# Doctoral Capability & Development Conference 2018 (DCAD18) 24-26 April 2018

# Rationale

The overarching aim of DCAD18 was to bring together the doctoral community at Coventry University. The idea was initiated in response to frequent requests from PGR for such an opportunity.

Alongside the programme of presentations in a variety of formats (poster, 20:20, standard 15 minutes) there was a programme of development activities for doctoral researchers and supervisors. Each day the keynote talks, mini-workshops and discussion sessions were focussed on a theme: Getting Started (day 1), Staying Motivated (day 2), Moving On (day 3).

The presenters were offered workshops on effective poster presentation and planning and polishing your presentations skills and poster clinic sessions prior to the conference.

# Participation and Programme

All doctoral researchers were offered the opportunity to present their research in a variety of formats - poster, 20:20, standard presentation (15 minutes), host a discussion group and/or Chair a session. The response from PGR was overwhelming - 180 doctoral researchers applied to contribute (present/host/Chair) 211 activities. Over the course of the conference 154 individual doctoral researchers contributed to the programme:

<http://recap.coventry.domains/DCAD2018/>

# Evaluation and Recommendations

A short questionnaire was sent out PGR on Thursday 10 May 2018 asking i) those who attended - what went well and what could be improved at the next Conference, ii) those who were unable to attend or decided not to, their reasons. 53 responses were received from 35 attendees and 18 non attendees.

**Attendees – 35 responses**

**Overall, how beneficial was the conference to you?**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Very | Mostly | Quite | Not particularly | Not at all |
| 10 | 10 | 11 | 3 | 1 |

**Respondents could select up to three words describing their DCAD18 experience:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Useful – 19 (55.9%) 2. Enjoyable – 17 (50%) 3. Inspiring – 16 – (47.1%) 4. Exciting - 7 (20.6%) 5. Excellent – 7 (20.6%) | 1. Average – 5 (14.7%) 2. Ordinary – 4 (11.8%) 3. High quality – 3 (8.8%) | 1. Not useful – 2 (5.9%) 2. Poor – 1 (2.9%) 3. Disorganised – 1 (2.9&) 4. Inadequate – 1 (2.9%) |

**What other words would you like to add?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Motivating - 3  Interesting – 2  Well-organised - 2 | Intuitive  Brilliant!  Engaging | Networking opportunity  Banks of knowledge Stressful |

Representative comments from those who attended at least one session of the conference

**What did you most benefit from/enjoy?**

“The opportunity to present my work to a non-specialist audience whilst still being in a ‘safe’ environment.”

“Seeing other PhD students research, which is varied and exciting.”

“Opportunity to meet and chat with PhD students from across the University.”

“Hearing other people share their research and seeing the ways in which complicated research was described to different audiences.”

“Presenting and getting feedback from others.”

“Practicing techniques for assertive communication.”

**What most made you think or inspired you?**

“Certain presenters stood out and make you realise what you aspire to be. And the not so perfect presentations help you learn how we can all be better.”

“Talking with other students and explaining my research in relation to their research.”

“Speaking to students about their research and how it could be applied.”

“Opportunity to test my presentation and poster design.”

**What would you change if we were running this event again?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Theme | Recommendation |
| Timing   * should avoid PRP season * clashed with a Faculty organised Thesis Bootcamp | * Conference dates announced as part of the PGR Programme in September (as they were previously). Dates are: 24-26 April, 2019. * Research Centres and Faculties are requested to refrain from booking PGR activities during the Conference. |
| Sharing research  A minority of postgraduate researchers failed to see the benefit of sharing research with a multidisciplinary audience: | * The conference contributions will be themed around the UN Sustainable Development Goals to assist with promoting understanding and community building. * The Research Centres that made contributions mandatory should consider whether this had an overall positive or negative effect. |
| Competitions   * running the poster session as a competition consumed time and prize money. * Also resulted in complaints about other contributions not being considered for prizes | * Focus will be on feedback * Budget saved on prize money will be used to hire a bigger venue |
| Using PGR as session chairs  PGR chaired some sessions as we did not have enough staff volunteers to assist. | Encourage more staff to chair and model good chairing. |

Non attendees – 18 responses

Representative comments from those who did not attend any of the conference.

**I didn’t attend any sessions at the Doctoral Capability and Development Conference 2018 (DCAD18) because:**

“I was not clear of the benefits of attending, and my supervisors did not encourage me to attend. I regret not attending.”

“It is totally useless! Your research students cannot even use the reply button of an email…the research quality of the university is zero.”

“Event was too long, did not have the time and did not see the benefit of attending.”

“I am in the final stages of my PhD. I do not have even half a day to spare, hence I now understand why PhD students give up so much during this period.”