



UNMC Graduate School team. From left: Dr Jiin Woei Lee, Dr Tissa Chandesa, Ms Vimalaewari Danapal, Ms Deepa Kumari Veerasingam, Ms Lisa Chin and Ms Amirah Zin.

Meet the new Head of UNMC Graduate School

We are pleased to inform that Deepa Kumari Veerasingam is the new Head of the Graduate School at UNMC. Deepa remains responsible for the MyMentor initiative and this is now under the remit of the Graduate School.

In carrying out her responsibility as the Head of Graduate School at UNMC, Deepa's goal is to ensure the Graduate School functions are strategically aligned with the vision and mission of the University as a whole. Deepa has worked closely with colleagues at Nottingham's UK and China campuses to ensure collaborative activity, integrated approach and contextual development of the department's internationalisation strategy are present throughout.

With over twenty years' experience, having worked extensively in administration throughout her professional career, Deepa has ensured her continued development in the areas of Administration and General Management and has obtained qualifications in these and related fields at the certificate, degree and postgraduate levels. Deepa is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree at School of Education, UNMC. Deepa's experience provides her with a wealth of information to share.

As a team, we are committed to support and develop all areas of postgraduate activity, Doctoral Training Programmes and Early Career Researchers.

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Future Event

Coffee and Cake Session: Chinese New Year Celebration

26th February 2016

3pm — 5pm

Postgraduate Hub, H1B12

All postgraduate students are welcome to join in the merriment of stirring and tossing *Yee Sang* (Prosperity Toss) while wishing for a year filled with auspiciousness.

Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Award 2016

The Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Award 2016 is now open to all UNMC postgraduate research students and postdoctoral researchers who teach.

What is a Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Award?

This award recognises and celebrates examples of innovative teaching and support of learning. Applicants may support teaching and learning through a wide range of activities, including: demonstrating in laboratory classes, distance learning, leading seminars or tutorials, supporting project work, lecturing or assessing and giving feedback on student work. This award is given to people who can show innovative and reflective practice by:

- improving effectiveness in their teaching and support of learning;
- making appropriate changes in learning activities or techniques;
- Evaluating and reflecting on the impact of their intervention and possibilities for further development.

**Deadline for submission of applications:
Friday, 4th March 2016**

How to apply?

Submit a written application, discussing your contribution to teaching and the support of learning, which addresses the aforementioned points. Please note that you do not need to give detailed evidence of all your teaching work and your application should be no longer than one page of A4. Also include a one page reference from your teaching mentor, module convenor or research supervisor in support. Details of previous winners can be found on the website of Professional Development, UK: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/professionaldevelopment/learningandteaching/new/index.aspx>. Submissions or enquiries should be sent by email to: Helen.Cowley@nottingham.ac.uk.

How many awards are granted?

Up to three awards of a certificate and a £100 voucher from the Graduate School, UK are presented annually.

How are the awards judged?

A panel of judges will consider all submissions and recommend a list of award winners. An award ceremony will take place on Thursday, 14th April 2016. Winners are automatically excluded from receiving another award for the following year.



Trainer's Column

by Dr Jiin Woei Lee,
Research Training Development Manager

The ringing of bells, the laughter and cheering, and the atmosphere of competition...

That was some of the happenings at the course "Analyse, Propose & Get Funded!". 18 postgraduates from all 3 faculties — Engineering, Science and Arts and Social Sciences, were selected to participate in this free 5-day course that ran from 18 — 22 Jan this year. The course used traditional and gaming techniques to teach essential skills of preparing and delivering a research proposal. It doubled as a research project on human behaviour. The effectiveness of using experiential gaming pedagogy for learning compared to traditional techniques, and determining the relationship between performance and personality traits. The course was initiated by Dr Jiin Woei Lee from the Graduate School and organised with Dr Cedric Tan from the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), University of Oxford, and Dr Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz from the School of Geography.

For the first 4 days the students were taught various skills by different teachers, namely, statistics, presentation skills, CV and writing skills. On the 5th day the participants, in their groups, were tasked to assimilate what they learnt over the previous days and present research project proposals of their choice and their CVs to a panel of judges in an environment akin to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI).

The 5-day course will be broken down in the remaining article, with a few representative images.

Day 1

The students were briefed about the entire course, followed by lessons in experimental design with a strong focus in statistics.



The game incorporated the use of M&Ms — always a delicious addition to any lesson!



Students with teacher Treshi Perera.

Day 2

The participants learnt about analysing data using the SPSS software programme.



Cheng explaining the concepts of data analysis.



How far ahead can you go? Participants using dinosaurs as pieces to move ahead in the SPSS-based game.

Photo courtesy of Dr Cedric Tan, WildCRU, University of Oxford.

Day 3

Presentations skills were the theme of the day. The participants learned about the basics of poster and PowerPoint presentation design along with the skills needed to sell, engage and make audiences want to know more (expand).



