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Regional News

Thank You

Welcome to the final edition of the SWW Hub Newsletter in 2007. Next year promises to bring new but exciting challenges as we move into the new Hub contract that runs from 2008 – 2012. We will be continuing to support the skills development of postgraduate researchers whilst beginning the task of broadening the programme to all researchers, including research staff. This issue of the Newsletter features an article by Dr Janet Metcalfe, Director of the UK GRAD programme which looks forward to the New Year and the new contract, but also reflects on achievements and milestones over the last five years.

Terri Delahunty (Hub Co-ordinator) and I would like to take this opportunity of saying a special thank you to all members of the Hub Steering Group (past and present) who have made such valuable contributions to the strategic thinking of the Hub since its inception in 2003. In addition we would like to thank you, our network, for your support, comments, contributions, and attendance at our events. We look forward to continuing and developing our relationship over the next five years. With all good wishes for the New Year.

Terri Delahunty and Anne Goodman.

Good Practice Event – February 27 2008

A reminder to put this date in your new diaries. This, our fifth such event, will be held at the Millennium Centre, Cardiff Bay. **Researcher Development: Opportunities and Challenges** will feature a keynote address by Dr Janet Metcalfe, Director of the UK GRAD programme.

Delegates will be able to choose from a range of workshops looking at issues affecting postgraduate researchers and the staff who support them. To reflect the wider remit of the new contract, the programme will include workshops for those supporting research staff and will also address issues that affect both groups. Bookings will open early in the New Year.

It's All in the Blend

This Practitioners' Forum on blended learning was held on December 14 in Cardiff. 60 delegates from across the region attended and heard Professor Gilly Salmon, Professor of E-learning and Learning Technologies, Beyond Distance Research Alliance, University of Leicester, deliver a stimulating and thought provoking keynote address. Hayden Blackey, Manager, Blending Learning, University of Glamorgan shared his thoughts on delivering blended learning to researchers; this was followed by a number of workshops showcasing practice in the region and beyond. Presentations from the event will be available on www.grad.ac.uk/swwhub shortly.

UK GRAD National News

Looking forward to the New Year

Dr Janet Metcalfe, Director, UK GRAD Programme

The end of the year is fast approaching. Not only has this year flown past, but also the last five years. Looking back as the UK GRAD Programme comes to the end of its five-year contract, I can't believe how fast time has flown by, or how much we have all achieved over this period.

We launched the UK GRAD Programme at our (pre-Roberts) 'Good Practice Workshop' in January 2003. At that time we had three nascent 'Hubs' – hosted by the Universities of Manchester, Leeds and Edinburgh –

and lots of good intentions of encouraging local universities to work together to share practice and embed personal development of researchers into research degree programmes. We didn't know whether it would work, but we all believed it was the right approach.

Even so, I have to confess to being surprised by hugely positive reaction to the idea of the regional Hubs. Within the first year, the Hubs had engaged all their regional institutions, identifying key contacts, running regional good practice events and building and informing a database of individuals interested in developing postgraduate researchers. By the end of the first year, HEIs in three regions had got together to form Hubs. We now have eight Hubs covering all the institutions across the UK.

Of course, Sir Gareth Roberts' recommendations in 'Set for Success' and the accompanying Government money helped enormously. This provided both the money and senior level attention at universities, particularly with large numbers of Research Council funded researchers, to highlight and kick-start the agenda. The 2003 introduction of the QAA's revised Section One of their Code of Practice helped too.

I believe, however, that what has been most influential has been the willingness of individuals and institutions to engage with our vision for the UK GRAD Programme 'for all postgraduate researchers to be fully equipped and encouraged to complete their studies successfully and to make the transition from their PhD studies to their future careers'.

Our ethos always has been to work in partnership with all stakeholders: to promote the importance of developing postgraduate researchers, encourage the sharing of practice and experience, and to develop and provide opportunities for skills development. I

can honestly say that I continue to be overwhelmed by the enthusiasm, openness and commitment shown throughout the extended UK GRAD network, now consisting of over 3500 registered contacts, in supporting our work.

