

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The College of Life and Environmental Sciences PRES actions update April 2012

Financial support for research activities

While many areas of research in the College are well funded it recognises the need to increase grant income. Directors of Research in all four Schools are overseeing mechanisms to ensure that staff submit the highest quality grant applications that address issues prioritised by funding bodies. The College is leading on a variety of research initiatives and one that will particularly affect DRs is the recent funding from BBSRC for a Doctoral Training Partnership with Warwick and Leicester. With matched support from the three institutions this will provide 30 well funded studentships per year for three years and will provide a foundation year for each cohort that will cover new ways of working, particularly with respect to mathematical and systems biology, large data set analysis and computer modelling. The studentships will be allocated strategically to support work in priority areas for BBSRC with a view to underpinning future grant applications.

LES has once again allocated £10,000 to support PGR-led conferences on a range of topics in 2011–12. The funds are allowing our PGRs to present their work as posters and talks alongside high profile researchers from inside and outside the University. The process

In perspective...

I am very pleased that we can provide a further update to our College responses to the PRES results. Colleges have been working very hard to address the issues raised in the last PRES which our previous 'You said, we did' pamphlets addressed.

Further developments have now taken place in the Colleges, and I hope that you will find it useful to know what they are.



Professor Brian Ford Lloyd, Director of the University Graduate School

of planning and making the conferences happen for those PGRs directly involved is an opportunity to develop useful organisational skills. The university support has also pump-primed a number of projects which have then won further external funding. For example, Nicola Cutting, Zoe Demery and Emma Tecwyn in Biosciences have won £4,430 from the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) towards their workshop on Physical Cognition and Problem Solving. We believe that such experiences are helping to create the proactive researchers of the future and we will continue to support such activities as a core part of College provision.

Support and guidance for PGRs who teach:
The College recognises the need to allow PGRs to develop their teaching skills both because PGRs play an important role as demonstrators, teaching assistants and assistants in supervising research projects and because this is a form of communication that will be required in many different careers. The College is working with CLAD in the implementation of its new modular training for PGRs and has in the last year worked with a cross-College group of PGRs to develop new guidance for PGRs who assist in supervising research projects.

LES is also trialling ways of supporting overseas PGRs and those whose first language is not English to develop the skills and confidence to take on a significant level of teaching while doing their PhD. Following discussion with staff in Psychology and CLAD, course structure and content headings have been finalized and resources and dates as currently planned are as follows:

Monday 23 April, 1–5pm: training session for the 'lead' TAs.

Monday 14, 21 and 28 May and Monday 11 June, 1–4pm: training sessions.

Within this pilot we envisage involving 3 'lead' TAs and up 16 TA (trainees). Recruitment is currently underway. This pilot should provide a formula for developing this course further next year with the aim of developing high quality teaching skills in all our DRs.

**Professor Chris Thomas,
PGR Lead
College of Life and
Environmental Sciences**

March–May	PRES survey takes place	June	PRES results compiled	July	PRES results discussed at UEB and special meeting of the Graduate School Management Board (GSMB) Findings sent to Colleges, the Guild and Corporate Service teams that support PGRs	Oct	PGR PRES report circulated	Oct–Dec	Actions discussed and implemented	March 2012	Colleges and Corporate Services report back to GSMB regarding PRES actions
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