

incite

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RESEARCH STAFF SKILLS TRAINING NEWSLETTER

University Launches Newsletter for Research Staff



Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell
Vice-President for Research

A key commitment outlined in the *Manchester 2015 Agenda* is to international excellence in research, which in turn supports the goal of the University to be a world-leading institution. The University's research staff represents a vital part of our academic community and is crucial to the achievement of that goal. We are therefore committed to creating an environment that allows these individuals to excel and reach their full potential. By providing mechanisms to identify training needs and opportunities to meet these needs, we aim to enhance the future prospects of research staff across the University.

Incite has been launched to promote and support the professional development of researchers. It represents an important means of keeping those involved in research informed about transferable skills training and opportunities for personal development. Its cross-faculty focus will give a unique overview of the provisions made for our researchers, offering staff the chance to learn about successful and innovative approaches to the challenge of undertaking research in general and skills training in particular.

For the researchers, principal investigators and members of management who are working together to facilitate and to produce world-leading research at The University of Manchester, *Incite* is sure to become a valuable source of information and essential point of reference. ■



Professor Simon Gaskell
Vice-President for Research

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Welcome to *Incite*

Welcome to the first edition of *Incite*, a quarterly newsletter for research staff working at the University of Manchester written and edited by fellow researchers.

The primary objective of *Incite* is to keep research staff updated on opportunities for skills training and other development activities which may be of interest. More than this though, it will offer a platform for researchers to share their experiences and to voice their opinions on a

range of issues no matter what the focus of their work is or where they are based. By putting research staff in touch with each other in this way and by spotlighting the issues that affect us, we hope that *Incite* will help to enhance the institutional research community and raise its profile across the University.

Future issues will include features on the personal experiences of researchers from a wide variety of fields, tips and advice from colleagues

and peers, research staff perspectives on the skills training agenda, thoughts on recent training events and conference reports. For more information about how you can contribute to future editions of *Incite* and to give feedback on this first issue, please email

RSTrainingNews@manchester.ac.uk ■

Meet the Editors

Neil Dixon

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

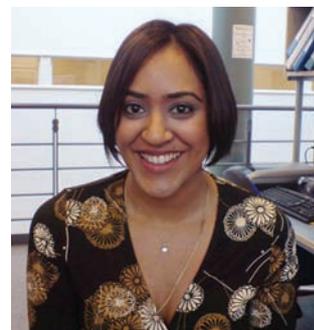
I trained as a Medicinal Chemist as an undergrad, and went on to study the biological targets involved in the bone disease Osteoporosis during my PhD at the University of Leeds. After I had travelled and worked my way around Latin America for a year, I took up a position under the supervision of Jason Micklefield, funded by the BBSRC and housed within the MIB. My current research involves the development of RNA based technologies to enable small molecule mediated genetic regulation. I have authored/co-authored nine peer-reviewed scientific research papers and am an avid mountaineer, scuba diver and general all-round adventurer.



Sarah Mohammad-Qureshi

Faculty of Life Sciences

After graduating from UMIST with a BSc in Biochemistry in 2000, I continued straight on to a PhD in Dr Graham Pavitt's lab. In 2004 I started a post-doc research position at UMIST and nowadays (after a short maternity break and the university merger) I am based in the Michael Smith Building, still under Graham's supervision. My current project involves working on the control of protein synthesis in baker's yeast, specifically in a protein factor that has been identified as responsible for a childhood brain disease. Between my lab-based research, presenting my results at international and national conferences, and negotiating meal plans with a toddler, I also represent the Gene Expression research theme at Post-Doc Staff Development meetings within the faculty.



Louise Mycock

Faculty of Humanities

I'm a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow hosted by the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures. After completing my undergraduate studies in English Language and Linguistics at the University of Durham, I moved to Hong Kong, living there for five years before leaving my job as Managing Editor of Macmillan Publishers (China) Ltd in order to return to the UK and work as a freelance proofreader, editor and writer. In 2002 I began studying at the University of Manchester for an MA in Linguistics. Over five years later, after completing my PhD and working as a Faculty of Humanities Research Fellow, I'm still in sunny Manchester. My research tackles the way in which different languages express questions both in speech and writing, which has the added advantage of providing me with the opportunity to travel and meet (extremely patient and helpful) native speakers in countries such as Hungary, Japan and Slovenia.



