St Leonard’s College PGR Getaway: Being a Researcher

Schools/Department/Unit involved: Students Association (PGR representatives) and Graduate School

Amount awarded: £5000

Aims and objectives of project:

The PGR retreat aimed to build strong interdisciplinary relationships that might not have develop otherwise. The goals of the event were therefore twofold: First, to develop interdisciplinary friendships and bring disparate PGR communities closer together. Second, to introduce members of one discipline to the sorts of work in other disciplines, bringing to focus chances for interdisciplinary collaboration that may not otherwise be recognized.

Outcome of project:

- Feedback generally very positive – vast majority of attendees would definitely recommend the event to a friend. Some extremely positive comments made and many feedback forms included advocated for the Getaway running again.
- To some extent feedback reflects difficulty of satisfying diverse range of requirements / preferences – for example several students suggested giving more time over to the writing time aspect of the Getaway, whilst others felt this was unnecessary as is already catered for by Thesis Boot Camp.
- Very consistent message that event didn’t need as much ‘scheduled time’ or instruction as it had – multiple students stated they would have preferred more free / unstructured time.
- Impression both at event and from feedback is that the following exercises / sessions were particularly successful:
  - PG Soc ‘escape room’ game as an icebreaker.
  - PG Soc quiz and games evening.
  - Small group presentations of one person’s research.
  - Designing and ‘pitching’ an interdisciplinary research project.
  - Discussion of alternative careers.
- Some students in their feedback suggested running more separate / parallel sessions to divide up arts and sciences or students at different stages. Whilst I appreciate where this is coming from I would worry about dividing different disciplines up too much as this runs against the explicit interdisciplinary aim of the event. Parallel sessions also ideally require multiple facilitators.
- Attempting to construct a communal, digital document was a dismal failure due to the ropey internet at the Burn! – I would definitely rethink or indeed entirely cut out this aspect if running the event again.
- A lot of feedback expressed desire for follow-on sessions: very reasonable request but of course has funding implications.
- One student made a suggestion in their feedback for a field trip – this could be an excellent option if putting more emphasis on the social / cohort development aspect of the Getaway in future years, but of course there are logistical challenges and thus funding issues (transport etc) associated with this.
Future Getaways

- Taking on board all of the above, I think future Getaway events should definitely feature both more social time and perhaps also more ‘communal working’ time – it seems from feedback that people really enjoyed just having the space in a novel setting to get some work done.
- I think the feedback certainly indicates that the event was successful and provides good support for the case that, if at all possible, the event should run again in the future. The question of course arises regarding funding: is it possible to secure ongoing funding to make this a regular event, or would a fresh application need to be made to the PGR development fund (or similar) each year?
- If the event were to run again, a discussion would need to be had regarding whether previous attendees would be allowed to re-apply or whether places should only be available to those who have not attended previously.