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Researcher development workshops

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Dr. Mhairi Towler integrates a background in science with animation skills in order to use visual and 3D methodologies to communicate science to a wide audience.

Mhairi gained a degree in Biochemistry and a PhD in Molecular and Cell Biology from the University of Dundee. She then carried out postdoctoral work, both in San Francisco and Dundee, in varying fields such as cell biology and human physiology. She was a founder member and Co-chair of the College of Life Sciences Postdoctoral Association. During her time as a postdoc she also completed a postgraduate certificate in teaching and learning in higher education and while studying for this recognised the importance of the visual as a cognitive tool.

While working as a scientist she became involved in several Sci-Art projects and collaborating with artists gave her an insight into the art world that inspired her and influenced her career aspirations with the ultimate goal of becoming a scientific visualisation practitioner. She completed a Masters in Animation and Visualisation at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design at the University of Dundee in 2012 in order to pursue this goal. She has exhibited her artwork in Dundee, Lithuania, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Paris, Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

Mhairi is Founder and Director of the multi-award winning animation production company, Vivomotion (www.vivomotion.co.uk). The company offers a service of bespoke animations for scientific communication. In addition, training workshops are offered for postgraduate and research staff on visual communication of research and how to launch a new enterprise. Mhairi is also an active member of The Royal Society of Edinburgh's Young Academy Scotland.

"The workshop was very helpful. I learnt a lot of do's and don'ts for poster presentations. Very interactive and interesting."

"I liked the session on storyboarding as I would like to make some animations and it was good to learn about the process involved."

Dr. Towler has delivered these workshops at the universities of Dundee, St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Glasgow and the prestigious Curie Insititut in Paris, France.

Where the workshop should take place and practical requirements

- In a room with an overhead projector for PowerPoint presentations and with Internet access.
  - Flip chart available for use.
  - Tables/desks for participants to lean on.
  - Maximum number of participants = 20.
  - Participants should bring their own laptops/tablets with them.
  - Facilitator will provide paper, pens and post it notes.

Target Audience • Relevant to postgraduate students.

Cost • Rates for the workshop are competitive and formal enquiries should be made to mhairi@vivomotion.co.uk

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Half day
Data visualisation: an introduction

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The Challenge

Data Visualisation is a huge field and many researchers don't know where to begin to find knew ways to present their results.

The Solution

By the end of this workshop, you should be able to:

- Access several on-line tools available for data visualisation.
- Design novel infographics for your research topics.

"Great session this afternoon. Now brimming with ideas for data visualisations to accompany the passenger experience."

Summary

This workshop will serve as an introduction to the vast field of data visualisation. Highlighting on-line tools, you will learn how to tell stories with your data. Examples of unique data visualisation projects will be shown for inspiration. Designing communications that appeal on an aesthetic level is important no matter what discipline you work in.

This workshop will look at how data can be turned into compelling visual stories, including flat graphic design (infographics).

Topics covered include:

- The importance of good visual storytelling;
- Designing and presenting graphs and charts to maximise their impact; and
- Examples of good practice.

Please note: Although different visualisation software options will be discussed during the workshop, this is not a software-training course.

Research Development Framework (RDF)

● A1/A2/A3 Knowledge and intellectual abilities

● D2/D3 Engagement, influence and impact

Presenting research visually

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The Challenge

Presenting our research in a visual way for different audiences can be a new concept for some researchers, involving skills not previously known.

The Solution

By the end of this workshop, you should be able to:

- Define the principles around poster design including layout, colour and font selection.
- Produce a draft plan for your poster.
- Have chosen visual aids to help with public engagement.
- Produce a hand drawn graphical abstract on your research area.
- Know how to access animation software to help illustrate your research.

"The ideas and ways to represent my research were very helpful. I liked how the facilitator let us apply our own subjects to the ideas presented."