Kate Webster

Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

I work as a Research Assistant in the School of Psychological Sciences. After graduating with a degree in Linguistics in 2006, I began my first contract research position in March 2007. I work for Professor Geoffrey Beattie on an ESRC funded project investigating the effects of thematic importance on the generation of imagistic hand gestures. Our current work on the subject of gesture provides an opportunity to add to the fascinating ongoing debate on the function of non-verbal communication. It is still unclear exactly why we use gestures and under what conditions. For example, do we gesture to represent what is most important to us in a particular context, or are gestures predominantly instruments for expression and emphasis, or to aid word retrieval? It is hoped that our research will help to shed some light on the mechanisms behind the generation and the communicative function of hand gestures.



Breakthrough Breast Cancer to Open £5 million Research Unit in Manchester

The charity Breakthrough Breast Cancer has announced that it is to help fund a £5 million research unit at the University of Manchester, set to become one of the UK's foremost centres for breast cancer research. The centre will be associated with the Faculties of Life Sciences and Medical and Human Sciences and is due to open in 2008, close to the Paterson Institute for Cancer Research and the Christie Hospital.

Researchers at the centre will aim to advance current understanding of the earlier stages of cancer development in order to gain a more accurate and earlier diagnosis of the disease, thus advancing methods to prevent its occurrence.

The research centre will be overseen by some of Manchester's major names in the fight against cancer: Anthony Howell, Professor of Medical Oncology at the University of Manchester, will be the Director of the Breakthrough Breast Cancer Research Centre; Professor Charles Streuli of the Faculty of Life Sciences will be the Research Director of the new unit; and Nigel Bundred, Professor in Surgical Oncology at the University Hospital of South Manchester and Christie Hospitals in Manchester, will be the Clinical Director.

Jeremy Hughes, Chief Executive of Breakthrough Breast Cancer, said, "We are delighted to be developing a dedicated breast cancer research unit in Manchester, which has such a strong reputation for cancer research, and look forward to working with the Manchester cancer research centre."

To find out more, please visit: www.breakthrough.org.uk ■

Major Aerospace Research Institute Lands at the University

In October 2007, the University of Manchester launched a new Aerospace Research Institute (UMARI) that is set to become the leading aerospace research facility in the world. This multidisciplinary facility houses over 100 researchers and has already secured £2.2 million in funding from the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC). It also boasts the second largest number of EPSRC funded research projects for the aerospace and defence sector.



A major focus of the institute, which aims to achieve the targets set by the Advisory Council for Aerospace Research in Europe (ACARE), will be to develop a quieter, more efficient and more durable aircraft. The facility will also play a major role in the promotion of the University's Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences as it links its research with some of the biggest names in business, including Airbus, BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce and Rapiscan. For researchers at the institute, industrial access to world-class research and facilities will help secure collaborations and mean a great advance in solving real-time aerospace problems. Resources at the facility will also be available to researchers across the country and from varying disciplines.

Director of UMARI, Professor Phil Withers, said, "This new institute puts the University of Manchester at the top table of university aerospace research in Britain."

Read more about UMARI at www.umari.manchester.ac.uk ■

UK Research Councils recognise changes needed for successful development of early-career researchers

A Revised Concordat for UK Researchers

What is it? In 1996, a set of guiding principles was drawn up for those responsible for managing and supporting researchers. This concordat was initially agreed upon by several bodies including the UK Research Councils and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (Universities UK), and was revised this year.

How does it affect me? The concordat aims to "provide a single unambiguous statement of expectations and responsibilities of funding bodies and institutions with respect to the management of researchers". That is, to present clear guidelines for supporting researchers' careers, with advice on putting these into practice.

What does the revised version contain? The latest concordat takes into account new legislation relating to researchers and changes that have arisen in the terms and conditions of research grants in the last 21 years. In brief, it covers seven principles, ranging from the recruitment process through to ensuring regular monitoring and recognising the value of researchers.

What can I do? A section aimed at researchers outlines the importance of taking responsibility for your own personal and career development and encourages independent thought.

Where can I find out more? The Research Council UK website www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/rcdu/careermanagement.htm has the full draft version. A Careers in Research website specially aimed at early post-doctoral researchers is due to be launched soon.

