Early Career Researchers Event: Staying in Academia

The cohort building activity took place on Friday 26th February 2016 at St Mary’s campus. The School of Public Health is split across three campuses, making activities to engage all students difficult. Those invited to the event, via email and poster advertising, were from Hammersmith, Charing Cross and St Mary’s campus. This event provided an opportunity to think about career planning and provided a great environment for cross-campus and cross-department networking.

Following a drinks reception, four academics spoke about the differing routes they have taken and their journey to and through an academic career (20 minute presentations each). The speakers chosen were at different career stages to give an idea of their thought process at that particular stage, their experiences through their own PhD and how they transitioned from a PhD and decided on a career in academia. This was followed up by a very open questions and answer sections and a networking food and drinks reception.

The informal setting and the food and drinks provided after the event contributed to a relaxed environment where there were further discussions with the presenters and attendees, as well as an opportunity for students who are usually based at different campuses to mix, be introduced and create connections.

The event was hugely popular and welcomed many PhD student, Post docs, MRes and Research assistant. PhD students who attended were very positive about the event; commenting on “the ability to interact with other PhD student from different departments” and being able to “hear about how others previously in our shoes have decided on and pursued a career in academia, particularly useful to hear honest tips and barriers they have faced”.

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We are very grateful to the Graduate School for providing funding for this activity. The event was successful in allowing PhD students, early and later on in their PhDs, (as well as other researchers) to scope and make a more informed decision about their career paths as well as providing an opportunity to make new contacts and increase support networks throughout their time at Imperial and onwards.