Transcript Host 4

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv.

I'm at the Open University and I'm doing a project for the knowledge exchange unit. On reviewing the Parliamentary Academic Fellowship scheme and I will be removing identifying marks from the transcript.

My plan is I'll probably send you a copy of the Teams chat once I've anonymized it and if there's anything else you want to cut out from it, that's fine.

Host 4  
Yeah, that's absolutely fine. Thank you.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Yeah. Good. And so what I'll do, I'll crack on and there's three different aspects I want to talk about today. The lead up to the fellowship, a couple of questions about the actual conduct of the fellowship and then just a few follow-ups about the post fellowship period.

Host 4  
Sure.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And casting your mind back. Can you remember what the process of advertising our short listing was like for the fellowship?

Host 4  
No, I can't. You can remind me if you like.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Okay um okay.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Well, this is where teams had to, uh, kind of select and shortlist applicants. They have to put it through to POST.

Host 4  
Yeah, yeah, I did all of that. Yeah.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And did you find the process cumbersome? Easy?

Host 4  
To be fair, our whole recruitment process is cumbersome, so this wasn't any more or less cumbersome. I think it needs to be relative. I suppose you could argue it should be an easier process. I don't.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
There's nothing that stuck out that this was easier, harder than similar processes.

Host 4  
No, not at the moment. Not that I can remember. You're asking me to cast my mind back a few years.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
OK, sure, no problem. And when your fellowship, when your fellow came on board, can you remember if you had induction plan for the fellow?

Host 4  
Yeah, I probably did.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And um, how important was having an induction plan, do you think?

Host 4  
That it was my plan rather than POST plan.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
OK. And how useful was that first embedding their fellow?

Host 4  
Yeah, absolutely. As again, it's very similar to if you had another member of staff, another new member of staff. It's not much different from that.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And so what would be the good elements within that briefly?

Host 4  
The good elements? Well, sort of making sure, making sure they knew what the job was about.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And if there was kind of general guidance for parliamentary hosts on having an induction plan, what sort of things would you recommend being in being slotted into them?

Host 4  
How the House of Commons works. How? Where? Research and information fits into that. And then probably more about some training about the specific team that they would be part of.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Okay and when the fellow is on board and how regular do you think the catchup should be?

Host 4  
With whom?

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
With the path

Host 4  
With the line manager.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Between the supervisor, yeah.

Host 4  
Um, well, I presume initially you would have. I didn't know you could specify that. I suppose not less than once a month, but it may require more meetings initially.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Okay. And do you have a sense of the blend, the best blend between online and face to face meetings?

Host 4  
The first time when I appointed the first parliamentary academic fellow, it was all online. There wasn't a choice and it worked fine, but now we have the option of face to face, so you know, obviously I think that's that changes the dynamic but because of the way the fact that parliamentary academics aren't necessarily going to be based in London, I think you have to accept that they will be online. A lot of it will be online.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
But do you think face to face should be part of the experience for both host and fellow?

Host 4  
Yeah, if possible. Yeah. You know, logistics being possible, logistics making it possible. But I wouldn't say it was impossible to do it without it.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And are you the things you'd recommend for supporting a fellow to get on with their work?

Host 4  
I think integration into the team, the host team is the key thing so that they feel part of the team once they feel part of the team, then they can talk to other team members about their work.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And how important do you think the Parliamentary supervisor is?

Host 4  
The person who supervising them? Yeah.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Would they facilitate the contacts with other team members?

Host 4  
Well, hopefully you have regular team meetings that they join, that would be one of my criteria that they would join in regular team meetings. That's the best way of finding out how a team works.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
How do you think impartiality should be handled between the fellow and the host?

Host 4  
Well, I don't know what the question is. What specifically what do you mean by handled?

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
OK. Do you think impartiality is understood differently between the academic and the parliamentary work of the fellow?

So you got the person who has an academic as an academic role. But they've also got Parliamentary role. And so as an academic in their academic work, they may, for example, be free to critique government policy. And do you see any challenges between?

Host 4  
Well, obviously they have to figure out that or we have to tell them that they're not allowed to do that. So that's the thing. You know, we have a different approach. So that's one of the key things that they do have to learn.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And was there ever an issue with the PAFs you've dealt with?

Host 4  
No, they've both been understood the difference.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And what guidance would did you give any specific guidance on social media use, for example?

Host 4  
I don't think so.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
The reason I'm asking that is cause academics have Twitter accounts, most of them.

Host 4  
A lot of our staff do as well.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Okay. And would you consider the academic being in the exactly the same guidelines or anything more specific?

Host 4  
Well, they have the same guidelines as other parliamentary researchers. They would still be if they're employed by Parliament, they would have to be held to the same standards.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And do you have any practical suggestions for how they manage that boundary?

Host 4  
I suppose if they felt they were unsure about something, they should consult their line manager, their supervisor. That would be my advice if you weren't sure about something to ask. The line manager in the first instance. Or if line manager is not available you could talk to somebody else who engages in social media and sort of, you know, run something past them. Or you could talk to our media people. They also deal with social media. So there are there are people they can go to. If they were unsure about something.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Okay um when you had your PAF on board. Were you aware over the PAFs within the organisation?

Host 4  
Yeah.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And did you know if your PAFs link up with other PAFs.

Host 4  
No, I think the knowledge exchange unit took responsibility for doing that.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Were there are any benefits to you as an individual from hosting a PAF?

Host 4  
They both of the ones I've hosted have added, you know, made a useful contribution to the team's output, so definitely yes.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And in what ways did they add to outputs? Are we talking?

Host 4  
Well, because they produce research papers and they respond to requests which is what they're hired to do, so to speak. So the fact that they do that and usually it's an area where we don't have expertise or we don't have enough expertise. So they add to that suite of papers and knowledge on that subject.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Were there any benefits to the to the wider organisation, do you think beyond the team?

Host 4  
Um, yes, they both of them actually interestingly, have recently organised seminars for with external speakers. And brought in academics from outside and engaged with members of Parliament on their topics. So both of them have been really good at doing that. Sort of cross House and academia networking.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Was that during the fellowship or after

Host 4  
One was during, one was after

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
Would you change anything about how you hosted your fellowships?

Host 4  
No, I think in both cases they've worked very well. So there's nothing I would change about what I did.

I think the some of the paperwork from the KEU is a bit arduous. And probably is more bureaucratic than it needs to be, but.

But no, but they've both been good, actually in very indifferent ways they made a positive contribution.

PRABHAKAR, Rajiv  
And with any might seem like an odd question, were there any shortcomings That you came across?

Host 4  
So the only thing to say is that sometimes if somebody works part time, which is what a PAF usually does, it's. But this is true, so also have staff we work part time that if requests come in for their area of work and their away from this job for a while, then that oh you know for three days for example it can it can put pressure on either when they come back or it could mean that somebody else and the team has to pick up that work because they're away for three days and there's something urgent that's coming.

But the reality is that certainly the first PAF I had, yeah, he was prepared to pick up things even when he wasn't, in theory, working for us. So it actually he was quite flexible and he would just take back the time and another way. So it was, it worked very well.