Pathways for the Future

What is it? A report by the Council for Science and Technology (CST) entitled "Pathways for the Future: the early career of researchers in the UK" was published in October 2007. Similar to the Research Council UK's Concordat, this report recognises the contribution of researchers in creating research excellence in the UK and states that effective guidance and support specific to early-career researchers is needed to maintain this standing.

How does it affect me? Many academic researchers at the start of their careers have reported feeling dissatisfied and undervalued, with very little extra responsibility given to them. The CST believes that action is required to reverse this trend and provide improved working conditions for researchers.

What does it contain? The CST proposes two main ways in which the current situation of researchers can be improved: by presenting a clear framework for career progression and by allowing researchers greater independence and more responsibility.

What can I do? Researchers are encouraged to interact with their employers and participate in career and personal development training opportunities.

Where can I find out more? CST's news webpage contains links to the complete report www2.cst.gov.uk/cst/news. The report also contains details of previous publications concerned with the interests of early-career researchers. ■

Q&A Case Study with Sarah Davies of the Psychology Support Group (PSG)

• When and how was the PSG founded?

The PSG group started out as the Research Assistant Support group (RAS). The group was set up in May 2006 by Vicky Absalom and Angela Rylands. Both were Research Assistants in the Department of Clinical Psychology at the time and they formed the group as a forum of support for students, researchers and other academics who work within Psychology. The group has grown steadily over the last 18 months and is now run by eight of us in total, including Research Assistants, PhD students and a project support worker. The group meetings are open to everyone – students, postgrads and staff alike – and are ideal for anyone who is interested in a career in Psychology.

• What's the format of a normal PSG meeting?

PSG meetings are held monthly and are a chance for people with an interest in Psychology to get together and interact. Meetings are attended by an invited speaker who delivers an informal talk about the area of Psychology they work in. Attendees are given the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback from the speaker. At the end of meetings we also circulate current local job vacancies.

• How has the PSG helped you in your work/career?

Being part of the PSG has been really beneficial. It has been a great opportunity for me to meet other people with similar career interests, which is fantastic as it provides a strong support system. It has also been a brilliant way to expand my knowledge about different areas of research and different career paths. The group has also provided me with the opportunity to work as part of a team, which is a nice contrast to my RA post which requires me to work largely on my own.

• What does the PSG offer to the research community as a whole at the University?

The PSG offers a network for any researchers or people interested in Psychology to discuss relevant issues. Research skills are quite transferable and as such our talks can be useful to any researcher within the University, not purely those within the School of Psychological Sciences. For instance, we have had attendees from Language, Education and Biological Sciences before. We also hold talks regarding careers and training. Andrea Grace Rannard gave a talk over the summer about Manchester Student Volunteers which was relevant to anyone wanting to improve their CV.

• What have you got coming up over the next few months?

The New Year will see a slightly altered PSG with more emphasis placed on the social interaction side of the group than there has been over the past year. The plan this year's meetings will alternate between meetings attended by an invited speaker and social meetings where people can come along to network and discuss any issues they may have, ask for advice or just chat about what they are doing at the time. We're hoping that this will help to create a feeling of community and provide a stronger support system for attendees.

To find out more about the PSG, go to www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/research/PSG or email the group at psg.manchester@yahoo.co.uk. You can also check out the Facebook group 'Psychology Support Group (PSG)', which is intended to act as an online forum for discussions and support. ■



Faculties of Life Sciences and Medical and Human Sciences Research Staff Careers Day



Over 100 researchers from the Faculties of Life Sciences (FLS) and Medical and Human Sciences (FMHS) attended the inaugural Research Staff Careers Day at Whitworth Hall on Wednesday, 10 October 2007. The event, which was sponsored by Naturejobs, highlighted the wide range of career options available to biomedical scientists, the importance of career planning and the transferable skills that are valued in different sectors.

Professor Phil Baker, Associate Dean for Research in FMHS, kick-started the day. He warmly welcomed everyone and acknowledged the wealth of talent and the major contribution that members of research staff make in the execution of high quality research at the University. The keynote presentation was given by Dr Graeme Wilkinson (AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals), who outlined the importance of research skills from the industrial R&D perspective. Elizabeth Wilkinson, head of postgraduate careers at the University, followed with motivational and practical advice on how to advance your career. This was reinforced by a Q&A session with recruiters and career consultants.

