



# Nucleus

UNMC Graduate School Quarterly Newsletter  
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## UNMC 2017 Three Minute Thesis Competition

We recently crowned our 2017 Three Minute Thesis (3MT<sup>®</sup>) Competition winner on 12 September 2017. A total of 14 contestants from various disciplines took part in this year's competition. The competition was judged by a multidisciplinary panel consisting of academics, non-academics and industry experts.

Initially developed by the University of Queensland in 2008, 3MT<sup>®</sup> challenges research students to communicate their research to a non-specialist audience in just three minutes. The aim is to help research students development their academic, presentation, and research communication skills.

The full results of this year's UNMC 3MT<sup>®</sup> Competition are:

**Winner & People's Choice - Olaoluwa Duro-Bello, School of English**

**Runner Up - Sia Ming Yean, School of Psychology**

In his winning presentation, Ola described his research on analysing Nigerian presidential speeches that influence the actions and differing perceptions of Boko Haram, a terrorist group in Nigeria. On the other hand, Sia explained her research on attempting to discover and expand on the theory of word learning in children in order to help those with learning difficulties.

Ola will now progress to the video round to compete against the other Nottingham campuses. The overall winner will represent the entire University of Nottingham at the Universitas 21 (U21) Final, also via video, which will be judged by an international panel of industry and academic professionals. The winner of the U21 3MT<sup>®</sup> will receive will receive US\$2,500 to visit a U21 university of their choice to benefit their research or on-going career development.

# My 3MT Experience: *What is the worst that could happen?*

by Olaoluwa Duro-Bello, UNMC 2017 3MT® Winner

I reckon I was the last contestant to register for the 3MT competition this year. Every time I received an email from the Graduate School reminding students about registering for the competition, I would simply mark the email as *read* and procrastinate registering. But on Friday 25 August, the Graduate School announced that registration would close at 4pm that day, I thought to myself 'why not? After all **what is the worst that could happen?**'. And the worst didn't happen, on the contrary, the best actually did; I won, but equally important, I enjoyed every bit of the 3 weeks of preparation we had before the actual competition. Contestants practiced, panicked, laughed and selflessly helped each other out with our presentations; such that many times it seemed like we were not even competing against each other. These are memories I will continue to cherish and I enjoin every PhD student who has not participated in the 3MT to give it a shot. I gained confidence not only in myself but about my research and I also learnt about the fascinating things other PhD students are doing.



Now that I have the benefit of hindsight, I would like to leave future participants with 3R's to serve as tips on your 3MT journey.

**Rehearse.** The Graduate School provides several sessions for participants to work on their PowerPoint presentation and also rehearse their lines. Honestly, I would not have made it past one paragraph of my speech if I didn't attend these sessions. I rehearsed in front of my wife and my 2 year old son. She listened attentively while he on the other hand kept on making me laugh. All the same they are the kind of non-specialist audience you can recite your speech to once it is ready. Finally, I did a mock presentation to my supervisor, Dr Derek Irwin. His comments and feedback went a long way towards shaping my speech for the competition.

**Rest.** My feet were sore on Monday 11 September which was the penultimate day to the competition. They were obviously sore because I had been pacing around trying to memorise my lines. I kept on thinking: "If I don't practice I would forget my lines on stage the next day". So when we were told to leave the Great Hall, go home and rest ahead of the big day, I did so very reluctantly. In hindsight, I realised that this was the best decision. I slept very early that night, woke up feeling refreshed the next day and this contributed to my overall feeling throughout the event.

**Relax.** This is probably the most difficult thing to do on 3MT day because there are a million and one things to panic about: "What if the audience doesn't get it? What if I go over time? What if I am too loud or too soft?" and the most worrisome (at least for me) "What if I forget my lines?". Well let me let you all in on a little secret; apparently none of the aforementioned things has ever happened to any participant in UNMC so don't worry you are not going to be the first. I already felt like a winner once I stepped on stage because I know all I had gone through to get there, so you too should feel so about yourself and your research. Good luck!



## **UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference**

### **Student-led Interdisciplinary Research Conference**

The inaugural UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference was held on 14 September 2017 by the Postgraduate Student Network (PGSN) in collaboration with the Graduate School. It was a research conference by postgraduate students, for postgraduate students. The goal was to empower postgraduate students to share and celebrate their research in a positive, constructive and collaborative space while facilitating the development of interdisciplinary connections and networks.

