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Manchester Team Win Biotechnology Yes Business Plan Award

A team of bioscientists from the University of Manchester won the 'Best Plant Science Business Plan' award at the national Biotechnology YES (Young Entrepreneurs Scheme) competition held on 9th December 2008.

Biotechnology YES is an innovative national competition which has run annually for the last 13 years and aims encourage an entrepreneurial culture amongst postgraduate and postdoctoral scientists. This year's competition witnessed 73 teams of bioscientists battling against each other to develop business plans for hypothetical biotechnology companies and bid for funding to commercialise their ideas. The University of Manchester team Follix (pictured above) were one of 14 teams making it through to the final.'

Manchester Team Win Biotechnology Yes Business Plan Award

...continued

Follix is a University of Manchester spin out company that has developed a patented technology which uses targeted microspheres to generate long-term skincare solutions. The first product to be developed, Follicare, is a medical device which removes the need for frequent hair removal by targeting these microspheres to hair follicles. Follix has two additional products at an early stage in development; ApoCore, a long-term anti-perspirant, and SebaCore, a long-term acne treatment. The Board of Directors consists of Laura Roberts (Chief Scientific Officer) Leon Adams (Operations Director) Alexandra Hughes (Finance Director) Tom Longden (Marketing Director) and Annie Geraghty (Managing Director).

Speaking on behalf of the team Alexandra Hughes noted "In terms of the competition, we all agreed that it was a very intense experience. We learnt a massive amount about business including the importance of good financial planning and intellectual property strategies. We were also able to explore the complicated constraints which specifically apply to the biotech industry. Through the involvement of UMIC (The University of Manchester Incubator Company) and UMIP (The University of Manchester's Intellectual Property experts) we were able to meet people who have actually commercialised their research and are now building their biotech company's. It was very clear that UMIC and UMIP really believe in providing opportunities for potential biotech entrepreneurs to learn the basics and to practice their skills which was what the competition was all about, also it was fun!"

Congratulations also to another University of Manchester team KaleidoCHEM Solutions (pictured below) who made it through to the final 14.. The team comprising of Natalie Burrows (Managing Director), Amy Chadwick (Research and Development Director), Amy Adlard (Marketing Director), Matthew Humphries (Operations Director) and Katherine Scott (Finance Director) are five postgraduate students from the School of Pharmacy. The teams' business plan was based on their product MycoSight, an instant colour change detection kit for mycoplasma.

To find out more about the Biotechnology Yes Scheme visit;
www.biotechnologyyes.co.uk

The deadline for entries to the 2009 competition is 17th June.



Research Careers in the UK: A Review

At the beginning of 2008, John Denham, Secretary of State for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) announced his intention to develop a policy framework for higher education for the next ten to fifteen years, to inform the development of his Department's policies. The Secretary of State commissioned a set of independent contributions focusing on a number of broad higher education issues by several individuals and organisations from the higher education sector, to feed into this policy framework.

In his contribution, Professor Nigel Thrift considers issues relevant to research careers, in particular examining whether the perception that doctoral, post-doctoral and the subsequent stages of typical research careers are not seen as all that attractive to some bright graduates is truly the case, and if so, why the situation exists and what can be done to improve matters.

Professor Thrift highlights that the evidence suggests it's crucial for government, research councils, universities and industry to understand that the supply and development of the next generation of world class researchers is affected both by the initial attractiveness of research careers and the retention and the advancement of the most talented researchers (from the UK and overseas) at subsequent levels. Equally, that today's researchers are part of a research architecture which spans the globe. Researchers are more mobile than ever before and a "brain drain" of both promising and elite researchers from the UK continues to be a clear and present danger. The report highlights that international competition will continue to intensify and the UK may be left vulnerable if it does not take more decisive action in certain areas.

The review identifies a need for the UK government, universities and research councils to establish a more sophisticated understanding of the supply and demand of researchers across all sectors and disciplines so that policies can be better targeted.

To read Professor Thrift's full report please visit;
www.dius.gov.uk/policy/research_careers.html

Editor's Note

Congratulations to both team Follix and team KaleidoChem Solutions on reaching the finals of the 2008 Biotechnology Young Entrepreneurs Scheme, which demonstrates the excellent entrepreneurial talent at the University of Manchester.

This issue is bursting with information on training and development activities taking place both across the University and across the UK – so grab those pens to get a few dates in the diary!

As always should you have any suggestions or would like to include articles in future issues please don't hesitate to contact me.

The next issue of STEPS will be available in April 2009 at

www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/skills/steps/

Best wishes
Claire Hughes
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Jorge Cham: The Power of Procrastination

So you haven't heard of PHD (piled higher and deeper) comics? Then you're probably working too hard. These comics are the creation of Jorge Cham, former PhD student and Post-doc, turned full time comic-strip animator and proponent of procrastination, and are read by over 2 million readers at more than 1,000 universities worldwide.