The afternoon was devoted to round-table discussion sessions giving researchers the opportunity to talk face to face with experienced people from across the scientific sector. More than 50 contributors offered their time to speak with research staff. These included representatives from academic research and administration, the research councils, charities and secondary schools, as well as experts in medical and scientific communications, intellectual property, industrial research, scientific sales/technical support, IT management and HE teaching.

The event was a very positive experience for all involved. Research staff participants found the day inspiring, offering comments such as:

"Excellent career planning advice ... Helped to clarify own career choices and gave me further ideas for other possibilities."

"... the day was well organised, informal, and relaxed, and made it easy to address questions that I had thought to ask."

Contributor Dr Simon Cutler, Innovation Programme Manager for the BBSRC, described his experience of the event by saying, "it was a pleasure talking to so many enthusiastic participants – they are a credit to the University".

Each of the contributors also completed a Career Profile questionnaire giving details of their career progression, key tasks and responsibilities, essential skills and experience needed and other useful advice for anyone considering a similar career. All of these profiles have been compiled to form a booklet which can be made available to research staff or accessed online at www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/trainingteam/naturejobs

As a follow-up to this successful event the organizers, Dr Sarah Ashworth (FLS) and Dr Rachel Cowen (FMHS), are running a workshop titled "Maximize the Impact of your CV" on 14th January 2008. To register, email laura.dunbar@manchester.ac.uk.

Rachel Cowen, *Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences* ■

Research Professional – funding and much more!

The ResearchResearch website is the pan-faculty one-stop shop for information on wide-ranging national and international funding opportunities. The University of Manchester has also subscribed to the Research Professional (RP) upgrade.

The new, improved RP service is a combination of content and technology. There is tighter integration of the news and funding information, and RP now has a modern interface that makes many previously time-consuming tasks simple. Users can, for example, search the funding database, save the results as a folder of opportunities and then click a button to share the results with colleagues. In addition, the University has subscribed to the Networked service, whose benefits include:

- **SHARING**

Instead of trying to figure out your own alert criteria, researchers can check the boxes of

shared searches that interest them which have been created by a 'workgroup' editor (such as a School research coordinator). Not only is a lot of duplicated effort cut out, searches can be based on roles or multidisciplinary institutional themes and results are more precise, reducing the burden on individuals.

- **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

This feature permits opportunities to be annotated with guidance such as the date of internal deadlines, academic and administrative contacts and general comments.

- **COMMUNICATIONS**

Once an opportunity has been annotated, those annotations are included whenever it is viewed. For researchers, this reduces the chances of information overload and the result is a one-stop shop for information and guidance.



The new features of RP will be available in March 2008. To subscribe and learn more, go to www.researchresearch.com ■

Where do we go from here?

Once again, I am tantalisingly close to that critical result, upon which rests the paper essential for the grant application to keep me in full-time employment. Suddenly, something brings the whole lot crashing down and once the swearing is over, I remain philosophical about my future in academic research.

The pressure of publishing and applying for ever-elusive fellowships can put off all but the absolutely determined, leading to inevitable disillusionment with the career structure in academia. However, our plight is starting to be noticed. The Roberts Agenda identified a shortfall in the training of contract research staff and funds subsequently allocated have been used to employ our Research Staff Representatives. In September 2007 the inaugural Source Event, a careers day for early-career Life and Medical Science researchers, was organised by Naturejobs in London. Add to this the careers days hosted by the University and there are clearly opportunities for those of us with itchy feet to meet people from a diverse range of jobs.

However, these are only any good if we support and make use of such resources. Are we making the most of them? One psychological obstacle is that of guilt: "I've invested a lot of time and energy in academic research, surely I must continue?" The number of non-research careers for which a PhD is a prerequisite indicates that there is more to a PhD than knowing a hell of a lot about a very narrow field (that popular phrase "transferable skills"!). Although many members of research staff do not know what to do next, nobody is going to drop the perfect job in our laps. Each of us needs to develop an understanding of what makes us tick and actively research avenues which fulfil our needs. We can take charge of our own futures and grasp the opportunities for training, investigating new careers and networking presented to us, perhaps through careers events and information sources such as this newsletter. And if you find something you might enjoy, don't be afraid to give it a go!