The welcome address was delivered by Professor Claire O'Malley, Vice Provost of Research and Knowledge Exchange. In her speech, Professor O'Malley highlighted the significance of postgraduate students of which they are central to the research mission of the University.

The keynote address was delivered by Professor Sayed Azam-Ali, CEO of Crops For the Future (CFF). In his speech entitled "Life Beyond Re-Search", Professor Azam-Ali explored the three global challenges: how will we nourish nine billion people; what will live in a warmer world; how will we stop destroying the planet; and got the audience thinking of the big picture.

A total of 18 participants presented their project and they were judged by a panel consisted of academics from across all three faculties. The panel included Dr Maniam Kaliannan (Chair), Associate Professor at Nottingham University Business School; Dr Chin Chiew Foan, Associate Professor at the School of Biosciences; Dr Jessica Price, Assistant Professor at the School of Psychology; Dr Show Pau Loke, Associate Professor at the Department of Chemical and Environmental Engineering; and Mr Philip Whitehead, Assistant Professor at the School of Education.

The full results of the UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference are:

**Best Overall Presenter - Sia Ming Yean, School of Psychology**

**Best PGR (Postgraduate Research) Presenter - Janet Tan Sui Ling, School of Pharmacy**



## UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference

by **Mohammed Ayoub Juman, Student Association (SA) Postgraduate Officer and Organising Chairperson of UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference**

The inaugural UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference took place on 14 September 2017 in the Great Hall. LINK is a student-led interdisciplinary research conference held by the students for the students with the goal to empower postgraduate students to share and celebrate their research in a positive, constructive and collaborative space. The main idea was to give postgraduate students an opportunity to experience what it would be like to be put on the spot in a conference environment and explain their research to a multidisciplinary audience. The conference was organised by the SA Postgraduate Student Network (PGSN), chaired by me, the SA Postgraduate Officer, along with the assistance of the Graduate School.

The conference involved participants giving a 10-minute presentation on their current research to a panel of five judges from varied disciplines, followed by a short question and answer session. Participants were judged based on their clarity of presentation, engagement with the audience and the effectiveness of their presentation slides. A total of 18 participants (17 postgraduate research students and 1 postgraduate taught student) presented their research in this conference.

Winners were based on two categories: Best PGR Presenter (chosen among PhD and MPhil students) and Best Overall Presenter (chosen among all participants) with a prize of RM1,500 and RM1,000 worth of conference funding respectively. The winner of the Best PGR Presenter was Janet Tan Sui Ling from the School of Pharmacy, with her presentation on 'Breathing new life into poorly soluble drugs'. The winner of the Best Overall Presenter was Sia Ming Yean from the School of Psychology, with her presentation on 'Word learning in children'. Both presenters did an amazing job and were highly commended by the judges.

Although this was the first time the LINK Conference was held at the Malaysia Campus, it was an overall success in relation to student participation and experience. I hope that UNMC LINK will continue with its success and obtain even more participants next year in UNMC LINK '18.

# My LINK '17 Experience

by Janet Tan Sui Ling, Best PGR Presenter of UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference

UNMC LINK '17 Postgraduate (PG) Conference was the first ever conference on campus organised by PG students, for PG students. Yeah, something for us! With that, I felt obliged to participate in this conference. It was a great opportunity for me as I have not attended any conferences before, neither overseas nor local, so basically my experience in presenting in a conference was zero at that time. There was no participation fee and this conference offered attractive prizes. So, why not?

My first ever presentation as a PG student was my own research talk which is a requirement for all students from the Faculty of Science. I practiced extremely hard for it that the script was well-embedded in my mind. On the other hand, my first ever experience of standing on stage, holding a microphone and talking in front of an audience who knows nothing about my research was this year's Three Minute Thesis (3MT<sup>®</sup>) competition. It was a useful albeit nerve-wrecking experience. Looking back, without these experiences, I don't think I would be able to present confidently and be at ease at the same time during the UNMC LINK '17 PG Conference. I was happy to have won the Best PGR Presenter award and the prize of RM1,500 conference funding was the icing on the cake. I would definitely urge my fellow PG students to take part in competitions, no matter how big or small, and keep trying because who knows, something big might be waiting for you!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisor, Professor Nashiru Billa, for his continuous support. I would also like to thank my family and fellow comrades from the Drug Delivery Lab: Rayan, Shi Ting, Jing Luen, Alya and Rajesh. Last but not least, I would like to thank the Postgraduate Student Network (PGSN) and the Graduate School for providing me with the platform to present my research to a wider audience.





