Nucleus

UNMC Graduate School Monthly Newsletter

ISSUE 05/16 [14] I MAY 2016

Graduate School

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Participants, trainers and judges during the Research Showcase 2016

Research Showcase 2016

Tell us how your research makes an impact!

Our annual Research Showcase was held on Wednesday, 27th April 2016. The showcase provided the opportunity for general audience to meet with world-leading researchers of the future, to hear about their research and question them about what it means for society. At the same time, the researchers got the chance to improve their communication skills and engage with the wider audience.

The Research Showcase enabled us to showcase the breadth and originality of the research undertaken by our postgraduate students. The skills they have developed in communicating their often highly complex and technical research to a non-expert audience are of great importance to them in their careers. The participants represented a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures. We believe that this international perspective and diversity is one of the many characteristics that makes The University of Nottingham a stimulating research environment, a truly global university.

We are very proud of them and delighted that the general audience was able to contribute to the success of this event and learn more about the fascinating work of our postgraduate students.

This issue

Future Event

Post-Graduate Student Network (PGSN) Networking Session

***in collaboration with the Graduate School**

24th May 2016 [tentative]

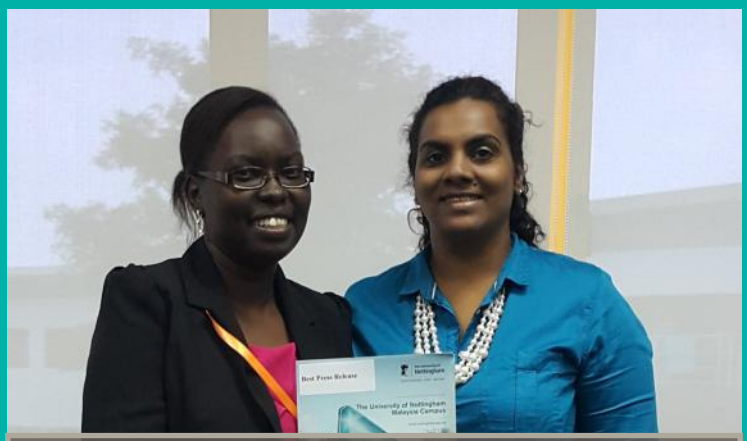
6pm

Block B Foyer

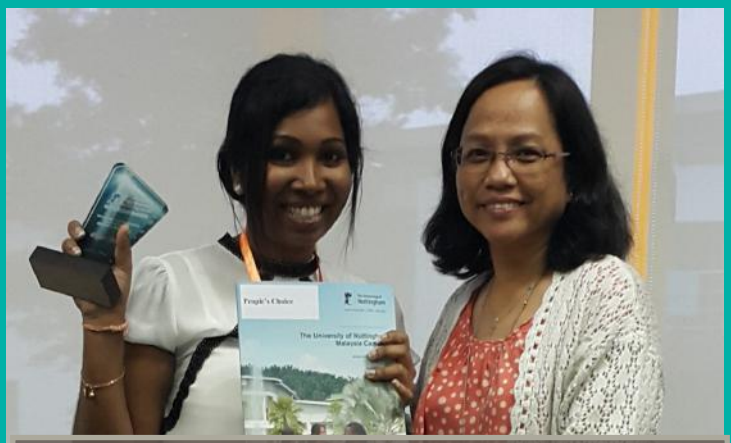
Full details will be announced soon.

Overall Winner: Lillian Joyce Among Olule, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Title of Poster: Using Your Wireless for Power
[From left] Associate Professor Dr Tang Sai Hong and Lillian Joyce Among Olule

Best Poster: Tan Jing Yang, Department of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering
Title of Poster: Little Fuel In, Little Soot Out
[From left] Tan Jing Yang and Ms Ruth Tomlinson



Best Press Release: Lillian Joyce Among Olule, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
Title of Poster: Using Your Wireless for Power
[From left] Lillian Joyce Among Olule and Ms Anitapadmani Pathmathasan



