



Strand A: Research Culture and Community PGR Placement Report

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

Lunchtime Seminar Series: Bitesize PhD

## Introduction

Bitesize PhD has been supported through the Courage Project as part of the Strand A Research Culture and Community PGR Placements.

Bitesize PhD is a lunchtime seminar series organised by PGRs, for PGRs. The seminars are run by PGRs from the Faculty of Medicine and Health, across two schools (Medicine and Health Sciences) and with involvement beyond the faculty from PGRs in Pharmacy and Science schools.

The seminars take place on a monthly basis. They begin with pizza and networking and then one or two PGRs will present their research to their peers. Research can be presented at any stage of the process. Due to the peer-to-peer nature of the seminar series, Bitesize PhD is a supportive, informal, constructive and non-competitive environment.

The organisers of the seminar series like to arrange an annual guest speaker event, inviting an external speaker to the University to deliver a presentation to new and current PGRs. Unfortunately, schedules did not enable an external speaker to be able to come to the university for the event this year but plans are in place to arrange the event for later in the term.

Over the duration of the Courage Project, there have been 7 lunchtime seminars and 9 PGRs presenting their research progress. A vast range of topics have been covered in the seminar series, reflecting the diversity of the PGR topic areas across the Faculties of Medicine and Health, Science and Pharmacy. The topics have included, influenza infection, prostate cancer, sedentary behaviour and physical activity in adolescents and children, combating metabolic diseases, infections and stem cells, and health promotion applications. Dates and speakers have been arranged for the seminar series throughout 2020.

## Feedback

The feedback from PGRs comes from the speakers, from people who have attended these seminars and from staff in the faculty:

Feedback from a speaker:

*“The Bitesize seminar was extremely useful. I was able to get hands-on experience in presenting my work, and it increased my confidence in answering questions related to the presentation and my project. Furthermore, it was a great opportunity to ask for immediate feedback on the clarity of the presentation, which is something that cannot do after a presentation at a conference.”*

Feedback from a speaker:

*“Taking part as a speaker for the Bitesize PhD seminar series was a great experience that in my opinion, every PhD student would be good to take advantage of. Being on my 1st year and just before my probation review, it helped me practice for the probationary review meeting. I experienced how it feels to receive critique from an audience that it is not totally related to my field.*

*I realised that I was not able enough in explaining some terms related to my project as such, I identified gaps in my knowledge to develop further. It really boosted my confidence and built my resilience as my experience was a great lesson on how I should defend my project and how to respond on feedback – all being part of the academia. I received valuable feedback which helps me to manage similar questions and highlight them every time I give a talk about my research. Last but not least, it helped me expand my network as I got to meet people with similar interests.”*

Feedback from an attendee:

*“I attended four Bitesize during the last year 3 of them for HSC students and one for Med Student all of them were really good and I found it useful for me personally rather than for my PhD as each subject is different.*

*First, you learn how different students from different backgrounds are presenting their research ideas and so you start to think about different styles of presentations. Second, communicating was another thing that was nice and how to communicate and also disseminate your research ideas. Third, students have the chance to practice in front of other PhD student in a friendly environment which can increase their level of confidence to present either at conferences or for their probation.”*

Feedback from faculty staff:

*“I have been incredibly impressed with the commitment and dedication shown by the PGR students in our Faculty, who take part in the Bitesize PhD seminar series. Running and organising these events is not a trivial matter and they have taken real ownership of these events. The seminar series offers real opportunities for our students to develop some of the key skills that they will need for the next step on their career path and it has also begun to establish a community spirit among this group of students.”*

## Recommendations

- The Faculty has always been supportive of Bitesize PhD and it is important that this support continues.

- Bitesize PhD incurs a minimal cost in providing free pizza at the seminars. This minimal cost should continue to be supported by the faculty as an investment in the development of research culture and communities amongst PGRs.
- Encourage wider engagement from PGRs in other faculties, to increase the development of communities across discipline areas.