely publicised via email and in PMA Forum meetings happening at the time. 44 Forum members responded to the survey, which represents around 24% of the PMA Forum membership.

The survey was developed in Qualtrics and split into six sections. A summary of the responses in each section is shown below. The responses from the survey were looked at in detail by the Committee in order to develop the Forum during its initial two years. Where specific decisions were made in response to this data that is also noted below.

What would you like to get out of the Forum?

The most popular response to this question was 'knowledge sharing / learning about best practice' but all four of the options offered received good support:



A very small number of other comments were made in the free text box which including learning about staff benefits and using the Forum as a way to advocate on behalf of members.

Using this data the Committee decided that they would seek to deliver all four areas wherever possible – for example main Forum meetings would see a number of different activities including best practice sharing, networking and CPD. Advocacy falls outside the terms of reference for the PMA Forum

PMA Forum Meetings

When asked how often they'd like meetings to take place the most popular responses were that the main meetings should take place once a term or twice a term (each attracting 36% of responses). After discussion, the Committee opted for a model with one main meeting in late Michaelmas (to avoid the busy Welcome period), two during lent term (either side of reading week), and one in summer term.

72% of respondents were happy to have meetings held outside of term time. In response to this the Committee elected to develop the summer vacation Best Practice Sessions (see next section). After investigation the Committee realised that the reality of Christmas and Easter is that there is very little time around closure when meetings could be successfully held.

The survey was distributed after the first main meeting in February 2019. When asked 'Do you think the format of the meeting in February worked well?' 64% of respondents said yes and 28% said maybe. The free texts comments saw people suggesting adding more structure to the group work; a little less content; and the possibility of specific meetings for undergraduate and postgraduate staff. In response to this the Committee decided to keep the format broadly the same but aim for a little less content in future meetings, acknowledging that the first meeting was particularly busy and very focused on undergraduate IRDAP.

A large number of potential topics were suggested which the Committee noted and will use to guide future meetings. Several members put themselves forwards to offer case studies and best practice examples which was very much appreciated.

Best Practice Workshops

76% of respondents said that they would be interested in attending best practice workshops over the summer vacation period, with a further 18% saying they would maybe be interested.

Five initial topics were suggested which received the following responses:



Other topics suggested by members included:

- Ways of successfully working with academics.
- Exams and assessment administration.
- Working with other services such as Careers and LSE LIFE.

The Committee will use these suggestions to help form the Summer 2019 workshops.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

62% of respondents felt that CPD should form part of the PMA Forum's work, with a further 31% saying that it maybe should. When asked 'Do you think we should devote time to CPD in the PMA Forum meetings or is there another way for us to cover this?' 74% of respondents said that it should form part of some meetings (but not all). The survey suggested that when it is covered it should take between 15 and 45 minutes.

Some other interesting ideas were suggested, and observations made in the free text box:

- Having CPD at the end of meetings so people can leave if they wish.
- Using the main meetings to collect ideas for CPD but actually delivering content in the sessions.
- Networking is an important part of CPD.

On the basis of these responses, the Committee have committed to trying to include some form of CPD in most main meetings but to schedule it towards the end of the session.

The idea of developing a matrix of key competencies set against training opportunities was introduced by Human Resources (HR) in the February 2019 PMA meeting. This would build on the Careers Pathways work undertaken by HR and other colleagues in 2015 (available [here](#)). We asked whether people would find this useful, 59% said yes and 41% said maybe. Nobody said that it would not be useful. A number of people put themselves forwards to help develop this work which was appreciated. The Committee have agreed to take this forwards with HR.

Outside of meetings

Online interaction

49% of respondents said that they would definitely use some form of online platform such as MS teams. A further 43% said they might use such a Forum. 59% of respondents said that they would make use of an online repository of documents with a further 35% saying they might make use of it. A smaller number of people said that they would contribute to such a repository. On the basis of these responses, the Committee committed to developing a space for Forum members to interact online. The repository of documents requires further investigation, particularly around issues such as ownership and quality assurance, however it would be ideal if any platform supported this for the future.

Social Activities

There was support for social activities with 55% of respondents saying that they felt the committee should organise socials or an away day. A further 35% said that this was maybe a good idea. 11% of respondents did not feel this was the role of the Committee. There were some suggestions of merging more work-based activities with social activities. The Committee decided to take forward the concept of socials first with a view to working on an away day later.

Anything else

There were a number of other suggestions made by members which the Committee discussed.

- Representing and advocating for PMA Members – this falls outside our terms of reference.
- Running events for smaller groups perhaps splitting by cluster or level of study – the Committee used this idea to help create smaller groups within events such as the summer social.
- A mentoring or buddy scheme – this is an interesting idea and warrants further investigation once the Forum is fully established.

Several members also used the final free text box to pass on their thanks to those involved in setting up the PMA Forum.