"It was good to learn how to make a graphical introduction to my project."
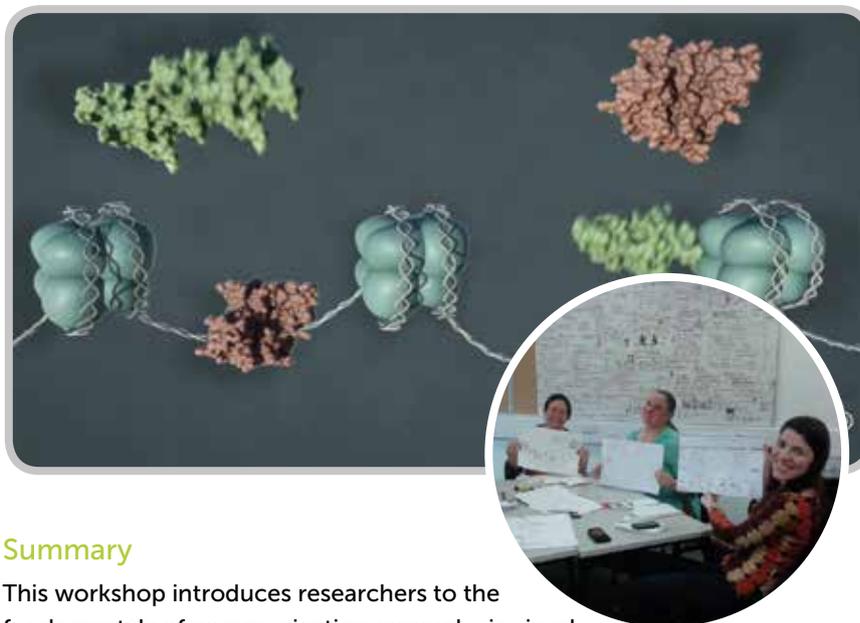
Summary

This workshop introduces researchers to the fundamentals of communicating research via visual means. Participants will leave the workshop with a foundation in what aspects should be considered when preparing their research findings for visual presentation. There will be four sessions throughout the day including:

- Poster design
- Ideas for public engagement
- Overview figures/graphical abstract preparation
- Animation techniques

Sharing your research findings via a poster is commonplace during the course of postgraduate study, whether within your own department or at an International conference. This workshop is designed for individuals who wish to understand how good, basic design can enhance the quality of their poster presentations.

Secondly many researchers are now expected to participate in public engagement events to share their research with a lay audience. Selecting the correct visual aids for this activity can help break down communication barriers.

Many journals now require the submission of a graphical abstract along with submission of a manuscript. This workshop will look at how to go about designing a graphical abstract on your research findings.

Finally, animation as a communication tool for science will be introduced.

Research Development Framework (RDF)

A1/A2/A3 Knowledge and intellectual abilities

D2/D3 Engagement, influence and impact

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Starting a new enterprise

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The Challenge

Launching a new enterprise can be a daunting experience, but even more so when we come from an academic background. Knowing where to begin can be a challenge.

The Solution

By the end of this workshop, you should be able to:

- Test your idea for viability.
- Source funding for your enterprise.
- Know who can help you outwith and within the University.
- Know the appropriate method to communicate your idea to others.

"The workshop facilitator did such an excellent job. She really knew her stuff and was extremely inspiring and motivating."

"I learnt who could help me with my new venture and gained new knowledge about patenting my ideas and business competitions that I can enter."

Summary

This workshop introduces researchers to the fundamentals of launching a new enterprise. It will include:

- Idea creation/development
- Finding funding
- Who to speak to, to progress the idea
- Communicating the idea to others, including elevator pitches
- Case studies

We all think we have the next great idea that will revolutionise a certain industry, however, have we really tested it out thoroughly? Ways of coming up with new ideas, and developing them when we do, will be discussed. Once we have our idea, how do we fund it and who do we need to speak to, to help us take it to the next step? Within the financial landscape of Scotland there exists a number of "pots" of money to help fund new business ideas. Different funding streams open to individuals will be highlighted. Finally, communicating our ideas to funders is key. Elevator pitches, longer oral presentations, written business plans, personal branding and social media will be covered.

Research Development Framework (RDF)

- A1/A2/A3 Knowledge and intellectual abilities
- B3 Personal effectiveness
- C3 Research governance and organisation
- D2/D3 Engagement, influence and impact

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