Jorge started writing PHD comics during his time as a PhD student at Stanford University in an attempt to portray some of the joys and pains of life in grad school. Jorge found that there are key concerns and situations experienced by PhD students from all disciplines, and locations, and that we can take comfort in this whenever the academic world is getting us down.

Jorge came to Manchester for the first time back in December to give a talk that was attended by over 400 Postgraduates and Post-docs (and even one or two Academics). From talking to Jorge and watching the presentation some key points stand out. Firstly, that procrastination can be a good thing; a way to unwind and enable those Eureka moments. Jorge went on to list a number of famous procrastinators whose most renowned work was done when they should have been doing something else (Einstein, the inventors of Google and Yahoo, Jorge himself).



Secondly, he pointed out the benefits of a bit of perspective. While it's important to do well, it's also important to realise that if your PhD research doesn't win you the Nobel Prize it isn't the end of the world. Consider the most famous professors in your field: did they do their most celebrated work as students or once they had students to do the work for them?

When asked what piece of advice would have been valuable at the start of his graduate studies Jorge said he wished he'd been told it's ok to say "No". That, in spite of the constant pressure and feelings of guilt about not doing enough reading, lab work, talks etc, it's crucial to learn to make time for yourself, to stop and relax without feeling guilty.

So if you're looking for a way of putting off that next experiment; check out www.phdcomics.com.

The talk and book signing was sponsored by the: The Faculty of EPS, Graduate and Researcher Development, The University of Manchester Research Office, Vitae NW Hub and Researchers in Residence.

Sarah Whitehead



Beyond the PhD

Beyond the PhD... An online career resource for arts and humanities PhD researchers

This resource was conceived and developed by people with arts and humanities PhDs in collaboration with careers professionals. It brings together a desire to make visible what happens to postgraduate researchers after they graduate and an ambition to avoid easy prescriptions of 'getting your perfect job'.

What Beyond the PhD offers is a rare opportunity to listen in on the experiences of a range of different people from different backgrounds, ages and stages of life who have been through the PhD in an arts and humanities discipline and made the transition into a variety of work beyond it. Their candid personal reflections on facing challenges, responding to opportunities and reaching decisions are captured in segments of audio-interview.

To explore Beyond the PhD visit www.beyondthephd.co.uk/



Faculty of Engineering & Physical Sciences – Training Activities

Graduate Teaching Assistants Training	20 February 09
Planning the Final Year	26 February 09
Publishing Academic Papers	3 March 09
Creating Ideas	4 March 09
Teaching in Higher Education	5 March 09
Networking	6 March 09
Effective Presentations	10 March 09
Starting a Business	10 March 09
Developing the Postgraduate Manager	30 March – 2 April 09
Introduction to Research	5 – 6 May 09

For more information about the Graduate Development Scheme, please visit:
www.graduatedevelopment.eps.manchester.ac.uk/graddev/research

Faculty of Humanities – Training Activities

Presentations Practice and Feedback – Year 1	17 February 09
Improve your Time Management	23 February 09
Keeping your PhD on Track – Year 2	23 February 09
Writing Proposals - Workshop 2 Grants and Fellowships	24 February 09
Endnote Supported Training	25 February 09
Managing Long Documents in Word	25 February 09
Enhancing Memory	2 March 09
Academic Writing 1 – Insights into the Writing Process	3 March 09
Graduate Teaching Assistant Training	6 March 09
Networking	10 March 09

For further information on the Humanities training, please visit:
www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/acaserv/pgresearch/training

Faculty of Life Sciences – Training Activities

Academic Literacy Programme On-line Course	29 January – 12 March 09
Bioinformatics On-line Course	16 February – 1 May 09
Inaugural GLS Postgraduate Society Lecture – Bruce Alberts	26 March 09
1st Year PhD/MPhil Communications Workshop	16 & 17 April 09
New Students Induction	29 April 09
2nd Year PhD Workshop	11 & 12 June 09
Pathways Careers Event	12 & 15 June 09

For more information on the Faculty of Life Sciences Graduate Training Programme visit: www.ls.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduate/skillsdevelopment

Faculty of Medical & Human Sciences – Training Activities

Academic Writing in English: Session 13 [international students only]	18 February 09
Scientific Creativity	18 February 09
Academic Writing in English: Session 14 [international students only]	25 February 09
Academic Writing in English: Session 15 [international students only]	4 March 09
Effective Academic Writing: getting the message across	10 March 09
Academic Writing in English: Session 16 [international students only]	11 March 09
Academic Writing in English: Session 17 [international students only]	18 March 09

For more information on the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences Graduate Training Programme visit:
www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/pg/research/GTP

John Rylands University Library – Training Activities

Using Special Collections	3 March 09
Endnote	4 March 09 12 March 09
Web of Science	10 March 09
Using Images from Special Collections	18 March 09
Finding News	20 March 09
Electronic Journals	23 March 09
For further information on the JRUL training programme and to book onto a course please visit: www.library.manchester.ac.uk/usingthelibrary/researchers	

The British Library Postgraduate Training Days

In a new initiative, research postgraduate from across the UK are invited to attend a specially tailored day of talks, workshop and networking opportunities at the Library, focusing on your research topic.

