



# **Engaging students to enhance the postgraduate research experience**

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# Engagement – why?

1. A quality mechanism
2. A principled approach to building relationships among and between postgraduate research communities

‘Engagement’ can straddle both,  
crossing the values-divide...

We are engaging PGR students through...

1. ...the University's  
**Effective Research  
Development Programme**

2. ...participation in  
**Research  
Supervisor  
Development  
sessions**

3. ...an HEA-accredited  
**learning and teaching  
programme**

# Effective Researcher Development Programme (1)

- Exeter's take on the Roberts agenda
- Wide range of workshops
- Repeated throughout the year
- High levels of engagement (100% for some RCs)
- Highly recommended by participants

# Effective Researcher Development Programme (2)

- PGR students ‘employed’ to expand and enhance the programme
- Referred to as **Skills Ambassadors**
- Help to:
  - Coordinate School-based events
  - Generate new ideas
  - Improve engagement
  - Develop a ‘skills culture’

# Effective Researcher Development Programme (3)

- Ambassadors helped by **Directors of Postgraduate Study** within Schools
- Ambassadors contribute to some training sessions
- One Ambassador per School (12 in all)
- Usually 2<sup>nd</sup> yr students, or PT equivalent
- **Has led to a significant increase in student participation (25% +)**

# Research supervisor development

- We needed a **new strategy**: brought in an external consultant
- Ran a **pilot session** for new and early career supervisors
- **Embedded this provision** in policy and practice
- Set up **rolling programme** of CPD sessions for all supervisors, in each academic School

## Supervisor development: students' roles

- PGR student representatives, including Skills Ambassadors, lead part of the regular developmental session for new supervisors
- PGR students becoming increasingly involved in School-based sessions for all supervisors, e.g by sitting as a panel of advisers for part of the session.

# Learning and teaching programme:

- helps PGR students consider their own **research** in relation to **learning**
- brings PGRs from different Schools together, leading to lively, cross-disciplinary engagements: face-to-face and online
- provides explicit opportunities provided for them to re-think the nature of knowledge and 'reality' in their subject discipline, and to consider **issues of interdisciplinarity** in relation to their own research.

# Conclusion

- Still **more to do....** for example, employ students more pro-actively as change agents in a variety of contexts
- Overall, **these forms of engagement have all been successful** – a platform from which to **cultivate imaginative, collaborative research communities**
- For more information, or to share *your* ideas: [c.b.wood@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:c.b.wood@exeter.ac.uk)

Time to discuss & share ideas!