Women in Research Workshop: Strengthening your Profile event report

Women in Research Workshop
Tuesday 3rd March 2020
Venue - YH/001B

09:15 - 09:30  Registration

09:30 - 09:35  Welcome to the event, Professor Deborah Smith, Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research

09:35 - 09:50  Professor Kiran Trehan
Introduction to Catherine Cuffley

09:50 - 12:15  Catherine Cuffley to lead interactive training session on personal branding and imposter syndrome
Coffee break will be included in this session.

12:15 - 13:00  Lunch

Session Chair - Anna Reader, Equality and Diversity Office
13:00 - 13:30  Professor Daphné Bavelier, University of Geneva

13:30 - 13:50  Jamie Khoo – Final year PhD Student, University of York

13:50 - 14:10  Professor Liz Meins, University of York

14:10 - 14:30  Joint panel Q&A

14:30 - 14:45  Coffee break

14:45 - 15:45  Catherine Cuffley to follow on training session from the morning and incorporate the responses from the participants and the experiences of the speakers.

15:45 - 16:00  Close event

16:00 - 17:00  Networking with refreshments
Conference Report
The opening address was given by Professor Deborah Smith, acting Deputy Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of York. Professor Smith was pleased to see so many attendees as was delighted to be opening our 2nd Annual Women in Research Conference. Professor Smith also introduced Professor Kiran Trehan, our new Pro-Vice Chancellor for Partnerships and Engagement, who gave her vision on how we can work together at York to continue to enhance the opportunities for women in research at York. Professor Trehan shared her passion and enthusiasm for presenting an even playing field for women and gave us a glimmer of her track record and her passion for inclusivity and diversity.

Catherine Cuffley
Catherine Cuffley, founder of ‘Thinking Choices’, is an executive coach working with women leaders in the city and after her successful workshop last year, was invited once again to work with us to develop the themes of the conference for 2020.

The aims of the workshop were to:
- Help strengthen and optimise our research profile
- Explore the ‘Imposter Syndrome’ and identify ways to overcome it

The workshop concentrated on these aims in order to support the maximisation of the impact of our participants’ research and to enhance their careers. We looked at Catherine’s SHIFT Framework to identify the focus areas for the conference.

Catherine started the workshop by asking us to consider our ongoing development journey, to think about why we are doing our research and who will benefit and how. We looked at our current research reputations in our fields, considered our on-line profiles and then began to think about how we can strengthen our profiles. We also explored what ‘Imposter Syndrome’ meant to us. How does it manifest itself and what we can do to mitigate those feelings? Catherine encouraged participants to choose a buddy (buddies) over coffee time and the lunch break and make a date to meet with them after the session.

Comments from the participants of the workshop when asked what part of the workshop they enjoyed the most included:
Discussions with other workshop participants, because they really added to what was said by Catherine.

Meeting other female researchers

Talking to the person next to you. She is in a different research discipline, and has different prospect of view of the topic. It is always good to hear what other people think.

Catherine: raising your profile- useful tips on building your own profile

Networking. Great that it was cross-faculty/possibility to meet people you wouldn’t meet normally.

Discussion of building profile, really practical advice

All of it was great – very motivating and loads of useful insights.

The importance of a profile, and realising that the reason I am intimidated by some researchers is because of their profile, not who they are (they’re possibly as timid as me!) was a key insight.

The tactics in strengthening your profile and tackling imposter syndrome was great

Speakers

Anna Reader, from our Equality and Diversity office chaired the afternoon session of speakers providing leading questions for discussion at the Q and A session at the end of the talks.

Professor Daphne Bavelier, University of Geneva shared her own career development experiences working across Europe and America. Daphne talked of the difficulties in balancing 2 careers in relationships, career progression for both partners, work-life balance, children and pets. Daphne inspired us to follow our passions and to make room for everyday life – staying true to ourselves.

Jamie Khoo, final year PhD student, University of York spoke about her career choices, life experiences and previous jobs in fashion editing and how they have informed her current research. Jamie shared her passion for why she is a researcher in her field and the opportunities for further research following her PhD award.

