Derwent – GCRC Chair

Laura Nicklin - Postgraduate

About your volunteering experience

- In my voluntary role as Chair of Derwent GCRC, I have helped integrate and improve connections for the postgrad community. I found that often postgrads can get caught up in their studies, leaving little time to socialise and make friends at the University. I’ve organised really successful social events, writing events and provost suppers, helping students get to know each other outside of their studies. From my time as an undergraduate, I know that you don’t often get the opportunity to socialise and just have a chat with postgrads, so to be able to bridge those gaps between the two student communities has been really rewarding.

What attracted you to take part in volunteering?

- Having had the experience of volunteering and doing paid work in similar areas, I realised that when money isn’t a factor, passion for what you are doing really takes over! Volunteering enables you to not only take part in work that you care about, but also to help solve problems for the local community. As chair of Derwent GCRC, I have made lots of new friends and developed a range of skills for future career development. Volunteering really does bring out the best of both worlds; you can improve your CV, whilst taking part in an enjoyable experience meeting a diverse range of people.

What have been the highlights/surprises of your volunteering experience?

- I think the main surprise from my time with Derwent GCRC is how much it took off! During the initial stages of getting GCRC off the ground a lot of people were telling me that it would be too much work, and that previous attempts had failed in the past. Despite this, through perseverance and commitment, it was amazing to see how many people wanted to get involved with GCRC, either as a member of the team or just coming down to our events. Seeing how much Derwent GCRC’s influence has spread around campus to promote the inter-college community has been a real highlight as well, with other colleges wanting to set up their own committees to boost sociable connections for the postgrad community.

Top tips for people thinking of volunteering?

- My advice for those thinking of volunteering would be that if you care about something, get involved! When volunteering, you have the opportunity to make the commitment towards helping others in the community you live in. Don’t be afraid to try something new, you never know what great things will come from it. I also think it is important to be honest with yourself and to be aware of your own feelings. Ultimately you are investing your own time, so make sure you get the most out of the experience.

If you are interested in getting involved in a volunteering role like this, or have something else in mind, please get in touch with us at volunteering@york.ac.uk and we will be happy to help you.