



2016 Crops For the Future (CFF) - University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) Week was successfully held on 13th—16th December 2016 at CFF Research Centre. The DTP Week combined workshops aimed at professional and academic development of postgraduate students, as well as symposia for sharing innovative research that cut across disciplines. More information is available on the DTP Column, pages 5 and 6.

Christmas and Year End Party

It has become something of a tradition that we throw a Christmas and Year End Party for all our postgraduate students. The annual party was held on 7th December 2016 and it was very well attended as the postgraduate students appreciated the opportunity to have an early celebration of Christmas.



A group photograph of postgraduate students and members of the Graduate School.

We look forward to such great turnout at our future events and activities.

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Future Event

Coffee and Cake Session: Chinese New Year Celebration

25th January 2017

12:30pm

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.

Images of Postgraduate Experience Photography Competition 2016: Presentation of Certificates

A presentation of certificates to some of the participants of the Images of Postgraduate Experience Photography Competition was held during the Graduate School's Christmas and Year End Party held on 7th December 2016.

The certificates were presented by Ms Deepa Kumari Veerasingam, Head of the Graduate School. The participants were commended for their efforts in showcasing the diversity and breadth of postgraduate experience at The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus.



Melissa Kam Yit Yee [left],
School of Biosciences



Abdulla Zubair Ahmed [right],
Nottingham University Business School



Tuty Julfa [left],
School of Psychology



Lee Ai-Suan [right],
School of Psychology



Audrey Wee Li-Huey [left], Department of
Electrical & Electronic Engineering



Muhammad Heikal Bin Ismail [left], Department of
Chemical & Environmental Engineering



Rayan Sabra [left],
School of Pharmacy

Well done to all the participants for commendable efforts!

The winning entry of the photography competition by Rayan Sabra is featured on the next page. Rayan also shared her experience participating in the competition and how she challenged herself in capturing the essence of her postgraduate research with just one photographic image and an abstract.

We look forward to yet another exciting and interesting chapter of the photography competition this year!

SWIRL @ Nucleus

So What's It Really Like?

The PhD path is unique: My perspective

by Aliyu Siise Abdullah Bamba, PhD student from the School of Biosciences.

Some of my personal experiences

Yes! No two PhDs are similar, yet they all have same modus operandi. On this premise, permit me to share the following personal experiences with you.

1. **PhD thesis by 'published' works:** I followed this format. It's increasingly becoming popular. The University of Nottingham's definition of 'published work' (see quality manual), it's quite 'generous'. The key argument in favour of this format is that, research articles get more exposure compared to thesis. To students, it shapes your CVs for academic/research career. But, I won't follow a research/academic career? Yes! If you're just realising that, your life is been 'wrenched' for nothing (you probably wouldn't really need PhD certificate). The least is, you escape email reminders from supervisor about drafting papers. How about that? Perhaps that time in your life, just seeing that thesis alone freaks you out! Advantage of this format to supervisors? Remember KPIs and grant applications?
2. **Write-up period, a myth?:** I remember reading a piece from a then 'final year' PhD student. She actually 'toured' the best cafes and restaurants in KL during 'write-up' period. This was my reactions then. OK! Sounds really cool! But how? People's 'write-up' period is sort of a 'vacation'? Guess what? As at that time (though not in my 'final year'), I was writing, and it wasn't fun! In short, my entire PhD duration was my write-up period!
3. **'It is your PhD' mantra, plus the ensuing 'politics':** You'll hear this phrase a lot! Depending on context, it could mean anything between 'Who cares?' to 'You're the boss!' Don't freak out! Concentrate on the latter. Be pragmatic, ask for help (some will never come!), but don't be afraid to take initiatives. Remember this saying; 'fear and doubt have killed more dreams than failure ever did'.

Caution!

None of these apply to you? Yes! It's possible. Thanks very much! I am honoured you passed by. Good luck with research! Hoping that 'Nobel Price' comes. If it doesn't happen, don't stress out! Perhaps you're over-ambitious. Nay, unrealistic! Again, it's perfectly normal!

Doctoral Training Partnership

CFF-UNMC DTP

DTP Week 2016

by Dr Maysoun Mustafa, CFF-UNMC DTP Manager.

Welcome to the ongoing CFF-UNMC DTP column. In this month's issue we recap the events and activities of the 3rd DTP Week held at CFF in December 2016.

CFF-UNMC DTP organised their third annual DTP Week on 13th to 16th December 2016. This year's event was attended by 25 students and was organised as a blend of professional development workshops and a scientific symposium for sharing research contributions.