People's Choice: Revathy Sankaran, Department of Chemical and Environmental Engineering
Title of Poster: Novel Method for Enzyme Separation
[From Left] Revathy Sankaran and Ms Ng Siew Ling

A group photo with external visitors from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)

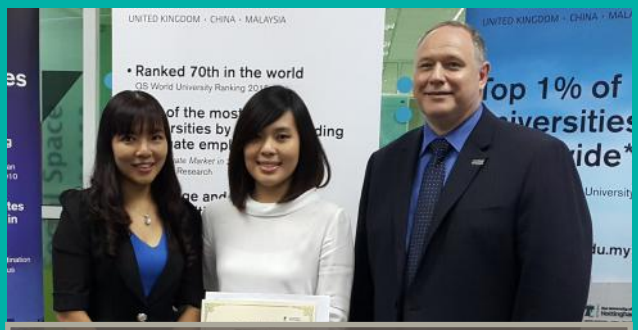
This year marked the externalisation of the Research Showcase where 10 doctoral students from UPM and UKM were invited as audience members. It was also the very first time we had an external judge, Associate Professor Dr Tan Sai Hong from UPM.

Postgraduate Prize Awards 2016

The University of Nottingham Postgraduate Prize Awards recognise accomplishments in research, publications, conferences and contributions to the postgraduate community.

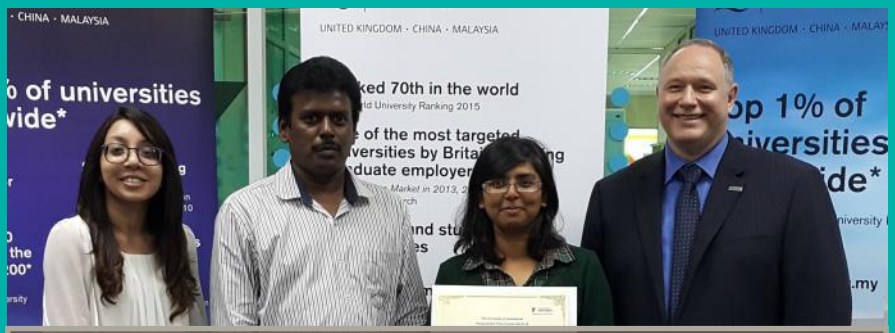
Students were nominated by their Heads of Schools for excellence across aforementioned areas. The recipients of the Postgraduate Prize Awards 2016 are listed below:

- **Pang Ee Leen, School of Biosciences**
- **Nagulendran Kangayatkarasu, School of Geography**
- **Sadia Afreen, Department of Chemical and Environmental Engineering**



[From left] Professor Sandy Loh Hwei San, Pang Ee Leen and Professor Graham Kendall

[From left] Nagulendran Kangayatkarasu and Professor Graham Kendall

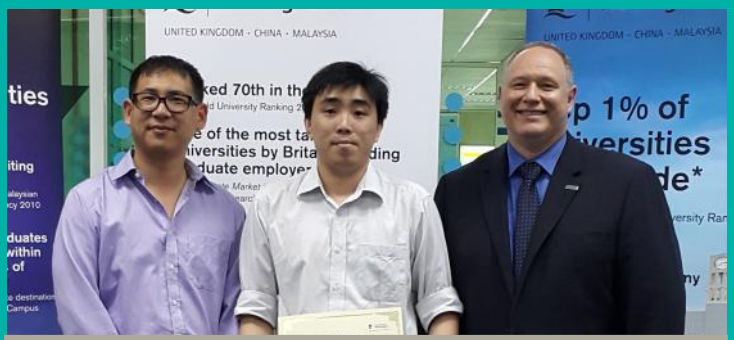


[From left] Ms Kasturi Muthoosamy, Professor Sivakumar Manickam, Sadia Afreen and Professor Graham Kendall

The Postgraduate Teaching Award recognises and celebrates examples of innovative teaching and support of learning.

The award is given to the applicant who can show innovative and reflective practice by improving effectiveness in teaching and support of learning, making appropriate changes in learning activities or techniques, and evaluating and reflecting on the impact of intervention and possibilities for future development. The recipient of the Postgraduate Teaching Award is listed below:

- **Ong Kian Chuan, Department of Civil Engineering**



[From left] Professor Andy Chan, Ong Kian Chuan and Professor Graham Kendall

The View by...

