PGR Student Interdisciplinary Conference Guidance

Introduction

This guide is aimed at helping you to write a good research proposal for your conference. Here are a few suggestions on what to include and what to avoid. It is intended to help you to think about your proposed research conference in a clear, structured and valuable way.

What is a research conference proposal?

A research proposal is an outline of your conference project, which is used to evaluate the quality, suitability, and originality of your project, as well as to gauge how realistic and informed you are in your plans for hosting a productive conference event.

What should it contain?

The following suggestions are based on the standard expected of research conference proposals:

- **Title** – a working title of your proposed interdisciplinary conference project; this does not have to be the final title of your conference but must provide information on the proposed content and format.

- **Proposal and rationale (about 500 words)** – in this section you are expected to:
  o set out the key research question/problem/theme/methodology that you want to address through the conference; outline the further ancillary research questions brought into focus.
  o provide a brief overview of the existing research in your area, or any similar conferences that have taken place (if you consider your event rare or unique, make sure you mention it!);
  o detail the cross-faculty collaboration; remember that the condition of the award is to have PGR researchers from *at least two different faculties* and *at least three different departments* on the organising board/committee;
  o provide a justification as to why the interdisciplinary framework is beneficial for your inquiry;
  o explain the working model of the conference (for example - panels with research papers, workshops, posters, short provocations, long-table discussions etc)
  o include the joining criteria (for example - open to PGR researchers at Essex only, open to all PGR researchers, open to PG researchers and members of staff, no fees or some charges etc.);
  o indicate any invited speakers or keynote speakers, if applicable;
  o suggest the proposed venue and time.

- **Amount requested and budget outline** – the maximum amount you can request is £5000. Please provide a detailed budget outline proposal, paying specific attention to items such as, travel and subsistence costs for conference speakers; accessibility or disability adjustment costs, catering fees; room hire (where applicable); printing and consumables; marketing and promotional materials; any anticipated post-conference costs [please note that this list is not exhaustive].

- **Timeline** – outline a timescale of the conference preparation, indicating the sequence of the project milestones, and how long the different tasks are envisaged to take. Allow enough time for all the administration before the event, evaluation afterwards and build in a buffer to manage the inevitable challenges that arise. It is really important that your expectations are realistic and fit within the available time. The conference must take place and all final costs processed by 31st July 2020.

- **Expected outputs and the impact of the conference** – in this section you are expected to:
  - indicate any possible research outputs as a result of the conference (working papers/presentations/datasets/conference proceedings);
  - explain the benefits of the conference for the University of Essex research community and PGR researchers in particular.

Useful practical hints
- This is a unique fund making space for interdisciplinary thinking and discussions. Be bold and creative in your proposal; think about inter-disciplinarity not only in terms of your own research but also in terms of research encounters between disciplines; make sure you consult your peers across faculties to consider the conference parameters from multiple perspectives.
- Consider and weigh up collectively the different models of conference and its budget, e.g., how many participants and panels you envisage; what will be your selection process; do you envision round tables, workshops, the use of labs or computer labs, performances; do you wish to spend more on the invited external speaker(s) or rely on internal experts who may agree to serve as key note speakers; do you want to set aside budget for an edited publication of conference papers?

How to write a strong research conference proposal
- Lead with a clear and well-defined research idea for the conference;
- Explain how the proposed research conference theme is relevant and significant;
- Discuss the impact your research may have in opening new areas of work and thinking;
- Outline a logical and practical plan to deliver the conference;
- Describe any relevant prior experience which may help you organise a successful conference;
- Ensure you write for an audience of informed reviewers who may not be familiar with the theme/subject you are proposing;
- Ensure the proposal is clear, concise and grammatically correct;
- You *do not have to* include references but signaling your familiarity with the field of research through the use of references is often helpful. If you do include those as a bibliography, the bibliography will not count towards your 500 word limit.

How to submit an application
- Send your application to Postgraduate Research Education Team: proficio@essex.ac.uk , with the subject heading "Application for PGR Interdisciplinary Conference", by the deadline of 5pm on Tuesday 21 January 2020.