## Postgraduate Welcome Programme

Our annual welcome event for all new and returning postgraduate students was held on 2 October 2017. The Postgraduate Welcome Programme featured a series of introductory sessions as well as social and educational activities, aimed to get the new postgraduate students started with their postgraduate life at UNMC and subsequently develop their network of friends and colleagues.

The programme started off with a welcome presentation delivered by Ms Deepa Kumari Veerasingam, Head of Graduate School. The presentation introduced the role of Graduate School in providing a range of dedicated support and services for its postgraduate students. This was followed with an informative presentation by Dr Lee Jiin Woei and Dr Tissa Chandesa, Research Training Development Managers. This session delved into the details of training provision by the Graduate School.

The programme continued on with a forum discussing the expectations of supervisors. The panel was made up of experienced PhD supervisors which included Dr Svenja Hanson, Associate Professor at the Department of Chemical and Environmental Engineering; Dr Jessica Price, Assistant Professor at the School of Psychology; and Dr Ken Kyid Yeoh, Assistant Professor at the Nottingham University Business School. This forum covered the many expectations of postgraduate research supervisors and the main objective was to assist the postgraduate students to establish an effective working relationship.

Next was a networking luncheon and this was followed with an educational session entitled "PhD in a Nutshell". Delivered by Dr Lee Jiin Woei, the session aimed to familiarise postgraduate students with common PhD transferable skills through activities and games in a friendly environment.

Last but not least, an experience sharing session by two senior postgraduate students, Mohammed Ayoub Juman and Olaoluwa Duro-Bello. Some useful tips and advice in surviving the challenging PhD study were also shared. This session was supported by the Postgraduate Student Network (PGSN).

## Coffee and Cake Sessions

The fourth and fifth Coffee and Cake sessions for this year were held respectively on 25 August and 29 September 2017. The casual sessions brought together postgraduate students from across all three faculties where they met and established rapport with one another whilst enjoying coffee and cakes. The sessions aimed to reduce the social isolation among the postgraduate students and subsequently increase their sense of belonging within the postgraduate community on campus.



A peer review for the 3MT<sup>®</sup> contestants was jointly held with the fourth Coffee and Cake session where the contestants had the opportunity to practice their three minute presentation and be given feedback on elements they can improve on.

The format of the session was revamped earlier this year where the first three sessions, held respectively in February, April and May, saw a very good turnout from the postgraduate students.

The next session will be held on 24 November 2017. We welcome all our postgraduate students to attend it. Refreshments are on us!



# The Entrepreneurial Graduate Student

by Dr Maysoun Mustafa, CFF-UNMC Doctoral Training Partnership Manager

What does a postgraduate student and an entrepreneur have in common? Numerous skills.

First, comes an innovative idea. In the same way that a doctorate student develops and writes a thesis around a hypothesis, an entrepreneur develops an enterprise on an idea. Then, comes the journey of writing a thesis or building a business, and that requires miles of creativity, resilience and perseverance. Entrepreneurs can be defined as people willing to take risks that other people are not - which could similarly apply for graduate students. Moreover, in pursuing a thesis or a business, the ability to convincingly deliver an innovative message to a larger audience lies at the heart of success.

As a graduate student, the Research Development Framework (RDF) is essential in defining the knowledge, behavior and attributes to develop during your studies. Entrepreneurship is a key area identified within the RDF, and is directly linked to several qualities that include:

- Ability to operate smoothly and efficiently within a team
- Initiative to pursue and follow through on opportunities
- Self-discipline and commitment to deadlines

These are all essential skills required by employers and advance career opportunities for graduates. Mastering these skills, in addition to others such as networking and presentation skills, can be advanced through entrepreneurial education.

Networking is a key factor for success and graduate students build these skills through attending conferences, workshops and other events. Meanwhile, graduate students master their presentation skills by frequently presenting via various platforms on their ongoing research.

Graduate studies also enhance the students' ability to self-reflect and recognise one's own strengths and weaknesses. Coupling this with recognising the strengths and weaknesses of team-mates, translates into successful teamwork. Moreover, working independently with minimal supervision, encourages students to self-direct and manage large projects while meeting high expectations. This all evidences exceptional self-discipline and ability to thrive in a competitive environment.