Dr Jessica Price

Assistant Professor, School of Psychology

I will let you into a little secret — I love being a supervisor!

The best part of my job is being a supervisor and I have been very lucky with the students I have supervised so far. For each of my postgraduate students, I sat them down and told them my expectations of what the supervision process would be like and asked them what they expected from it process at the very start. I like to set basic ground rules and then build a relationship up from there. I usually try to devote an hour a week just to them – it is their hour of my time that is solely theirs to use and I make sure I keep it safe from any other distractions/meetings. I have an open door policy so if they just have small queries; they can just pop in for a quick chat if I am free.

I was very lucky to have a supervisor who always encouraged me but I was always too scared to admit to him when I didn't understand something. During the start of a PhD or a final year project, I don't expect students to understand everything and I much prefer it if they just admit they don't know something rather than struggle. I see my role more as a facilitator – I am not here to tell you what to do but to guide you in the right direction, but if you are really struggling then I will catch you. Sometimes just going through a journal article together helps the student to start to get to grips with previous research and gives us an insight as a supervisor of what their level of understanding is and how we can help them. It is so easy to forget that a student doesn't necessarily have the same level of understanding, especially at the start of their PhD. I always tell my students that in their PhD/final year project, what do you think you should do next. If they don't know, then we work it through together until they are comfortable working on it themselves. I love it when they take ownership of their project and start telling me the direction they want to take – backed up by literature and strong research questions of course!

Sometimes it is difficult being a supervisor, two years ago I really doubted myself and I felt I was letting my students down whereas now I feel more confident in my abilities. Keeping track of what their progress is can be very tricky during semester time when I have a full teaching load. I also sometimes need to be reminded about what the design of their study is and what they have found. I have been known to get my student's data mixed up. Setting agenda and getting them to write up the outcomes of supervision meetings makes life so much easier – for both them and me. I usually summarise the main points at the end of a meeting and set timelines for when certain tasks should be completed and in what order. I think I have learned over the years how to be a good trouble-shooter and also to anticipate what problems might arise and how to solve them. I generally have plan A, then plan B and sometimes even a plan G, it may be a slow process but it all (mostly) works out in the end.

I feel I have probably learnt more from students than they have from me. I have learnt that the supervision process is not a one size fits all approach, some students need more support than others, some are fairly self-reliant from the very get-go and some just need me to point them in the right direction once in a while. On a final note, to the person or persons who nominated and voted for me for the Best Supervisor Staff Oscar – I am extremely grateful and honoured; I must be doing something right!

SWIRL @ Nucleus

So What's It Really Like?

Find out about life at UNMC from current postgraduate students!

Word Choice: Balance between Big and Short Words

by Viknesh Andiappan, PhD candidate from the Department of Chemical and Environmental Engineering / Centre of Sustainable Palm Oil Research

An important aspect in pursuing PhD is having the opportunity to present findings to a scientific (or general) audience. However, communicating scientific findings can sometimes be a tricky ordeal. PhD students are often advised to refrain from heavy use of topic specific jargons or "big" words and keep their presentation as simple as possible. Contrary to popular belief, this piece suggests a different direction on the use of words in communicating one's research. As an illustrative case study, we could draw our attention to two popular yet distinctive personalities; current presidential candidate gunning for the Republican nomination, Donald Trump and actor/comedian, Russell Brand. For those who follow presidential campaigns in the United States (US), ever wondered why Donald Trump is rapidly gaining support in the US despite vast criticism of his policies? Donald Trump speaks in very simple words. In fact, a YouTube channel called Charisma on Command claimed that he uses an average of one syllable per word and speaks at a low school level standard! But why is he so memorable and persuasive then? Because simple and short words stick in one's head. On the other hand, we have Russel Brand who is charismatic and persuasive too, yet speaks in the exact opposite way of Donald Trump! So which is better, the use of big words or small words? And should one speak/present/communicate in just one style? The answer is, **BOTH** styles should be considered based on the audience. Smaller words such as 'big' are commonly used, easily understood and has a stronger emotional impact in a wider audience, which is why it works for Donald Trump in politics. In fact, the use of simple words has a second advantage. Since simple words are easily understood, listeners generally tend to believe it to be the truth. In contrast, big words or jargons are generally puffed up speech that is tough to understand and has very limited meaning. Because big words have limited meaning, we often see it being used in areas of specialisation e.g. research, consultation, etc. Unfortunately, big words are often deemed as pretentious as they conceal true meaning from general audiences and limit their attention span. Which is why we tend to squirm at the thought of listening to economists speak about the stock market and economy over the news. However, the crucial distinction about big words is that although they have limited meaning, they are often used to reflect precision. Words like 'colossal' or 'humongous' would help one imagine an idea or story vividly, which can be advantageous in some instances.

