

Lancaster University: peer-to-peer postgraduate researcher coaching

Following an initial university wide pilot programme of peer-to-peer coaching, the Faculty of Science and Technology now offer a peer-to-peer coaching programme.

The rationale was that providing peer-to-peer training for postgraduate researchers provides a way of giving them self-coaching skills and skills to support their peers, while also enhancing their employability skills.

The objectives of the programme are to apply coaching skills to:

- support the performance and development of individual researchers
- to train researchers in peer coaching skills to enable better peer support
- to enable researchers to self-coach in areas identified from the RDF.

The programme is run by a lecturer who is a professional trained coach and an ICF PCC external coach.

The programme involves a two day interactive experiential training programme, peer-to-peer practice and group coaching sessions over a period of ten weeks, and a one day follow up workshop.

Postgraduate researchers are given:

- an introduction to basic coaching techniques
- experience of being coached and coaching
- peer support with your PhD experience
- experience of supporting other PhD students in a structured way
- tools to work with during their PhD and beyond.

Coachee quotes:

“Try to make more concrete aims that I can achieve rather than being overwhelmed by stressful work I schedule. It helps me to keep doing instead of worrying about issues that I have.”

“If I hadn't taken this programme I think I would be carrying on trying to squeeze more time and energy out of what there already is – and I suppose possibly then extending my PhD into infinity.”

“After the workshops I declared my intention to put in a paper for [a] conference next year. I have since written the paper and have been invited for it to be included in a symposium submission.”

“I gave a presentation ...and I actually enjoyed it rather than worrying whether I was hitting the right tone.”

Coachee quotes:

“The PhD can be one boring, long, draining effort and motivation is ever diminishing, but by focusing on the end results, piece by piece I’m progressing at a rate that I can monitor and be proud of getting the results.”

“Being confident enough to speak up for myself and my decisions during meetings with supervisors. Also knowing why it is that I am procrastinating, recognising how that will affect my work and how this will make me feel. By knowing this I can better address problems (changing the job I am doing at that time, going to the gym for a break, speaking to somebody about problem). Since doing the workshop I have made significant progress with my writing and part of the reason has been recognising my gremlins and not letting them stop me.”

“Now I can faster identify what should be done on my research task. Therefore now it is much easier for me to start working on the task, so the time between the receiving the task and the start of working on the task became shorter. Meetings with supervisor became better – now I can use time of our supervision meeting more effectively. I feel more motivated because I learnt how to deal with problems, which usually decreased my motivation.”

For further information

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