Graduate students often fail to see their skills applicable in the various career paths that they may end up pursuing. A large proportion of employment opportunities are now available outside of academia. In these sectors, the skills and talents of doctorate degree holders are much appreciated. Problem-solving, communication, collaboration, resilience, adaptability are all skills that graduate students possess and enhance their edge in today's market, but its self-awareness that makes for a rounded skill-set.

*Suggestions: Attend as many events as possible - on or off campus. Workshops and training programmes that specifically target entrepreneurship skills will be very useful, but don't limit yourself to that. By attending various events in your field, you can learn more about your industry and connect with professionals. Most importantly, get to know alumni in your field.*



# The Doctoral Journey: Perspectives

by Dr Kalaimani Markandan, UNMC alumna

“Easy choices, hard life; hard choices, easy life,” Jerzy Gregorek. Four years ago, it was time for me to make a tough decision; declining an offer as process engineer and deciding to pursue PhD at The University of Nottingham. My road to PhD had been exhausting at times, however the final output was certainly a major achievement and a hugely gratifying event in life. Here are my five perspectives for making it through PhD, in a time-efficient way.

**Write and write more.** Write as often and as much as you can as this will not only make you a fluent academic writer but will also assist you in gathering ample feedback and save time on completing your dissertation.

**Attend conferences.** Attending conferences allows you to build network and increase your awareness of recent trends happening in your research field. Most importantly, conferences have been my trial stages to prove and establish my work within the research community.

**Don't work too hard.** The sole purpose of PhD is to address your research objectives in a novel way and prove yourself as an independent researcher. Most of us are not aiming for a Nobel Prize. Make time for your family and friends; they matter the most in the end. Get hobbies that absorbs your mind fully and helps you to concentrate on something completely different from your research. My options were badminton, white water rafting, road trips and hiking. Just find something that makes you feel fulfilled.

**Participate and present wherever you can.** UNMC Graduate School - the best platform for PhD graduates in UNMC to develop their professional skills. They assist you to practice presenting your research not only as often as you can but to as many audiences as possible. Try participating in their annual 3MT and Research Showcase competitions. They are excellent ways to develop your skills for communicating research ideas in a precise, concise and engaging manner. These competitions are great opportunities to bring your research to broad audience, improve your presentation skills and get funded for your conferences!

Last but not least, remember why you started this PhD journey. Frequently remind yourself to push your project forward and dedicate quality time to unraveling one tiny sub-question of your research question every month.



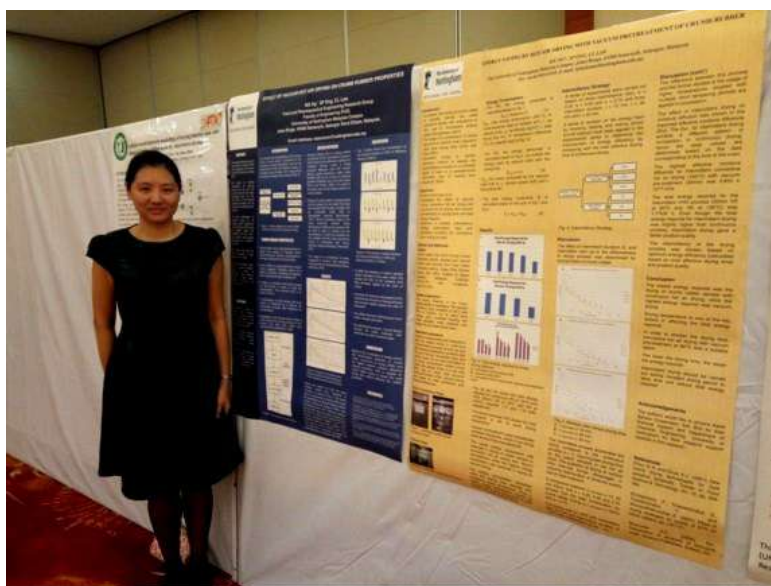
*Dr Kalaimani Markandan graduated with a first class master's degree in Chemical Engineering in July 2013 and further obtained her PhD degree in July 2017 from The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus. During her PhD studies, she won People's Choice and Best Press Release awards at the 2015 UNMC Research Showcase; Best Speaker award at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asia Conference on Materials and Mechanical Engineering held in Chengdu, China; and grand prize at the 2015 Faculty of Engineering Postgraduate Research Showcase.*