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"Because big words have limited meaning, we often see it being used in areas of specialisation. Unfortunately, big words are often deemed as pretentious as they conceal true meaning from general audiences and limit their attention span."

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So understanding advantages of both short and big words provide PhD students the ability to tailor their speech according the audience and find the right balance between words. If students insist on throwing only big words at the audience, it would not make them able communicators and they are surely not going to influence anyone to think that they are anything but just plain arrogant.

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Short Words = Truth (Apparently)

Big Words = Precision

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Doctoral Training Programme

CFF-UNMC DTP

Becoming a DTP Researcher

Welcome to the ongoing CFF-UNMC DTP column. In this month's issue we look at how DTP researchers attempt to bridge the gap between real life issues and the scientific quest for knowledge.

The DTP programme aims to develop scientifically trained professionals with an appetite for exploring research questions and utilising their expertise and knowledge in answering important challenges to society. Thus, these researchers are adapted to work both within and outside of academia.

Achieving the balance between specific research-related skills and general transferrable skills is a challenge that researchers aim to tackle through the pursuit of a PhD. A key attribute of the DTP programme is to identify the right mix of transferable skills that are needed by the researchers, as well as identifying the trends for skills needed in the future work environment. These programmes then work through collaborations with various actors in academia, public and private sector, and society at large, to allow the professional development of early career researchers.

The key elements of a DTP programme include the following:

1. Training beyond specific research skills

A lot of emphasis is placed on encouraging independent research and utilizing the latest technologies for the ongoing research activities. This will involve developing specific research skills. However, building transferable and generic skills — such as proposal writing, critical thinking — also play a key role in the DTP training. Such skills need to be applicable for the wider context in the scientific and professional development of the researcher.

2. Multi-supervisory teams

The programme fosters links with academic and non-academic institutes , thus offering early career researchers the opportunity to work in supervisory teams. In some instances, the multi-supervisory teams will also expand across multiple sites for conducting the research activity. This whole experience allows the researcher to work in trans-disciplinary teams, broadening their knowledge and experience while encouraging communication with experts and non-experts from various fields.

3. Trans-disciplinary research

As discussed in the previous issue of Nucleus, trans-disciplinary research plays a big role in the DTP programme. As such, a lot of emphasis is placed on exploring research questions in diverse fields — which may often be interlinked. Although the DTP programme aims to develop researchers with competence in diverse skills, specialisation still remains an important aspect of the programme.

Thus a DTP researcher can be defined as: A multi-tasker, problem-solver, communicator, manager and researcher undergoing training for a range of careers within and outside of academia.

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 May 2016 are outlined below:

Date	Time	Course
9th May 2016	10am — 12.30pm	Word Essentials for Researchers — Beginners
13th May 2016	10am — 12.30pm	Word Essentials for Researchers — Advanced
18th May 2016	2pm — 4pm	Understanding How to Use Mendeley*
23rd May 2016	10am — 12pm	Preparing for Your VIVA
25th May 2016	2pm — 4pm	Understanding How to Use EndNote*
30th May 2016	10am — 3pm	Presentation Skills

*UNMC Library course

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.

Graduate School

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