Participants learning about presentation skills.



Cedric extolling the virtues of having the ability to erm... sell, engage and expand.

Photo courtesy of Dr Cedric Tan, WildCRU, University of Oxford.

Day 4

Curriculum Vitae (CVs) are often assessed alongside the project proposal by funders to gauge the credibility and ability of the principal investigator and his/her collaborators to put out viable research and meet milestones. Being able to word the proposal into a compelling story can determine whether the proposal is accepted or not.



Ahimsa was the star of the day — he shared his experiences and knowledge during the CV and technical writing classes.

Day 5

The day of reckoning. Participants in their groups presented CVs and research proposals on a topic of their choice for RM20,000. The panel of judges consisted of academics from all faculties — Prof Graham Kendall, Dr Svenja Hanson and Dr Tessa Houghton.

The feedback from judges to the participants include:

- Substance and preparation are both important. You can't have one without the other. Your research proposal has to be good as well as your ability to sell yourself such as highlighting your expertise and by being passionate and enthusiastic.
- Over-ambitious projects e.g. unrealistic timelines and budget, having 5 projects in 1 project and fusing 2 very different aspects together is likely to not get you funded. The project's impact must be focused.

Overall, this is a pilot course run by the Graduate School in collaboration with WildCRU (University of Oxford) and the School of Geography. The judges had fun. We amassed good feedback from students. One of them said that the course had given her a new perspective of her PhD project and she is looking forward to implementing the statistics she learned from the course. A few other students mentioned that the course provided the opportunity to get to know and network with fellow students — the postgraduate life, whether Masters or PhD, can be a lonely experience. It is hoped that if this course is repeated next year, we will implement the suggested improvements.



A group photo of participants, judges and organisers.

Acknowledgements

Funding: Teaching and Learning Strategic Project Fund. Judges: Prof Graham Kendall, Dr Svenja Hanson, Dr Tessa Houghton. Teachers: Dr Cedric Tan, Lim Phui Cheng and Treshi Perera. Materials provided by: Dr Cedric Tan, Lim Phui Cheng and the Graduate School. Games provided by: Dr Cedric Tan. Observers of participant behaviour and performance: Christy Yap, Heerman Kumar, Azrin bin Jamaluddin, Ricardo Cruz, Alberto Tanzi and Lee Ai-suan. Photographer: Lee Ai-suan.

The View by...

Dr Acga Cheng

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Biosciences

What's Next After PhD?

10 questions raised by postgraduate students — PART I

Q: What business opportunities are out there for PhD students apart from teaching/academic?

A: Join non-academic research organisations or private sector research companies as their partner or product specialist.

Q: Post-doctoral: Why would PhDs consider it?

- A:
- To gain more research experience through involvement in a specific research project or a number of mini projects.
 - To broaden research knowledge and improve research capabilities through short term trainings and workshops.
 - To build/expand research network through participation in scientific conferences or involvement in collaborative projects.

Q: What are the top qualities of PhD graduates that potential industrial employers are looking for?

A: Effective communication and management skills, good problem-solving abilities, self-motivated/self-directed.

Q: How to present skills and talents in a more 'commercial' language? As our research is specialized, how do we sell our skills and talents to wider range of potential employers? How to put across our skill sets and abilities?

A: Try to present yourself as an all-rounder who not only has a set of specific skills e.g. research, but also other personal/interpersonal skill sets or abilities to perform a variety of tasks.

Q: Career plan: How to strategise and what to consider?

A: Look at your interests and identify career paths and occupational options based on your interest and expertise. Talk to your current supervisor or people working in the related fields to learn their views and explore available opportunities. After selecting a career path to follow, work for it!

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PART II will be featured in the next issue of Nucleus. Stay tuned!

Researcher Development Programme

The Graduate School's Researcher Development Programme (RDP) provides free training for University of Nottingham registered postgraduate researchers and taught Masters students of the University to develop a range of transferable skills.

Upcoming RDP courses in February 2016 are outlined below:

Date	Time	Course
22 nd February 2016	2pm — 4.30pm	Preparing a Press Release
29 th February 2016	10am — 12pm	What Do I Want to Get Out of a Conference?

Note: Please register your attendance at <http://moodle.nottingham.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=11606>.

We are also open to conducting tailor made courses which are driven primary by the students request, input and interactions. If you wish to us to conduct such courses, please get in touch with us via email to graduateschool@nottingham.edu.my.

Postgraduate Student Teachers Programme

The Graduate School offers postgraduate research students, who are involved in teaching, a range of workshops. The workshops cover different methods of teaching, including giving feedback when assessing undergraduates' work. Schools identify which of the workshops are relevant to the style of teaching that the postgraduate student teachers (PSTs) will be doing. PSTs must complete the specified workshops before they can take on their teaching duties.