Each day includes a general introduction to relevant research sources, curator talks and workshops, and details on how to get a Reader Pass.

The aims of the training days are;

- To introduce you to the range of research materials available in the British Library
- To offer special curator sessions and workshops in a range of topics
- To show you how to access the catalogues, and carry out bibliographic research on your topic
- To introduce you to specialist curators at the Library
- To give you an opportunity to network with postgraduate students from other universities across the UK

To find out more about postgraduate training opportunities please visit www.bl.uk/

PhD Conference on European Linguistic Minorities in Cross-Disciplinary Perspective

The Manchester Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence has been awarded Arts and Humanities Research Council funds to intensify its PhD training provision. Later this year the Centre will host a cross-disciplinary conference on the topic of European minority groups. A number of high-profile guest speakers will give plenary talks, and the conference will be open to students from Manchester and beyond. PhD students researching minority groups in Europe from any disciplinary angle (e.g. linguistics, social sciences, business, law, history, education, cultural studies, and politics) are invited to submit an abstract for the conference. A full call for papers will be issued in mid-February.

Full details will soon be available on the JMCE's website (section 'Young Researchers'). You can also sign up to the Centre's mailing list and stay abreast of all Europe-related JMCE events by going to the URL below.

www.manchester.ac.uk/jeanmonnet www.manchester.ac.uk/jeanmonnet/list.htm

Contact: Filippo Nereo, email: Filippo.Nereo@manchester.ac.uk



Vitae National GRADschools 2009 Launched

Postgraduate researchers can now view new information on GRADschools at:
www.vitae.ac.uk/gradschoolsinfo

GRADschools are designed to help researchers reflect upon and develop their skills as a postgraduate researcher and consider how they can apply these skills now and in the future. Specifically they encourage participants to:

- Develop their personal effectiveness
- Identify ways to communicate effectively
- Make more informed choices about their future
- Own and manage the next step of their career

The new web pages include information about three national GRADschools which are now open for applications:

- 28th April – 1st May, Bournemouth
- 27th – 31st October, Windermere
- 24th – 27th November, Windermere



Vitae – PGR Tips Engaging the Public in your Research

You may have noticed your funder or your institution encouraging you to spend time talking to the general public about your research. Doing this can be very rewarding. Vitae list opportunities and potential benefits of public engagement on their website

www.vitae.ac.uk/1238/Public-engagement.html. These include:

- Honing your presentation skills
- Thinking about your project's place in the bigger picture
- Increasing the visibility of your subject
- Building your own profile
- Having some fun and realising how much of an expert you really are.



It also contains a short “how to” list, which is expanded on here:

Consider your audience

This is even more important than for a presentation to your peers. Consider the age, interests and prior knowledge of your audience. Don't assume that your audience is stupid but avoid jargon and specialised language.

What sort of activity?

Lots of ideas and organisations that run activities are listed on the Vitae website. But for example consider writing for a non-specialist magazine, talking to school children, taking part in science or other festivals, taking part in an exhibition or any other opportunities that arise or that you can create. Talking to family or friends that work in different areas is all good practice, and also an opportunity to also get different perspectives on what you are doing, which could be useful.

Consider the purpose of your activity

You may want to debunk some myths research and researchers. More usually your aim will be to engage your audience in the wider field of your research. In the time you will have available it may not be possible to touch on your specific contribution to that field- but does it matter? Focus on one key message at a time

Delivery

What props or visual aids could you use to enliven your presentation? (check health and safety requirements!). What illustrations would add to your article? Try and relate your topic to your audience's situation and interests and think about the possible application of your research.

Seek advice when you are dealing with the media

Most institutions will have an office that can advise on how to deal with publicity.

Most of all- have fun!

Manchester Beacon for Public Engagement

Manchester holds one of the six newly formed 'Beacons' for public engagement. This is a collaboration between The University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, The University of Salford, the Museum of Science and Industry and Manchester: Knowledge Capital.

The Manchester Beacon is at the forefront of efforts to bring about a substantial change in the culture of academic institutions, encouraging and assisting staff and students to enthusiastically reach out, listen to and engage with the public.

The beacon, based in the Manchester Museum, will:

- establish a networking programme to bring together people in the public and private sectors
- fund multi-disciplinary partnerships to stimulate new and creative ways to make a difference to local communities
- signpost existing opportunities and initiatives for people to get involved with
- celebrate and share effective public engagement work locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- raise funds for more public engagement and embed it within the partners through professional development, recognition and reward initiatives.

To find out more visit;

www.publicengagement.ac.uk/beacons/manchester/default.htm



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