

From Starters to Main Courses

Date(s) Tuesday 24th July 2012 (09:00-16:30)

Contact **Workshop Leader:** Professor Janice Thompson

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Today food is major issue of economic and social interest (e.g. UK government's public health responsibility deal) as well as a scientific one. Increasingly food security has become an issue for governments alongside commercial interests, particularly the power of large food corporations and supermarkets against social and medical concerns such as the increase in obesity. There are critical questions to be raised and addressed in the food system: is it produced in a fair and healthy way; where do the profits from its production, processing and distribution go; what is a fair apportionment of value between the key actor groups, the stakeholders in the system – workers, business, the community, and government; and what impact will the high fat/high salt/high sugar, genetically modified delicacies developed in the R&D departments of global consumer product companies have on the health of future generations? In the health arena, nutrition has been a long-standing priority area for many research funders, from the Department of Health (NIHR) through Research Councils (MRC, BBSRC, ESRC) to charities (Wellcome Trust and many other medical charities). Within the University of Birmingham, we have pockets of genuine strength – the Centre for Formulation Engineering; public health nutrition; nutrition and exercise metabolism; brain reactions to food and parental feeding practices in psychology; behavioural medicine in health & population sciences; and there are some excellent external relationships through the School of Marketing. Internal opportunities created by new senior nutrition-focused vacancies and appointments under the MRC-ARUK Centre for Musculoskeletal Ageing Research and through the School for Sport & Exercise Sciences, have created an ideal time to bring our interdisciplinary strengths together.



The IAS workshop, by attracting a wide range of disciplinary expertise from across campus, and focusing discussion around three major strategic external funding opportunities, aimed to catalyse new interactions and initiate a road map of how to elevate Birmingham's visibility and status as a major UK centre for nutrition-related research. Some of the main opportunities to explore are the role of nutrition research in a potential future bid for an NIHR Biomedical Research Unit in Obesity, a BBSRC Strategic Longer and Larger grant, or an ESRC Centre and Large Grants competition proposal.

The workshop explored relevant interests and opportunities with an overview of what is going on currently in nutrition at the university and then explored themes that the diverse groups represented felt need to be addressed in research.

The University's largest ever public engagement event, Brum Dine With Me, in September 2012 will give the University a major publicity boost in the area of nutrition and the workshop provided an opportunity to plan for the best engagement with that.

Internal attendees (name and School): **Business:** Isabelle Szmigin, Pam Robinson, Nina Michaelidou, **Psychology:** Jackie Blissett, **Sport & Exercise Science:** Anton Wagenmakers, Gareth Wallis, Frank Eves, Andrew Blannin, Michael Grey, Erica Thomas, **Cancer Studies:** Chris Tselepis, **Immunity & Infection:** Janet Lord, **Health & Population Sciences:** Deborah Lycett, Peymane Adab, Sabi Redwood, Miranda Pallan, Tania Griffin, Behnoush Ahranjani, Kiya Kelleher, **Chemical Engineering:** Jennifer Norton, **Primary Care Clinical Sciences:** Angus Dawson

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