

Research Active Staff Network Funding 2014/15 Summary Report

Overview

In 2014/15 the LDC Research Active Staff Network Funding managed and supported by Sandy Sparks, supported 12 Research Active Staff Networks by awarding £12000 of which £9966 was spent by research active staff network leads. The projects funded encouraged inter-disciplinary and collaborative working across the university and in many cases supported networks which fostered links with external partners or other universities both locally, nationally and in some cases internationally. Activities and projects ranged from journal clubs to public lectures on hotly debated topics such as immigration. In 2014/15, 84% of the project proposals and subsequent projects/networks were submitted or run by women, ensuring that the LDC Research Active Staff Network Funding remains an important provider of opportunities for the university in their drive to encourage the development of women in research and contribute towards the University's Athena Swan Award. Research active staff felt that the funding had enabled a number of additional benefits;

- Increased opportunity for networking
- Development opportunities, both personally and professionally
- Reduced feeling of isolation and developed a sense of community
- Careers development through starting a network or leading a network
- Opportunity for not yet independent research staff to obtain funding to pilot an initiative
- Practice sharing via the research staff forum and between the network leads

Areas of focus included:

- Athena Swan (with female lead or participant focus) = 10
- Inter-disciplinary for collaborative aim = 9
- The network activity produced a tangible output = 5
- The network supported collegiality in the department/faculty = 11
- The network included a public engagement focus or activity = 1
- PhD – the network encouraged engagement with PhD students to support researcher development = 6
- International = 4
- Innovative use of technology = 2
- Equality and Diversity focus or relevance = 3

Applications for network funding were received from the following:

- Warwick Medical School = 4
- Warwick Manufacturing Centre = 3
- Italian Studies = 1
- School of Modern Language & Cultures = 1
- Centre for Life Long Learning = 1
- Centre for Education = 1
- Centre for Applied Linguistics = 1

Summary of Networks

Interdisciplinary Network: Minorities Within the Military

Metteo Pretelli - Italian Studies

This PhD organised Conference: Minorities in Armies: Ethnicity, Race, Alienage provided an opportunity for PhD researchers to organise an international conference and raise the profile of the department of History and the School of Modern Languages and Cultures. Presenters for the conference included researchers from Italy and Brazil and the UK. The conference provided a learning opportunity for the organising committee to gain expertise in event and project management in addition to increasing their subject knowledge.

Numbers: 2 PhD students organising conference and 6 presenters, 2 chairs, 2 respondents presenting. Audience take up not reported.

Creating a G+ Community Focusing on Language, Teaching & Research - Computer mediated communication and language teaching project

Teresa Mackinnon - School of Language and Cultures

A project linking with the University's strategic partner Monash running a series of lunchtime learning meetings for participants to understand better the learning technologies available to work effectively with colleagues at Monash. The meetings provided opportunities for researchers to gain an insight into the most innovative and effective use of technology when collaborating with partner and external organisations. The outputs from the project are a recognition of the challenges faced when working in an interdisciplinary field. Overall a successful project with significant learning points for all involved and the potential to use as a springboard for future Monash Alliance activities.

Numbers: 2 researchers organising meetings, 15-25 researchers attending

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

Neill Raath - WMG

A network of researchers interested in LCA. A series of 7 monthly lunchtime meetings open to all research staff across the university included software training, Q&A sessions and resulted in a better understanding of LCA by network members in a safe and friendly environment. The output of this network has been the ability of members to make cost effective and informed choices when purchasing software extensions relating to LCA.