Kate Silverthorne,
Faculty of Life Sciences ■



Useful resources

The University of Manchester...

Careers

www.careers.manchester.ac.uk

IT training courses

www.manchester.ac.uk/itservices/trainingcourses

Manchester Science Enterprise Centre

www.msec.ac.uk

STDU courses

www.manchester.ac.uk/training

The University of Manchester Intellectual Property Limited

www.umip.com

... and beyond

FindAPostDoc.com

www.findapostdoc.com

Jobs in Research, Science, Academic & Related Professions

www.jobs.ac.uk

National Research Staff/Postdoc Association of the UK

<http://scratchpad.wikia.com/index.php?title=Category:NationalpostdocUK>

Naturejobs

www.naturejobs.com

New Scientist Jobs

www.newscientistjobs.com

Research Councils UK

www.rcuk.ac.uk

ResearchResearch

www.researchresearch.com

United Kingdom Research Office (UKRO)

www.ukro.ac.uk ■

Skills training events calendar

January 2008

- 14 Academic CV Skills, *MHS & LS*
- 15 Academic Writing Skills for Research Staff, *EPS*
- 21 Scientific Abstracts, *MHS*
- 23 ESRC Funding Workshop, *Hum*
- 30 AHRC Funding Workshop, *Hum*
- 31 Annual Research Staff Conference: 'Career Progression', *Hum*
Career Review Clinic (pre-interviews 24th January), *EPS*

February 2008

- 6 Scientific Posters, *MHS*
- 8 FLS Research Staff Bulletin (edition 12), *LS*
- 13 Career Review Clinic (pre-interviews 6th February), *EPS*
Peer Review, *MHS*
- 28 Engaging with the Public, *Hum*

March 2008

- 4 Oral Presentation Skills: Day 1, *MHS*
- 7 FLS Research Staff Bulletin (edition 13), *LS*
- 12 Oral Presentation Skills: Day 2, *MHS*
Building a Research Funding Portfolio, *EPS*

April 2008

Second Annual Away Day for Research Staff, *EPS* (TBC)

- 1 Effective Publications, *MHS*
- 21 Faculty Away Day, *MHS*

Further information and bookings

For further information on any of the above or to find out how to book a place, visit/contact:

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Science (EPS)

www.manchester.ac.uk/eps/resdev

Faculty of Humanities (Hum)

www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/acaserv/rsforum/workshops

Faculty of Life Sciences (LS)

email Sarah.Ashworth@manchester.ac.uk

Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences (MHS)

www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/restrain/workshops/calendar



The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL
Royal Charter Number RC000797
J1769 12.07

Contacts

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Research Staff Training Contact

Jim Boran: Jim.Boran@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 306 4166

IT support

it-servicedesk@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 306 3535

Human Resources

tel 0161 306 4058

Faculty of Humanities

Research Staff Training Contact

Susan Hogan: Susan.Hogan@manchester.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 306 1116

IT support

servicedeskhum@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 275 4999
Manchester Business School: itservicesstaffmbs@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 275 6321

Human Resources

tel 0161 275 2038

www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/facserv/humanresources

Faculty of Life Sciences

Research Staff Training Contact

Sarah Ashworth: Sarah.Ashworth@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 275 1683

IT support

itServiceDesk.lifesciences@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 275 1688

Human Resources

tel 0161 275 2030

Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

Research Staff Training Contact

Rachel Cowen: Rachel.L.Cowen@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 275 5634

IT support

itservicedesk.mhs@manchester.ac.uk
tel 0161 275 1111

Human Resources

www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/humanresources

Careers Service

www.careers.manchester.ac.uk

Security

tel 0161 306 9966

Counselling Service

tel 0161 275 2864
counsel.service@manchester.ac.uk

Contributions and feedback

We are looking for news or article contributions for forthcoming issues of *Incite* and would be happy to hear about any topics you wish to see discussed.

Contributions could include:

- personal experiences within your field
- opinions on the skills training agenda
- thoughts on recent training events
- conference reports
- a career case study

The deadlines for contributions to future issues of *Incite* are:

- 7 March 2008 for Issue 2
- 8 August 2008 for Issue 3
- 3 October 2008 for Issue 4

For further information about submitting contributions or to give us your feedback on this newsletter, please email the editor at

RSTrainingNews@manchester.ac.uk ■