Upcoming PST courses in February 2016 are outlined below:

Date	Time	Course
16 th February 2016	10am — 12.30pm	Demonstrating in Laboratory Practicals
17 th February 2016	10am — 12.30pm	Assessing and Giving Feedback
17 th February 2016	3pm — 5pm	Health and Safety Workshop <i>*by Health and Safety Office</i>
22 nd February 2016	10am — 12.30pm	Small Group Teaching
23 rd February 2016	10am — 12.30pm	Lecturing for Learning

Note: Please register your attendance at <http://moodle.nottingham.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=12021>.

If you wish to attend the above training courses at a later date, kindly register under the 'Waiting List' on the respective tutorial booking page, for our reference. Please be informed that the PST trainings may be conducted in April 2016 if and when there is a demand with a minimum of 6 participants for each training requested.

SWIRL @ Nucleus

So What's It Really Like?

Find out about life at UNMC from current postgraduate students!

Writing a review paper — A student's perspective

by Suganti Ramard, PhD candidate, Department of Chemical and Environmental Engineering

As a PhD student, I feared the thought of writing my thesis. It's an exhausting, time consuming and very much scientific writing journey. Hence, I broke my thesis into sections that I worked on continuously from the start of my PhD tenure. One of the writing sections I worked early on was the "Literature Review". I read extensively to understand the depth of research in my field of study. At the end of my first year, I had written an extensive review which was then published in *Progress in Material Science* (IF: 27.42; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pmatsci.2015.02.004>). Here, I'd like to share my experience of writing a review paper from the student perspective.



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Waste tire rubber in polymer blends: A review on the evolution, properties and future

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ABSTRACT

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This review addresses the progress in waste tire recycling with a particular attention to incorporation of waste tire rubber (WTR) into polymeric matrices. Methods of waste tire downsizing, importance of WTR characterization and current practice of WTR modification has been emphasized. Detailed discussion on influence of WTR size, loading, modification, compatibilization and crosslinking on the rheological, mechanical and thermal properties of rubber, thermoplastic and thermoplastic elastomer blends utilizing WTR



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First and foremost, decide the scope of the paper.

I decided to work beyond the scope of my thesis, to understand the coverage of research around the area of my thesis. The wider scope requires more reading, organisation and coherence. Discuss with your supervisor and invest your energy in having a clear scope. A lot of time will be saved in organising and formulating the structure of your review paper if there is clarity in the scope.

Second, read, read, read and annotate, annotate, annotate!

Annotating is a simple act of adding short notes/comments/explanation to the reading material. This is the most crucial part of writing a review. By reading extensively, one would be swimming in the sea of information. However, it's very (very very) important to annotate all the materials you read. I used a free software called "ReadCube", where I stored the pdf files and annotated all the files I read, simply because I prefer reading from the screen. Use whichever method suits you, but the key is to **read and annotate**. Start with simple annotation such as article's main theme and keywords.

Third, organise your materials.

As I went along reading and annotating, I started organising my materials into groups. A clear scope will ensure this process goes smoothly. As I organise (and reorganise) the materials, I reread and added more related information to the annotations. Build your annotation by adding more specific and key findings of the articles related to the scope of review. This leads to formulation of the paper structure. At this point, I have read and annotated over 300 materials (journals, book chapters and articles), however, only about half of these materials were used in my review paper. The use of suitable materials enhances the strength of the paper. Annotations again help in organisation of the materials and formulation of paper structure.

Finally, write, write, write and revise, revise, revise.

Start with the part of review you are most informed and aware of, guided by the formulated structure. Unintentional plagiarism is very common, especially when writing a review. Hence, build the content of the review from your annotations. Avoid reading the materials at this point. Remember, you are writing a review, do not just discuss the past literature. Ensure enough details are given and be able to underline the missing gaps and suggest future outlines of the research scope covered. If you are not confident, ask your supervisor. Always keep the conclusions, introduction and abstract to be written last. Once I was done with the first draft, I left it to sit for two weeks before I went back to work on it. At this point, my objective was to increase the coherence of the paper by adding, reshuffling and removing the content. **Do not be afraid to remove a big chunk of your write-up if you find it challenging the coherence of your writing.** Once I was happy with the paper, I humbly requested my fellow PhD mates to have a look at it. Of course my supervisors did their part in addressing the critical needs of the paper. Once I was satisfied with the paper content, organisation and coherence, I started the long (long... long...) publication process.

Be disciplined — this is one key element to succeed throughout the process of writing a review paper. Plan out the task at hand and execute. I had a monthly and weekly planner to remind myself of the “to do list”. Keep up the motivation and get it done. Good luck!

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SWIRL @ Nucleus is a sharing column featuring the life of postgraduate students at UNMC. There is no limit to what can be included in this column e.g. sharing of experience and knowledge, university life, social or educational activities, internal or external engagement, social awareness, etc.

If you are a postgraduate student, we welcome you to send in a brief write-up and picture (if any) via email to graduateschool@nottingham.edu.my.



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