

BSG Post-Graduate Training Workshop

Windsor, UK, 9-12 December 2019

Report on the BSG Post-Graduate Training Workshop 2019

Francis Matthews

KU Leuven, francis.matthews@kuleuven.be



Photos from Cumberland Lodge. Credits to Dr Lucy Smith for the group photo (top left).

December the 9th to 12th marked the 2019 edition of the BSG Windsor Workshop, located on the idyllic Cumberland Lodge estate. Upon arrival, the impressive buildings and outdoor grounds set a relaxing scene and give the feeling of being on a quintessential English country estate. After an initial gathering on Monday afternoon over one of many cups of tea and cake, we were given a talk about the rich history of Cumberland Lodge and how it came to be a center for education after World War 2.

Attending the session gives the perfect opportunity to connect with and befriend other British and European PhD students working in Geomorphology. Each session was undertaken in 'The Mews' building, formerly the horse stables of the building but exquisitely renovated into a number of bedrooms upstairs and rooms for presentations downstairs. The structure of the days consisted of a set of different sessions relating to project management, philosophical approach and practical skills in research, broken up breakfast, lunch and dinner in the main building of Cumberland Lodge. The



BSG Post-Graduate Training Workshop

Windsor, UK, 9-12 December 2019

series of breaks within the day gives the perfect opportunity to further discuss interesting topics presented during each session amongst fellow PhD students and Professors.

Sessions breaking down the philosophical approach to research were stimulating and gave the opportunity to consider aspects that many early-career researchers may otherwise not. This included considering our individual philosophical approaches to research, even if it was thought that we didn't previously have one. Other intellectually prompting sessions were on modeling, since many of us early PhD researchers are undertaking modeling exercises it was useful to consider the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the deeper considerations necessary when modeling.

Practical sessions included the use of social media for research communication; a session followed by many new geomorphology PhD researchers on Twitter. Jo Shanahan from the English Environmental Agency gave a talk about her life 'beyond the PhD' as a Geomorphologist working in a non-academic career, which gave many useful insights into avenues beyond academia as well as opportunities that can be pursued with a background in Geomorphology. Tuesday evening gave the opportunity to design a hypothetical PhD project within groups and present it amongst our cohort. This gave the perfect opportunity to go through the planning process of a 3-4 year PhD project, without worrying about scientific details.

Presentations allowed the perfect opportunity to polish our skills in the styles of presentation necessary for conferences. The Pico sessions to commence the workshop gave experience in concisely presenting our research and also gave an insight into the research of our colleagues. On Wednesday we had the chance to present a more in depth summary of our research amongst smaller groups undertaking similar projects to ourselves. This allowed for valuable discussions and feedback that can be taken forward into the future.

Alongside important learning, the workshop gave the brilliant opportunity to have fun and bond with other PhD colleagues. Walking around the large countryside estate grounds provided fresh air and a welcome break between sessions. The famous Cumberland Lodge basement hosted pool and table tennis tournaments during the evenings, building up to the 'grand finale' pool tournament on the Wednesday night to continue the BSG tradition. Most importantly, alongside learning the necessary skills to pursue a successful academic career and navigate the world of research and publishing, the workshop allowed many PhD students arriving as strangers to leave as friends. Therefore I strongly recommend the workshop to anyone considering taking part.