Numbers: 7 meetings attended by 10 RS

Borders, Race, Ethnicity and Migration (BREM) Network

Khursheed Wadia, Vicky Squires, Hannah Jones - CLL

A comprehensive project resulting in an active mailing list of 105 members, regular events, meetings and collaborations. The BREM network established links and agreement with Coventry University's Centre for Peace, Trust and Social Relations, a number of third sector and statutory organisations and worked in collaboration with Warwick E&D network to run an annual lecture attended by 70 staff (Academic and non-academic) and students. The network organised an Early Career Researchers (ECR) Methodology Workshop with a guest speaker from Malmö University, Sweden, attended by 11 participants. In addition BREM ran a workshop for academics, practitioners and activists attended by 22 participants from Coventry City Council, Coventry City of Sanctuary, Coventry Ethnic Minority Action Partnership, Coventry Law Centre, Coventry University (Centre for Peace, Trust and Social Relations), Open University (Dept of Geography) and University of Warwick (CLL, PaIS, Sociology, WBS, CAL). The 'Migration, post-coloniality and the question of Europe' symposium was attended by 14 speakers and keynote address from a researcher Kings, London. Finally 14 BREM members met to discuss the Network's activities, review and reflect on success. The network site (http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/bremnetwork) continues to publicise the network activities and provide a place for researchers with an interest to come to share ideas and learn about forthcoming events.

Numbers: 132 researchers, staff, students involved in attending, organising and speaking at events, workshops and meetings.

Women in Science (WIS) network – Seasonal workshop

Carolyn Dawson - WMG

The network involved over 100 members, including staff and students, from across 19 departments/groups of the University in 5 different activities. This has allowed a much stronger network to emerge. Expressions of Interest in joining the WIS committee have resulted, allowing the potential for future sustainability of the network beyond current members' time at Warwick. The network is now working with the E&D network to evaluate the usefulness of the group as a 'womens' network and to broaden the scope in order to recognise the potential for unconscious bias.

Numbers: 100 members – 2 organisation members and 4 guest speakers/facilitators

Discourse Studies in the Social Sciences including Discourse Analysis Network Event

Sue Wharton - CAL

Building on success of previous year activities the Discourse Analysis Network organised a successful event and reported they were "very happy" with the level of engagement, interaction and discussion. Attended by 25 participants, audience members included both research staff and PhD students. CAL also noted an increase in the number of PhD students from other departments attending research methods workshops as advised by their supervisors who had attended this event.

Numbers: 25 participants, 2 organisers, 5 presenters

Education Researchers' Network (ERN)

Elizabeth Arkweck, Mairi-Ann Cullen, Richard Sutcliffe - CES

The Education Researchers Network ran a series of 6 lunchtime meetings organised by the Research Development Manager and members of the ERN. Topics including interdisciplinary working, REF and impact were covered. The lunchtime slot provided opportunities for networking, sharing ideas and collaborations to form.

Numbers: 3 organisers and participants (numbers not known)

Health Economics Journal Club Network

Melina Dritsaki, Kamran Khan - WMS

The Health Economics Journal club ran 8 meetings providing an opportunity for researchers to discuss, debate and learn from peers and critically to begin generating collaborative research proposals. The journal club has provided researchers with an opportunity to get more acquainted with the new team Population Evidence & Technologies who recently joined WMS. It has also continued to strengthen links with Warwick Evidence, the Department of Economics and collaborators at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. It had led to members of the Population Evidence & Technologies team and Warwick Evidence being asked to collaborate on a number of research projects.

Numbers: 1 organiser, 9 speakers/ contributors

WMG Researcher Forum

Vannessa Goodship - WMG

Funding has helped grow the network and new initiatives to encourage collaboration. A mix of breakfast meetings and lunchtime events with up to 33 attending. The forum facilitates new collaborations for research proposals and papers. Information is shared for best practice purposes. Guests from outside WMG and both industry and admin staff have been involved enabling the knowledge of the academic process as well as the research itself to be shared and understood. Presenting work in a more informal setting has also been a positive experience for the speakers. WMG management continue to be very supportive of the networks activities which provide a useful communication route for both sides. It also ties into wider university activity such as AthenaSWAN and the University Staff Research Forum.

"The LDC funding has not only underpinned our monthly community event (the WMG Researcher Forum) at a time when the department and therefore research related researchers are expanding rapidly, but has also given us a firm foundation on which to build a number of other related developmental activities to the benefits of all our contract research staff and beyond." Dr Vannessa Goodship, WMG

Numbers: 3 organisers, 3 speakers per event plus attendees

Qualitative and Mixed Methods Interest Group (QMIG)

Stephanie Tierney, Amy Grove, Rebecca Johnson - WMS

Four meetings attended by 15- 25 people per meetings have enabled members to meet others within the Medical School and across the wider University with an interest in Qualitative and Mixed Methods. Group members have shared their research interests and, it is anticipated, this will lead to greater collaboration in the future. It has also enabled less experienced researchers to learn from colleagues who have more expertise in conducting qualitative/mixed methods projects. A direct output has been the creation of a list of 48 researchers based at the university using a mix methods approach.