The workshops ran throughout the morning sessions of the first, second and third day, spanning various themes from media to innovation and commercialisation. On the first day Dr Ramesh Premnath, Editor at Springer Publishing, spoke to the participants about journal publishing, book publishing and Springer's publishing program on Crops.

The second day addressed three elements of media: social media, mass media and internal communication within organisations. Prof Graham Kendall highlighted the benefits of building a presence online as a researcher and shared tricks and tips on maintaining an active social media profile. This was followed by a session on engaging with mass media by Dr Yao Hua Law, a freelance scientific writer. Dr Yao Hua noted that most journalists covering scientific issues today rarely come from a scientific background, thus encouraged young scientists to – carefully – engage with mass media. Most organisations have a specialised department to support their researchers in engaging with mass media as well as streamlining the communication of messages within the organisation, as was highlighted by the third speaker of the day, Zuraida Zainal Abidin of CFF.

Innovation and commercialisation of research was the theme of the third day, which started with Dr Avvari Mohan (NUBS, UNMC) speaking on innovative research that creates value for society by addressing the three components of responsible research: environmental, social and economic sustainability. Prof Norzulaani Khalid (CEBAR, UM) shared personal insights on research commercialisation from her experiences of setting up and managing her own company on banana tissue culture. The session concluded with Beatrice and Clarice from the social enterprise Eats, Shoots & Roots, who shared their experiences on designing productive landscapes and teaching people to grow food in the city.



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The scientific symposia addressed the topic of 'Future Agriculture', and took place throughout the afternoon of the first, second and third day and the morning of the final day. It commenced with students working in transdisciplinary groups to dissect the topic of agriculture in a changing world and how to address the challenges that may unfold. The afternoon sessions of the second and third day were the highlight of the week with the postgraduate students – social scientists, engineers, computer scientists, mathematicians and plant scientists – presenting on their ongoing research activities while rethinking agriculture together and sharing their concerns and hopes for the future.

On the final day, Prof Claire O'Malley spoke to the participants on research internationalisation, specifically sharing on how to benefit from the numerous opportunities available for international researchers. Prof Sayed Azam-Ali (CFF) highlighted the importance of diversifying agricultural systems and the challenges that the new generation of agricultural researchers will shoulder. This was followed by a panel discussion involving Prof Datin Dr Siti Nor Akmar (UPM); Prof Dr Wickneswari Ratnam (UKM); Ayman Salama (CFF); and Aliyu Siise (UNMC); and moderated by Prof Soh Aik Chin (CFF). The panel addressed the concerns of rethinking agriculture and emphasised the importance of new technologies and knowledge preservation as well as ensuring communication across the different disciplines.



Several spillover effects emerged, with student participants from UKM, UPM and UNMC communicating together as well as the various partners involved throughout the week, as we all move together to face this hefty challenge of addressing food and energy insecurity in a changing climate.

We are certainly grateful for all the guests, participants and organisers who made this event a success and we owe a special thanks to the Alumni and Donor Relations Office, who supported the DTP in bidding our first graduates farewell as we welcome them into our CFFPLUS Alumni.



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 January 2017 are outlined below:

Date	Time	Course
9 th January 2017	10am—12pm	Nature of the PhD and the Supervision Process
9 th January 2017	2pm—4pm	Introduction to Development Needs Analysis
10 th January 2017	10am—12pm	Planning Research and Time Management
11 th January 2017	10am—12pm	Creative Thinking
12 th January 2017	10am—5pm	How to be an Effective Researcher
13 th January 2017	10am—12pm	Getting into the Habit of Writing
18 th January 2017	2pm—4pm	Understanding How to Use Endnote*
20 th January 2017	10am—12pm	Preparing for Your Viva
23 rd January 2017	2pm—4pm	Understanding How to Use Mendeley*
25 th January 2017	10am—12pm	Communicating Your Research

**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.



Research Boot Camp

What do PhD students need to help them get started on their research degree?

Research Boot Camp is back, starting from 9th to 13th January 2017! It offers a range of intensive courses to help the new postgraduate students to get going with their research degree. The courses offered are:

- Nature of the PhD and the Supervision Process
- Introduction to Development Needs Analysis
- Planning Research and Time Management
- Creative Thinking
- How to be an Effective Researcher
- Getting into the Habit of Writing



The boot camp is part of the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) by the Graduate School. In addition to the courses in the boot camp, the RDP includes many other courses, designed to support postgraduate students at different stages of their PhD. The RDP was also designed to support the early stages in the development skills listed in the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](#).

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