But I don't want you to think that because this is the end of the UK GRAD contract, we are saying good-bye. CRAC, in partnership with myself, UK GRAD Hubs and UKHERD (the Higher Education Researcher Development group), is thrilled to have secured funding for the next five years. The new programme – yet to be named - will continue to build on the momentum gained during the UK GRAD contract in supporting postgraduate researchers, while widening the scope of our remit to include research staff.

Through the new programme we will continue to provide ongoing activities and support for postgraduate researchers in much the same way as through the UK GRAD Programme. Our 2008 programme of provision of national and local GRADschools and other courses for postgraduate researchers is contained in this newsletter.

In preparation for the official launch of the new programme in September 2008 we will be working with the Hubs, the UKHERD network, and more generally with the sector to develop our offer to research staff and individuals supporting research staff.

Overall, our vision is that the UK is world-class in supporting the personal, professional, and career development of all researchers. Building on the successes of UK GRAD, the new programme aims to:

- champion the development and implementation of effective policy

- enhance higher education provision through sharing practice and resources
- provide access to development opportunities and resources
- build an evidence base to support the researcher development agenda.

There are specific innovations that will characterise the new 'researcher development' programme:

- five overarching network groups comprising researchers, HE staff supporting researchers, those interested in policy relating to researcher development, academics and employers, will engage all stakeholders interested in developing and supporting researchers
- the website will be 'the first port of call for information about developing researchers and profiling researcher careers'. Extensive tools for facilitating online communities will complement a 'just for researchers' section, incorporating and building on the proposed *Research Careers Mapping Tool* as well as targeted support for other stakeholder groups
- a trainers' support unit will provide access to development, training resources, advice, and guidance to HE staff responsible for developing researchers. It will also support the programme of local GRADschools
- national provision will include a small programme of national GRADschools and a specific programme of activities to support Research Council-funded researchers focused around collaborative activities with individual Councils, capitalising on the training and

- support they offer directly to their own researchers
- a new incubator unit will work with the sector to innovate and leverage existing good practice identified in and outside the sector. It will pilot and promote the latest developments in providing career management and personal and professional development opportunities for researchers
- building an evidence base will have a higher priority in the new programme and a research and development unit will undertake research and evaluation projects to complement and support the agenda of the Rugby Team.

Throughout the year, we will continue to keep you informed and consult you as we develop our provision within the new programme and specifically to support the research staff agenda.

We are all enthusiastically looking forward to the New Year, with an exciting list of resolutions that, together with our existing and new colleagues, networks and stakeholders, we will achieve during 2008. Here's to a Happy New Year!

Improving postgraduate career development

To help inform developments and support for future postgraduate researchers, UK GRAD is surveying those who have completed a doctorate between 2001-2005. These people will be in a unique position to reflect on their experiences and identify how their postgraduate experience influenced and prepared them for their future career paths.

This information will provide a really positive contribution to the career development support of future postgraduate researchers by enabling UK GRAD to understand when and what useful interventions should be made and share this with those

supporting postgraduates within institutions and further afield.

The first stage in this process is to conduct an online survey of people who have completed a doctorate. Please encourage any relevant contacts to complete the survey, which is available on www.survey.crac.org.uk/transition. The survey is open until to January 11 2008.

Ask the Experts

2007's 'Ask the Experts' on line chat ran at the end of November. The theme of the event was **Career planning - How to stand out from the crowd** and it provided an opportunity for PhD researchers to ask career related questions to an experienced team of experts from academia and the private, public, and not for profit sectors.

Despite a technical problem that caused the cancellation of the public sector chat, the event was extremely successful and attracted over 90 participants throughout the day. The chat generated lots of discussion around what it was like to work in these sectors, what was involved in these jobs, and what employers were really looking for from applicants.

