

Special interest sessions

SIS A1 - Increasing the visibility of doctoral graduates competencies in the European employment market

Presenters:

Barthélemy Durette, R&D Group Leader, Adoc Talent Management

Alison Mitchell, Director of Development, Vitae

Outline

It is important that HR reference frameworks for use by the public, employers, policy makers and researchers in Europe properly reflect the skills and competencies of doctoral graduates, and that universities enable doctoral graduates to record and present the full range of their competencies to prospective employers.

ESCO, for example, is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations across sectors as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The ESCO classification identifies and categorizes skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training, developed in an open IT format, and available to all free of charge via the ESCO portal.

The Diploma Supplement is a document providing a standardized description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its graduate holder. It is produced by the higher education institutions according to standards agreed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. There is debate about creating a comparable supplement for doctoral graduates.

This session will outline preliminary work between Vitae and Adoc Talent Management on the inter-relationship of European competencies frameworks for researchers in relation to employability, and how we plan to ensure that HR reference frameworks in Europe improve their ability to describe and promote doctoral graduates and their careers.

SIS A2 – From doctoral student to practising professional - bridging the gap through a discovery based workshop approach

Presenters:

Dr David Stanley, EngD Programme Manager, EngD Centre, University of Manchester

Dr Adrian West, Associate, Company of Mind

Brief overview:

EngD students are doctoral students whose career path is expected to lead to technical leadership roles in industry. Central to their training programme at Manchester is Professional Practice - what it means to be a professional engineer. Previous experiences of delivering such content on Professional Practice, typically as a “shopping list” of attributes and competences to aspire to, had fallen short of expectations. Feedback was poor, students found it hard to engage with the notion of professional engineering competences and what they might mean in real working practice. This contrasted with their deep understanding of the technical skills and specialist knowledge they were obtaining through their doctoral research.

We will describe a radical rethink of engaging our students with this topic, and its successful application in a completely re-designed workshop. It encourages students to explore the world of the professional engineer through interviews, case studies, role models, and by importing tools used in industrial leadership development and strategic facilitation. Ultimately students formulate their own statements of professional engineering competence. We believe this approach could be equally relevant in other, non-engineering, professional sectors.

SIS A3 - Making online programmes work for researchers - A blended approach

Presenters:

Mary O'Regan, Research Advisor to Human Resources, University College Cork
Dr Maeve Lankford, Manager Staff Welfare and Development, University College Cork

Outline

In 2013, University College Cork gained the HRS4R in recognition of the University's on-going commitment to adopting the principles of The European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This commitment is echoed in the University's Research Strategy.

Epigeum is a leading publisher of on-line courses. In line with UCC's mission to prioritise the delivery of staff development programmes for Researchers, UCC engaged with the Epigeum development group to develop Professional Skills for Research Leaders (PSRL).

PSRL is an online programme designed to help individual researchers enhance their approach to leadership, management and engagement. It will enable participants to identify a range of strategies and opportunities to establish themselves as research leaders, from writing compelling and competitive funding applications to managing relationships with team members and collaborators.

The course delivers high quality, accessible training which is complemented by six practical workshops facilitated by in-house trainers and expert guests. As a transferrable qualification is desirable to participants, UCC achieved ILM endorsement of the programme which is critical to its success.

SIS A4 - Problem-based learning techniques for developing researcher cohorts (DTC's and ITN's)

Presenter:

Kevin Parker, Director, KKI Associates

Outline

When training a researcher cohort, especially those which are multi-centre (often widely separated), the trainer often needs to enhance cohort cohesion and internal interaction, sometimes in a limited time period. KKI has recently developed Context and Problem-based

Learning (C/PB-L) case studies and activities (in collaboration with Leicester and Edinburgh Universities and the Royal Society of Chemistry) that help to achieve this.

These C/PB-L activities are designed to foster problem-solving, communication and team-working in the cohort while ostensibly addressing issues such as innovation, impact and entrepreneurship. Some have a high degree of technical content requiring rapid assimilation of new data, while others take the guise of 'games' (albeit with a serious point).

This session will briefly outline the lessons that the author has gained from working with DTC and similar cohorts around the UK and beyond, also drawing on the author's 15 year experience of devising training material for adults and young people in the Scout Association.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to try some of the shorter C/PB-L activities for themselves. Many of these are set in the fictitious, newly independent, European country of 'Northland' where the Minister of Science is grappling with a wide variety of issues from bio-fuel production, to power line planning permission, and 'ambush' interviews with 9/11 'truthers'...

SIS A5 - PhD Boot Camp

Presenter:

Dr. Katrien Daemen-De Gelder, Policy advisor, Ghent University

Outline

To further improve their career prospects and allow for a smoother transition into the labour market, PhD students require valuable professional work experience. The international PhD boot camp, organised by the Ghent University Doctoral Schools, is geared towards enabling PhD students to offer their strongest set of skills and expertise to non-academic patrons coming from an array of sectors including public policy, private businesses and industry. For the purposes of, amongst others, consulting, market research, business prospecting and development, PhD students are expected to carry out short-term (2 weeks) intensive international assignments that have a well-defined scope with clearly formulated objectives and expectations. The 1st edition of the boot camp (2014-2015), commissioned by the provincial authorities of East Flanders, propelled multitalented bioscience engineering PhD students into exciting professional territory in Vietnam.

The boot camp allows PhD students to put their skills and competencies acquired through their research as well as transferable skills training into real-world practice, thus providing them with a welcome confidence boost and an effective means of getting their CV noticed!

SIS A6 - Leadership in Action Programme - adapted

Presenter:

Sandy Sparks, Learning and Development Advisor, Research Active Staff, University of Warwick

Outline

As HE institutions look to develop the research leaders of the future with less resources, increasing requirements and competing demands, how do staff developers support the learning and development of research leaders.

