

Quality News



Prifysgol Cymru
University of Wales

Issue 28

June 2011

Building a community of researchers



Standing before a room of postgraduate students in a function suite at the Park Thistle Hotel in Cardiff, Pro Vice-Chancellor Robert Brown welcomed an international congregation to the University's first ever Research Students' Conference.

Spanning two days (13-14 May), the conference was punctuated by a series of seminars, workshops and networking opportunities designed to help University of Wales students improve their skills.

Commencing the proceedings, Vice-Chancellor Professor Marc Clement gave an impassioned talk on the often unexpectedly exciting paths where students' doctoral research can lead. Drawing on his own experience as a world-leading laser physicist, he

presented a slideshow which traced his journey from his time spent studying for a PhD, up to the present day.

The next speaker was Professor Nigel Palastanga who introduced students to the University's newly created Faculty, which will be working to support all students studying towards a University of Wales degree. Students were then encouraged by Faculty Senior Lecturer Dr Simon Jones to engage in activities aimed at improving their networking skills. 'The loneliness of a long distance runner', the theme of Dr Jones's second seminar, stressed the importance of a scholastic community for students embarking on the isolated journey of doctoral research.

The afternoon seminars included Faculty Senior Lecturer Jacqueline Young's 'How to embrace the media' workshop; Global Academy's Dr Louisa Huxtable-Thomas's presentation, 'Preparation and training for your Viva'; Bronwen Blatchford's guidance on how best to utilise the University of Wales library and database; and Jo Hare of UWIC's slideshow, 'Preparing the transfer to PhD from MPhil'. These topics were chosen by the students themselves, who in the organisational stages of the conference had identified issues which would be most useful to them.

On the following day the students were active participants in the conference. Twelve students from various institutions gave presentations exploring their research journeys so far, identifying common problems and sharing best practice. The winner of the conference's poster competition was also announced; Aime-Louise Prior from UWIC was selected for her poster which investigated 'Anorexia Nervosa: How can Telephone Helplines Help?'

Steve Hughes-France-Hayhurst, a research student at the University of Wales, Newport, who attended the conference, said;

"It's been a great opportunity for me to network, get moral support and find comfort knowing that I'm not out there running in the fells all alone – there are others out there facing the same obstacles as me. It's nice; I feel I've achieved a real feeling of camaraderie from having shared my experiences with others in my newfound community."

PhD student, Anna Whicher, added;

"I think the conference has been a great opportunity to meet other research students from the University of Wales community – which is completely new to me. I've really enjoyed exchanging ideas about my research and will be taking home lots of new ones!"

Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Palastanga, said;

"Today's been an excellent opportunity for the University of Wales Faculty to show its unflinching commitment and support for our research students. We look forward to even greater engagement in the future."

Tom Barrett
Press Officer

Forthcoming events

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 30 June | QAA Annual Conference: Is there a public interest in higher education?, East Midlands Conference Centre
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/events/publicInterestinHE11/ |
| 30 June | HEA Seminar: Valuing Learners in the Workplace, University of Wales: Trinity Saint David
http://www.health.heacademy.ac.uk/news-events/eventsbox/events2011/heasem-valuing300611 |
| 4 July | HEA Seminar: Assessing the Assessment Experience, University of Wales Newport
http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/2011/jointevents/Seminars/05_Jul_Newport_UWIC_Wales_Seminar_2011 |
| 14 July | Wrexham Science Festival, Glyndŵr University
http://www.wrexhamsf.com |

Alliance Thematic Group for Quality

On the 4th May, members of the Alliance Thematic Group for Quality (ATGQ), together with colleagues from Alliance institutions, met at Gregynog Hall for an intensive two-day conference. The conference was opened by Pro-Vice Chancellor (Quality), Professor Kate Sullivan. Professor Sullivan outlined the need for the University to adopt a common academic framework for taught awards (CAFTA), as it had already done for research degrees, in order to best ensure consistency of treatment for candidates across Alliance institutions and at collaborative centres.

On day one, we were divided into 5 working groups, each chaired by a member of the ATGQ, or a nominated alternate. Each working group was tasked with considering particular issues linked to examination/assessment board conventions and practice, as shown:

- Processes for the treatment of borderline results (Chaired by Julia Piacentini, University of Wales Institute Cardiff)
- Rules for compensation and condonement (Chaired by Dr Nick Potter, Swansea Metropolitan University)
- Rules for the exercise of discretion by examination/assessment boards (Chaired by Sarah Clark, University of Wales, Newport)
- Formulae for the calculation of awards/weighting and rules for rounding of marks (Chaired by Dr Catrin Thomas, University of Wales: Trinity Saint David)
- Regulations governing resits (Chaired by Gillian Bridgett, Glyndŵr University).

These working groups were informed by a summary of practice at institutions outside of the Alliance which had been obtained through the Academic Registrars' Council (ARC). A Plenary Session was then held at which each working group reported back

on its discussions. A number of generic issues were identified; among them, the need for the production of a glossary of key terms which might lead to the adoption of common terminology, in due course.

All in all, we were pleased to be able to reflect upon the very constructive and positive nature of the Thematic Group. Whilst some matters of detail remained to be resolved in principle by the ATGQ or by the Academic Board of the University of Wales, the scale of them appeared small, particularly when compared to the extent of the apparent commonality of practice or willingness to agree a common approach.

Mr John McInally
Director, Academic Registry

An academic day of science

Academic staff and researchers from the University of Wales and Glyndŵr University will showcase academic practice and research at the forthcoming *Wrexham Science Festival*, to be held at Glyndŵr University on Thursday 14th July.

The day is a unique opportunity for University staff, students and interested members of the general public to find out about University research work and how it relates to everyday life.

For full programme details and to register for this free event please see: www.wrexhamsf.com.



Profile of a University of Wales Collaborative Centre: Escuela Superior de Comunicación (ESCO), Granada, Spain



Escuela Superior de Comunicación (ESCO) was established in 2000 by a group of communications professionals and academics from the University of Granada, with the aim of providing good quality education and training for professionals in the field of communication, in Eastern Andalusia.

Three BA degree programmes were presented for successful validation by the University of Wales in 2001. These underwent a successful quinquennial review in July 2007.

Since its inception, ESCO has been committed to its mission of providing a thorough learning experience for its students, combining academic rigor with social responsibility and professional relevance. A core part of this training is achieved through work placements for students. ESCO has agreements with over 400 companies in which students are offered work placements, ranging from media and advertising agencies and international companies, to financial institutions. Through these opportunities, students are able to contextualise their studies, demonstrate their professional competencies and form their own links with local employers.

In addition to academic expertise, members of the teaching team remain active in their professional field, thereby providing a valuable insight into how best to combine academic learning with practical application.

Jenna Williams
Validation Officer

Facts and figures

Institution and location:	Escuela Superior de Comunicación (ESCO), Granada, Spain
Collaborated with UW since:	2001
UW validated programmes here:	BA (Hons) Journalism BA (Hons) Audiovisual Communication BA (Hons) Advertising and Public Relations
Current number of UW students:	210

For more information about ESCO, please visit <http://escogranada.com>

Contact us at qualitynews@wales.ac.uk