Professor Liz Meins, University of York, spoke about how her passion for her research and teaching has enabled her to rise to the level of Professor. Liz also described the resilience needed as not every publication and grant application or job interview will be successful. Liz also described her feelings of ‘Imposter Syndrome’ and reminded us that everyone has those feelings from time to time and we need to remind ourselves that we are up to the task.

The Q and A was a very honest and inspiring discussion, which our participants greatly appreciated. Comments from our audience when asked which speaker did they enjoy the most and why included:

- Talk by Prof Daphne Bavelier; she was an excellent, engaging speaker and had a different, international perspective on building a career in academia as a woman.
- Jamie was great because she talked openly about deciding which direction to go in after her PhD while still being in the process of figuring that out. Her research was also very inspiring.
- Prof Kiran Trehan was great; very passionate and genuine
- All of the speakers were exceptional – it’s always nice to hear about someone’s experience.
● Prof Daphne Bavelier – sincere, authentic and useful.
● Prof Daphne Bavelier – Genuine, inspiring, strong female researcher
● All of them were excellent speakers
● All of the speakers. Each giving different, unique insights to an array of departments.
● All of them were great and all added something of value
● The invited speakers were superb and inspirational.

Action planning
The final session of the day was dedication to further discussion on how to handle ‘Imposter Syndrome’. Catherine then encouraged participants to form an action planning and she provided time for reflection on the messages and discussions from the day and insights from our speakers. To then reinforce the commitment Catherine made sure that everyone that wanted to, chose a buddy, discussed their actions and signed up to meeting their buddy in the next few weeks. RETT and RDT have booked a follow-up lunch on Tuesday 28th April where we will prompt our participants to keep going with their actions, build on their buddy relationships and to continue to grow their networks.

Feedback
From informal feedback on the day there was a very positive atmosphere and people felt they benefited from attending the sessions, below are a few quotes from the feedback forms

● I loved the event last year and I loved it this year. Thank you.
● Great initiative.
● Please keep running it, loved it.
● Brilliant!

Things for consideration in future events

● More time for Q&A
● May not be the right platform to invite PhD students to speak
● The timeframe, format and catering all worked really well.
● Need to be mindful that work-life balance needs to include those without children and those with caring responsibilities
● Location on Heslington West Campus was appreciated

This quote made the conference all worthwhile for the organisers
“I started today feeling pretty despondant- actually quite upset about how powerless I am in my career. But this all changed within the first hout! Loads of positive and inspiring tips for how to take control and ownership of our profile. What have we got to lose!”

Recommendations
Based on the issues raised during the day the university should consider the following to reduce barriers for women’s career progression and provide more opportunities for grant
writing training these issues are not only relevant to women). Discussion should take place during performance reviews.

**Support for Learning and Development**
There are varying levels of support provided by line managers/supervisors. This includes allowing time for training, writing grants and papers, conferences etc. This presents an important opportunity for professional development discussions and training needs analysis to take place, which in turn provides a platform for discussions on promotion prospects.

**Women in Research network**
The women who attended the event valued being able to share their experiences and network with other researchers from across the university. Following our first ‘Women in Research’ conference, we have established and supported a range of meetings (lunch and brunch) to enable women researchers to continue this support network. This has included events such as speakers (both internal and external) on the Use of Social Media and Mentoring and Coaching opportunities at York, as well as more informal get togethers. Sheffield have produced a nice “how to guide” about their women’s network. [https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.417012!/file/GPGfinal.pdf](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.417012!/file/GPGfinal.pdf)
This require a small amount of resources to keep the network going and we are working on a plan to recruit volunteers from this network to eventually lead this group of women researchers.

**ECR ring-fenced funds**
A barrier to success that is bridging the gap between post-doctoral researcher and independent academic. And in particular demonstrating a track record in winning funding. A proportion of the University Priming Fund could be ring-fenced for post-docs to enable to explore their independent research ideas (with support from their supervisor).