We wanted to offer the Leadership in Action programme to our research active staff but needed to reduce the face to face contact time from three days.

At Warwick University, we have adapted the Vitae Leadership in Action programme to a three afternoons, 1 week apart programme. We still cover the six components but we have changed / adapted some of the materials. The programme ran for research staff but could be used by other staff/ student categories.

I would like to share our experience and learning with other researcher developers and also take the opportunity to discuss how other HE's/ Universities are using this material.

SIS A7 - CAMPUS - online portal for mentoring and coaching resources

Presenter:

Jos Finer, Head of Organisational and Staff Development, University of St Andrews

Outline

The University of St Andrews has been heavily engaged in mentoring and coaching as part of its professional and career development provision. This has led various initiatives such as the development of SUMAC, the online data management platform for mentoring and coaching schemes, and to co-organising the Mentoring Scotland conference in 2013. Many discussions with other institutions through these activities and via practitioner networks have raised the possibility of creating an online resource centre, allowing institutions to disseminate and share good practice covering a wide range of mentoring and coaching themes, such as scheme design, training, administration, evaluation and supervision among others.

St Andrews has carried out some groundwork to set up just such a portal 'CAMPUS' (Coaching and Mentoring Portal for Universities) - and wishes to engage with other institutions to get feedback, invite contributions and discuss how this could be improved, expanded and established as a valuable and sustainable resource for the sector.

SIS A8 - A rights based approach to development as a priority for higher education research institutions

Presenter:

Ade. Olaiya, Postgraduate Researcher, University of the West of England

Outline

The UN Thematic Consultation on Education for the World We Want has stated a number of targets for the achievement of sustainable development goals including, "reducing and eliminating disparities in educational outcomes among Learners", (Sayed: 2013). My

involvement as a postgraduate researcher on the Race Equality Mark Self-Assessment Team at the University of the West of England has increased my awareness of inequalities in the field of education nationally. For example, empirical evidence highlights people of African descent living in the UK experience disproportionate inequalities as a result of structural discrimination in the fulfilment of the right to education. This threatens diversity and inclusion in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Notably, people of African descent remain disproportionately marginalised from senior academic and management posts in British universities. Moreover disproportionate differentials persist in attainment and retention levels of students and staff, including researchers from different ethnicities. I will therefore critically analyse the effectiveness of interventions such as the Equality Challenge Unit's Race Equality Charter Mark for the attainment of sustainable development goals. For example, how can we achieve “more inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities” SDG4?

This special interest session will focus on discussion of how supranational initiatives such as the Plan of Action for the International Decade for People of African Descent, can empower and create impact, for example through education and human rights awareness.

SIS A9 - Making the most of career-building communication opportunities at every stage of the research cycle

Presenters:

Dr Pete Moore, Director, ThinkWrite Training

Dr Nicola Cotton, Associate Trainer, ThinkWrite Training

Outline:

Research follows a cycle that involves creating an idea, seeking funding, performing the work and disseminating the results. These results then trigger the next phase of idea forming. At each stage in the cycle there are critical communication needs, requiring different messages to be sent to different stake-holders.

The seminar will invite participants to unpack each research stage, investigate the communication challenges and seek solutions that not only solve immediate issues, but also help to build solid research careers.

SIS A10 – Pedagogy, public engagement and researcher development

Presenters:

Dr Mary Henes, London Regional Director, The Brilliant Club

Daniela Bultoc, Doctoral Skills Development Programme Manager, University College London

Outline:

This workshop explores the overlap and interaction between pedagogy, public engagement and researcher development, and therefore relates to the theme of enabling researchers to reach their potential and make powerful career choices.

The session seeks to explore how institutions can best support researchers as teachers and public engagement professionals, as well as how trainers in both fields could collaborate. Through case studies from UCL's researcher development programmes, alongside an introduction to The Brilliant Club's pedagogy and public engagement training, the presenters will facilitate discussions around the power of innovative institutional collaborations that further develop the researchers' potential for careers both in and outside of academia.

SIS A11 Jumping in at the deep end: pre-doctoral research strategies

Presenter:

Dr Anne Boulton, Reader in the Psychology of Fashion, Birmingham City University

Outline:

Traditionally, the academic route to research is via the PhD, thus ensuring that the researcher acquires the appropriate knowledge and expertise. When this is not the case, whether through necessity or circumstance, it is difficult for those with the potential for research to know where to begin. This session will explore the issues involved in establishing a research culture in an academic department with no research tradition, and working with emerging researchers. By emerging researchers I mean those who are new to, or are interested in pursuing, research, but who have no prior experience: in this case, academics who have substantial subject knowledge and are experienced teachers. Many of them are planning to undertake a doctorate in the near future, but in the meantime, they need support and guidance. In approaching the project I faced two major challenges: firstly, encouraging a research ethos in a community with little confidence in its capacity for research; and secondly, developing a programme of researcher development appropriate for this naive audience. I will consider the nature of these challenges, how I responded to them, and the design of an associated development programme. Discussion will focus on future planning and the difficulties still to be overcome.

SIS A12 – Getting the first lecturing job - final report and future developments

Presenter:

Dr Josie Grindulis, Career Development Manager - Research Staff, Cardiff University
Clare Jones, Senior Careers Adviser Research Staff/Postgraduate Research Students,
University of Nottingham

Outline:

This session will provide an update on the main findings from "Getting the first lecturing job" (AGCAS Research Staff Task Group 2014), the "Researcher to lecturer" model for academic career development it introduced and areas for further research concerning the "attractiveness" of an academic career in the 21st century. There will also be an opportunity to review how the report's findings and model have been used within training and careers guidance/coaching work to date and development plans for further resources from the survey.