Further details about the event, including the transcripts from the chat, can be found at:

www.grad.ac.uk/asktheexperts2007

Other News

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2008: Invitation for HE institutions

PRES is designed to help institutions to enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree provision by collecting feedback from current research students. It is an online

survey that is student-centred, easy to use, voluntary, flexible. cost-effective, anonymous, secure and allows comparative analysis across the sector. If you wish to be a part of PRES 2008 cohort please express your interest by 31 January 2008 by emailing surveys@heacademy.ac.uk. For more information about PRES 2008 and the PRES 2007 final report please go to: www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/surveys/pres. This link also allows you to view the presentations made at the PRES event held in Birmingham in December.

Entrepreneurship Days at the British Library

Sara Gould, The British Library, Higher Education writes:

Two very successful Entrepreneurship Days for postgraduate researchers were held at the British Library on 26 November and 3 December 2007.

All of the PGRs that came from different universities across the UK were already seriously considering starting their own business - or indeed had already started. During the day, they learnt the importance of assessing their markets and identifying target audiences and key players, before putting it all into practice.

Working in small groups, delegates had to come up with a business idea before using the online business information databases in the Library's Business & IP Centre to explore the market size, key audiences, competitors, potential partners and industry trends. The Business & IP Centre is well equipped for this as it offers access to the UK's largest collection of business information, including market research reports, company directories, trade journals and IP resources. The day ended with team presentations to an expert panel, who considered each team's passion for their idea as well as the idea itself and the use they had made of the Library's resources.

The days were organised in partnership with UK GRAD, and supported by Imperial College Graduate School, and form part of the Library's national research training days for postgraduate students. For further information about this programme, contact highereducation@bl.uk.

THES Higher Award 2007 winners announced

The winners of THES Higher Awards were announced at the Awards dinner on November 29 at Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London.

This year, the THES Higher Awards saw over 90 % of the UK universities entering in one or more of the 18 categories available and demonstrating a breadth of excellent practice with over 100 entries shortlisted across the different categories.

The Award for Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers went to the St Andrews University for their GRADskills entry. This Award, sponsored by RCUK in association with UK GRAD, aims to recognise the groundbreaking work being undertaken by higher education institutions in building a better future for UK research and researchers.

Other shortlisted candidates in this category included: *How to be an Effective Researcher* from Edinburgh University, *Newcastle Business School* from Northumbria University, *Research Staff Support Team* from Newcastle University and *Transitions* from the University of East Anglia.

Janet Metcalfe, Director of the UK GRAD Programme, said "We have been impressed by the overall quality of the competition and all the shortlisted finalists provided evidence of outstanding support for researchers. We hope their innovative approaches will inspire other universities in developing their own practice."

For information, universities in the region who were also winners included:

Exeter University: University of the Year and

Young Academic Author of the Year: Richard Toye, Senior Lecturer in History,

Bristol University: Outstanding Contribution to Sustainable Development

Our congratulations to all.

PostgraduateStudentships.co.uk: helping supervisors attract good PhD students

Supervisors with a PhD studentship or a PhD project to offer looking for a cost effective means of reaching a wide range of potential postgraduates, may find

PostgraduateStudentships.co.uk can help. After only a year, the site is already attracting around 60,000 individual visits per month from the UK and around the world looking for postgraduate study and funding opportunities. And as its name indicates, it is highly targeted and easily accessible by and designed specifically for intending postgraduates.

PostgraduateStudentships.co.uk has the added advantage that it is the only site where students can view a wide range of general funding from charities, trusts and research councils directly alongside University funding: ideal for unfunded projects, it also helps students look for funding if they are not eligible for specific studentships but still want to study within that department. The site provides the information they need to look for appropriate general funding, direct from the University advert, which in turn can help departments attract a wider range of applicants.

Nearly 250 University Departments and Institutes are registered on the site, and studentships and unfunded

projects (as well as Professional Doctorates, Masters and postgraduate open days) can be posted on the site for as little as £40 each, and sometimes less.

To find out more, and about how to advertise on the site, please visit: www.PostgraduateStudentships.co.uk/providers_advertisers or contact Jane Penrose, Director of PostgraduateStudentships.co.uk on: jane.penrose@postgraduatestudentships.co.uk

News from the Research Councils

RCUK Academic Fellowships Scheme

The RCUK Academic Fellowships Scheme provides 800 of the UK's best researchers with a pathway to a permanent academic position. The scheme has successfully driven a culture change in the academic community, encouraging HEIs to develop their policies for the support of researchers and improve career paths. A number of HEIs have created their own schemes analogous to the Academic Fellowships model.