"The LDC funding has allowed us to bring together colleagues from across the University to develop skills and to promote the pursuit of excellence in research. It has enabled us to invite speakers who introduce topics of relevance, to which group members might not otherwise be exposed. The number of people who are part of the group has increased to over 60 colleagues during the past year. Feedback following our events suggests that those attending have benefitted from the opportunity to think about how they conduct their research and to share experiences or problems, in a collegiate, supportive environment." Dr Stephanie Tierney, Warwick Medical School

Numbers: 1 organiser, 5 presenters, 15-20 attendees at each event

Research Methodology Advice Service Dedicated to use Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Group

Deborah Biggerstaff - WMS

Seventy members attended meetings with visiting guest speakers and experts from universities across the UK. The group has been very successful in attracting high profile speakers and exploiting the potential to join a collaborative virtual hub of c.6 midlands universities which members state is *"Fantastic for networking across institutions"*. International links have been explored including the IPA group founder becoming the midlands lead for national and international IPA network with over 2500

members, which has seen an increase in the numbers of requests for research papers. The group has also provided a positive forum for junior members of the research community to learn and gain confidence.

"Just to let you know that I passed my PhD yesterday (minor corrections). It was a really positive experience, both examiners supportive of IPA (and the external thought my sample was large.... I was ready to defend the 'small' sample size!). Thank-you for all your support over the last few years, both yourself and the IPA group are mentioned in my acknowledgment section. It really has made a massive difference to me.... thanks" and 'Brilliant to engage in non-judgemental discussion where ideas can be presented without fear.'

It has also been welcomed by researchers who say "I am so pleased to have found out about this group. It has reduced the isolation and made available a forum to share and learn about IPA."

"Thank you for facilitating the Midland IPA seminar and coordinating another great session - we talked about the presentations and subsequent discussions all the way back to Cheltenham - so much so we did not hear the satnav and took a wrong turning! Although I have only just 'found' the seminars I already know that they are, and will be, of great support and interest to my research and professional development. Having an opportunity to meet with others from differing disciplines, research experience and interests, in a mutually supportive environment, and feeling able to participate freely in discussions reaffirms for me the necessity and credibility of adopting a qualitative approach to better understand the human condition - music to my ears".

From another attendee:

"Many thanks for once again organising a stimulating meeting that covered many topics (& the nice lunch)! This particular group stands out from others that I attend as it always feels like a safe environment to bring those 'stupid' questions without fear of judgement... and is particularly impressive that it manages to engage early IPA-ers, those of us with a little more experience, as well as yourself with an unparalleled depth and breadth of knowledge! The group's interdisciplinarity demonstrates the reach of the approach, appealing to not only psychologists, but also social workers, nurses, educationalists, sociologists and counsellors. Similarly, the distances travelled by some attendees underscores the need for a West Midlands group. I look forward to our next meeting!"

Numbers: 1 organiser, 70 attendees

Medical and Statistics Book and Journal Club **SieWan Hee, Thomas Hamborg - WMS**

Nine monthly meetings open to all RS but of particular interest to those in medical statistics (13 on average). The book club provides an opportunity to share learning and experiences in a relaxed environment followed by lunch. Researchers who attend report that it is *"...a great place to discuss topics of statistical interest with colleagues from across WMS. Meetings are always stimulating, engaging and lively."* The club also supports more junior members of the research community providing an inclusive ethos for PhD students *"I am a PhD student and felt fully included in all the discussions. It also gave me a chance to practice discussing/delivering a topic to a group of academics and diagnostic test accuracy ties directly into my PhD methods so was very useful."*

Numbers: 2 organisers and 13 speakers on average per meeting.

A network for Early Career Researcher stated in WMS but was discontinued during the year.

Future / Next Steps

To continue to promote the research active staff network funding and support the network leads for 2015/16.

To provide support to the network and also help with developing/ facilitating/ presenting at workshops and information session for example 'How to raise your profile', 'Manage your Career Development' etc.

To increase awareness and the take-up from other STEM departments

To publish the impact of this Warwick initiative.