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# Coffee, Cake and Crystal Maze

– how to create a sense of belonging  
in postgraduate community.





## **Session Outline**

- **Who we are and why we are here**
- **Examples of initiatives**
- **Break-out sessions**
- **Wrap up and conclusions**



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**Who are we?**

**Why are we here?**



## Mandy Gill

- Project Officer
- Manage Training, Marketing, Events & Communications for The Nottingham BBSRC DTP.
- Previously worked at Great Ormond Street Hospital, University of Derby & Church of England Head office.
- Currently studying for Degree in Creative Writing & English Literature.
- I was once an extra on the critically acclaimed British soap 'Crossroads' and shared a taxi with Linda Robson!





## Donna Palmer

- Currently managed ESRC and NERC DTPs at Nottingham
- Undergraduate and PhD in Chemistry
- Project Manager for Research Organisation
- Joined University of Nottingham in 2012
- Managed a EPSRC CDT at Loughborough Uni
- Member of Researcher Academy Wellbeing task group
- I was in the audience on a Saturday morning kids TV show in the 90s and sat next to Robson and Jerome



# The Researcher Academy



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The Researcher Academy supports researchers across all stages of their research career, from first year PhD students through to senior research leaders.

- Postgraduate Researchers (Mainly PhD students but includes MRes)
- Research Staff (at all levels)
- Research Supervisors
- Staff who support researchers



# The Nottingham BBSRC Doctoral Training Partnership



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Led by the University of Nottingham in partnership with Nottingham Trent University and the National Biofilms Innovation Centre (NBIC).

Fully funded four-year PhD studentships in the Biological Sciences.

Standard programme – lab rotations, three-month professional placement. Industry linked studentships.

Currently around 220 students on the programme.

Extensive training available during induction, annual training week and throughout year. Scientific, Careers, EDI & self-management training offered.

Annual Conference.

# ESRC Midlands Graduate School Doctoral Training Partnership



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Started in 2017, led by University of Warwick with Aston, Birmingham, Leicester, Loughborough and Nottingham. Supporting 7 cohorts of postgraduate researchers to undertake interdisciplinary research across the social sciences.

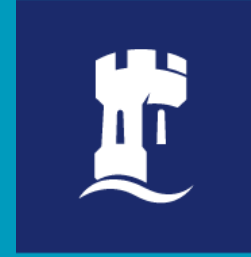
Approximately 70 'active' ESRC funded researchers at Nottingham ( of ~480).

Researchers are funded for up to 4 years and aligned to Training Pathways. Nottingham offers 13 of 17 available training pathways drawing expertise from 12 Schools across 4 Faculties.

ESRC have specific training requirements for all funded researchers. Majority of researchers are funded to complete Masters in Social Science Research (MSSR) in year 1 (and are registered as postgraduate taught).

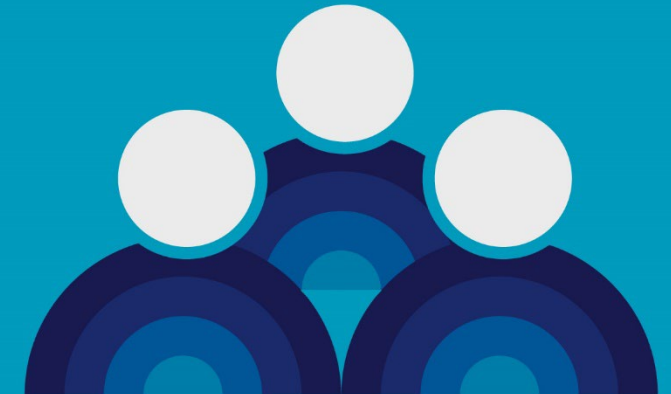
All ESRC funded researchers must complete 20 credits of additional taught training in PhD years.





## Passionate about PGR development, success and building a sense of community

- Share some of our experiences from over the past 3 years
- Hear your experiences and ideas
- Leave with a newfound sense of passion for building PGR community!





## **Breakout 1**

- 1. What do you currently do to build a sense of community in your PGR population?**

**(10 mins)**



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# The coffee, the cake and the crystals



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# How do we build community?

## Step 1: Break the Ice (with a musical instrument if you have to )



Nottingham BBSRC DTP @nottm\_bbsrc\_dtp · Nov 16, 2021

This is our 2021 cohort and now you could be a part of the 2022 cohort. Recruitment to the programme (standard & CASE) opens today! More details here: [bit.ly/31Vo3d1](https://bit.ly/31Vo3d1)

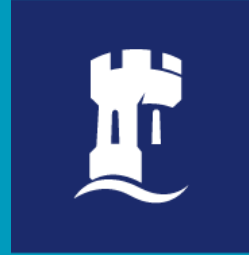


Nottingham BBSRC DTP @nottm\_bbsrc\_dtp · Sep 27, 2022

Our wonderful 2022 Cohort are here!! 🎉🎊🍰🥰



## Step 2: Ask your students what they want:



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You may already do these things, but we have:

- Student Forums
- Invite student reps to training & management committee meetings
- Opportunities throughout year to provide feedback
  - Events
  - Surveys
  - Regular drop-in sessions
  - Coffee and cake sessions
  - FAQ and information sessions

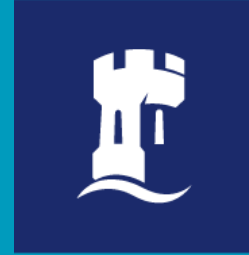
# Step 3. Put on group/team building activities (Hire external companies for this if you can. One event goes a long way)



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# Step 4: Create a Cohort Development Fund (if you have the finance for this)



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- Funding to support student-led events and training initiatives which benefit the DTP cohort and to the development of the students delivering the event or initiative
- Applications for amounts up to £2,000 per event or initiative (BBSRC limit up to £10k per annum)
- So far?
  - BBSRC Boat party, Mock conference, First Aid training, Primary & Nursery School visit outreach (scientists for the day)
  - ESRC specialist workshops, training with external providers, PhD development day, writing retreats



## Step 5: Be an ally (encourage your students to do the same)

- Inclusive
- EDI training – disability awareness, anti-racism, LGBTQIA+ training
- Is there anyone else like me here?
- Mentor scheme and buddy scheme
- Student reps



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# Step 6: Choose points in the year you can gather people together (& don't leave gaps too long in between)



# Step 7: Use Social Media and Marketing



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- Use hashtags at events
- Ask students what they want to see on socials
- Student social media takeovers 'a day in the life'
- Keep the voice genuine and relatable
- Follow your students on social media
- Notice which platforms you have more interaction on and use them
- Re-brand if you need to
- Inclusive marketing campaign – videography & updated marketing materials

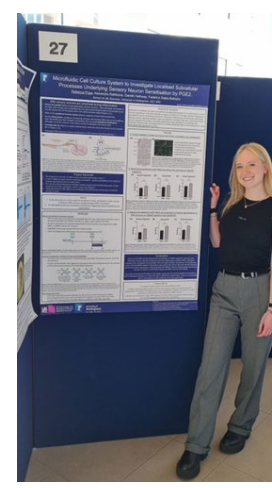
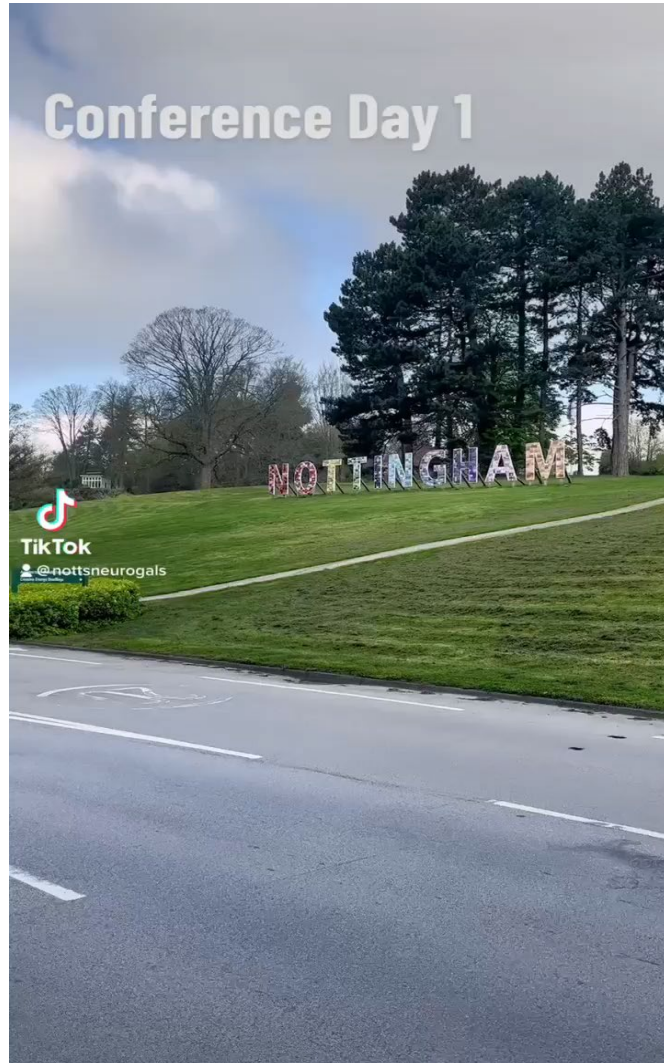


# Conference in a TikTok & some pics



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**Foteini Patera** @foteini\_pat · Apr 19  
How you thought your PhD would look like vs how it actually looks like!  
But seriously enjoying #BBSRCDTPSpringConf2023  
Thank you @nottm\_bbsrc\_dtp for a great conference once again!



So, what do Nottingham BBSRC DTP students *actually* think about being part of a cohort?



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## Breakout 2

1. What would you love to do to build PGR community if money was no object?

(10 mins)



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## **Breakout 3**

**1. How can we make our dream ideas a reality?**

**(5 mins)**



## Our contact details:



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