As a result, Research Councils UK will be looking to define its future approach and has no immediate plans to award new RCUK Academic Fellowships in the near future, but will continue to work with the sector to attract the most creative minds into research and to help research organisations manage their staff and develop their careers.

RCUK and Research Council Delivery Plans

The seven Research Councils and RCUK have published their Delivery Plans for 2008/09 to 2010/11 to coincide with the announcement of the Science Budget allocations. The RCUK delivery plan reflects the Research Councils' priorities for joint working for 2008-09 to 2010-11 and

complements the Research Councils' individual delivery plans.

RCUK priorities fall into three inter-related areas: Skilled people, Knowledge, and Economic impact. In supporting activities in these areas RCUK will build partnerships with researchers and research funders overseas and potential beneficiaries. RCUK works to engage the public in its work. The Plans can be seen at: www.rcuk.ac.uk/news/071212.htm.

European Charter & Code for Researchers: EC's Response to GAP Analysis

The European Commission's has responded the UK HE Sector gap analysis, published by Universities UK and Research Councils UK (www.grad.ac.uk/researcherscareers). The response acknowledges that the results of this gap analysis demonstrate that current guidance and practices in the UK already present a high level of compliance with the Charter and Code, and provides clarification to the UK where definitions contained within the Charter and Code may be open to ambiguity or mis-interpretation. See www.rcuk.ac.uk/news/071204.htm for the full response.

New Chair for AHRC

Sir Alan Wilson FBA FRS, Professor of Urban and regional Systems, University College, London has been appointed as the new Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Events for You

UKCGE Winter Conference 2008
Responding to Change in
Postgraduate Recruitment
This will be held on February 12 at the British Library Conference centre, London. For more details, go to: www.ukcge.ac.uk

Events & News for Your Researchers

GRADschool Dates

The new programme of GRADschools has been launched. Details in Diary Dates on page. More information can be found on www.grad.ac.uk/gradschools.

Conferences at Cardiff University

The following two events might be of interest to your researchers. Both are open to PGRs at neighbouring institutions:

Spotlight on Social Sciences: January 21

This conference (organised by and for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers) will showcase current research in the social and economic sciences at Cardiff and at neighbouring institutions. It will provide participants with a valuable opportunity to meet other researchers and establish links. To book a place, email: Rebecca Green greenR1@cardiff.ac.uk

Voice of Humanities: March 20

A call for papers for this conference will be issued in the New Year.



Diary Dates

January

9-10, UKGRAD Policy Forum,
Birmingham
21, Spotlight on Social Sciences,
Cardiff University

February

12, UKCGE Winter Conference,
London
27, SWW Hub Good Practice event,
Cardiff

March

7-16 National Science and
Engineering week
20, Voice of Humanities, Cardiff
University

April

8-9 CETL Conference, Oxford



Diary Dates

GRADschools

January

21-24, Local GRADSchool, Barony
Castle

March

10-13, Local GRADSchool, Scalford
Hall
17-20, Local GRADschool, Oxford
17-20, Local GRADschool, Scalford
Hall

April

1-4, Local GRADschool, Edinburgh
18-21, Local GRADschool, Cambridge
22-24, Local GRADschool,
Birmingham

May

12-16, Local GRADschool, UWE
13-16, National GRADschool,
Windermere
27-29, Local GRADschool,
Loughborough

June

17-19, Developing the Postgraduate
Manager, University of Manchester
17-21, National GRADschool,
Windermere
24-27, Local GRADschool, Edinburgh

July

2-4, Local GRADschool, Essex
22-25, National GRADschool,
Bournemouth
28-31, Local GRADschool, Durham

October

28-1 November, National
GRADschool, Bournemouth

November

18-22, National GRADschool,
Windermere

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