

## Annual Research Staff Conference

The Research Staff Conference was established in 2009 and has seen registrations increase from 60 in its first year to nearly 200 in 2014 (around one third of the research staff population). The conference is a key mechanism for dialogue with ECRs, through both the workshops and the stallholder section of the conference. The conference is chaired by the VP (Research), with input from academic and support staff from across the University, as well as invited external speakers and guests. Key themes over the past years have included:

- Awareness of funders, funding opportunities and Fellowships
- Careers outside of academia
- Research impact (including commercialisation and enterprise, public engagement and research/ policy linkages)
- Peer review, open access publication and research integrity

Research staff are encouraged to provide input into the conference design and workshop selection at key stages throughout the year. The conference is championed by Research Deans and a key aim for 2014/15 is to improve awareness of the conference and facilitate access to all staff. In 2013 we offered mobile crèche facilities to researcher parents. For the 2015 conference, we hope to tailor sessions to different stages of postdoctoral researchers and we will also launch our 'Mentor of the Year' Award, to recognise and celebrate the contributions of more senior staff to the researcher development agenda. A selection of feedback from the 2013 and 2014 conferences can be found below.

*I am very glad I took the time to attend. Thanks for good workshop. Learned lots.*

*I found the conference very useful particularly with the VPs talk regarding the future of research and what is going to be the focus of ongoing research in the perspective of the University and Research councils.*

*Both workshops were pertinent to my current situation and provided valuable information and inspiration.*

*I appreciated hearing from female role models, as so often conferences are dominated by men.*

*This gave me some interesting ideas for improving my outreach.*

*Useful to hear about the policies and future directions within the university.*

*I left with quite a few good ideas and contacted three of the speakers for follow-up discussions.*

*Thanks again for organising the great research staff conference this week. Plenary sessions were very useful. The most valuable aspects were meeting and networking with people. Finding out about how a university works, from the top level.*

*I thought it was a really useful event for early career researchers and a great way to publicise what is going on at the University for researchers and for career development (information that doesn't always get fed down from PIs). I left the event pack in the café for people to look at. Not everyone has time or knows what to search for on the University website.*

*really good that the University is thinking about its research staff and I do appreciate that.*

*I just wanted to say that I found the conference better for me personally than last year, because there was more in it for Arts researchers. The session on European funding was particularly good - very practical, and encouraging too; [the second talk] was especially good in that respect. I had been spending most of the semester teaching, but going to the conference made me feel like a researcher again :) It is also really useful to have the stands - one reason I went was that I knew I could talk to several people in the one venue, and asking questions in person about relevant training courses etc is so much easier in person than by email.*