

DR TIMOTHY BEHRENS  
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Dear Search Committee,

It is my pleasure to recommend Dr. John Pearson for a faculty position in your department. I have known John and his work for several years, as we have pursued similar interests in the field of reward-guided decision making. In brief, since moving into the field from his PhD in physics, John's work in computational and cognitive neuroscience has been amongst the very best in the field.

Dr. Pearson possesses an enviable range of research skills. In addition to the computational and mathematical skills, acquired through his training in the physical sciences, John's work displays a deep and thoughtful understanding of cognitive neuroscience and neuroanatomy. Allied to his knowledge of electrophysiological recording techniques, these skills place John in a position that is almost unique worldwide. When John sets up his independent research group, he will be able to perform recording studies at single cell resolution, that are motivated by formal computational accounts of behaviour, and deployed in brain regions selected according to a thorough understanding of functional neuroanatomy. There are few groups in the world in such a position.

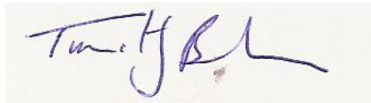
Dr. Pearson is not only unusual in his range of skills, but he is also extremely imaginative in deploying them. He is, I believe, the only scientist in the world making recordings in the posterior cingulate cortex to study reward-guided behaviour, and his decision to buck the prefrontal trend in the field has been an extremely successful one. Dr. Pearson has been able to show, almost single handedly, the important role that PCC has in guiding behavioural adaptation. Furthermore, in formalising his data and ideas in terms of the mathematics of change detection, he has provided deep and important insights into how the brain solves one of the most fundamental problems in behavioural control: the so-called "explore-exploit dilemma".

John Pearson is a very high quality scientist. He has an array of analytical, technical and biological skills. He is both highly imaginative and deeply thoughtful in his work. He is not

afraid to tackle big questions and he is a trend-setter in his approaches to tackling them. His most recent research direction, which aims to record from single cells in awake humans, yet again demonstrates his willingness and ability to forge research directions that others would be scared of taking. This latest endeavour promises to be particularly exciting for the large numbers of researchers, including myself, who study the human brain with less well-resolved techniques.

John would make an excellent colleague. I wholeheartedly recommend him for a faculty position in your department.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Behrens', on a light-colored rectangular background.

Tim Behrens  
Head of Connectivity  
FMRIB Centre  
University of Oxford