# How the Postgraduate Prize Award benefitted me

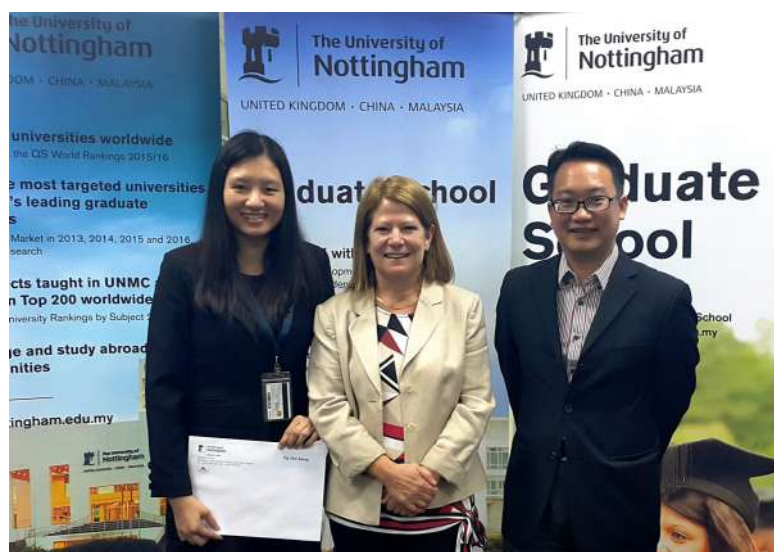
by Ng Mei Xiang, Postgraduate Prize Award 2017 recipient

I am truly blessed to be one of the 2017 recipients of the Postgraduate Prize Award. I feel extremely honoured and appreciative for receiving this significant award. The award is an important impetus for me to continue the research that I have been carried out since 2014. My academic studies are a major part of my personal and professional development, but like many other things, it has its associated expenses. This award helps to alleviate my financial burden needed to complete my postgraduate studies.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” has always been my life philosophy. I believe in giving to the society means creating positive impacts not only for the society but also for myself. This award was put towards the cost associated with attending a conference in Wuxi, China. This award also encouraged me to keep moving forward with my future endeavours in my research work and contribution to society.



I would like to thank the Graduate School for continuing to provide support for postgraduate students and I have no doubt that this Postgraduate Prize Award will further accelerate my professional development.



*The University of Nottingham Postgraduate Prize Awards recognise accomplishments in research, publications, conferences and contributions to the postgraduate community. Students were nominated by their Head of Schools for excellent across the aforementioned areas. [From left: Mei Xiang, Professor Claire O'Malley and Professor Law Chung Lim.]*



## Researcher Development Programme

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

Upcoming RDP courses this month are:

Date	Time	Course
3 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Nature of the PhD and the Supervision Process
3 October 2017	2pm - 4pm	Introduction to Development Needs Analysis
4 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Creative Thinking
4 October 2017	2pm - 4pm	Philosophy of Science
5 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Planning Research and Time Management
6 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Getting into the Habit of Writing
9 October 2017	10am - 5pm	How to be an Effective Researcher
16 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Introduction to ORIS
20 October 2017	2pm - 4pm	Understanding How to Use EndNote
23 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Understanding How to Use Mendeley
25 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Preparing for Your Viva
30 October 2017	10am - 12pm	Communicating Your Research: Dealing with Media

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 primarily by the students' requests, input and interactions. If you wish for us to conduct such courses, please get in touch with us via email to [graduateschool@nottingham.edu.my](mailto:graduateschool@nottingham.edu.my).



## Postgraduate Student Teachers Programme

The Graduate School offers a range of workshops to postgraduate research students who are involved in teaching. All workshops of the Postgraduate Student Teachers (PST) Programme are aligned to the UK Professional Standard of Framework's (UKPSF) areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values.

Upcoming PST courses this month are:

Date	Time	Course
10 October 2017	10am - 12.30pm	Preparing to Teach in Higher Education
11 October 2017	10am - 12.30pm	Demonstrating in Laboratory Practicals
11 October 2017	3pm - 5.30pm	Health and Safety
12 October 2017	10am - 12.30pm	Marking and Assessment
12 October 2017	2pm - 4.30pm	Lecturing for Learning
13 October 2017	2pm - 4.30pm	Small Group Teaching

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

If you have any queries, please get in touch with us via email to [graduateschool@nottingham.edu.my](mailto:graduateschool@nottingham.edu.my).