

2019 PERCAT Postdoctoral Researcher Conference

Postdocs from LES and EPS enjoyed a day learning about each other's research and career experiences, garnished with an engaging keynote lecture – and a good share of free food and drinks.



On June 26th, about 90 delegates from across EPS and LES came together at the Alan Walters building for the 2019 PERCAT Conference. Ahead of the conference, the organising committee had selected ten out of 25 received contributions for oral presentation. The speakers came from nine different schools and invited the audience to insights on their research projects. About thirty participants also showcased their work with poster presentations. Participants commented that it was “*great to hear about research from different subjects*” and that the “*session lengths were perfect*”.

The conference was kicked off in the morning with a welcome note by Chris Baber. The following speakers' session covered diverse topics, from hurricanes in the Atlantic to bacteria communities on feet of British sheep. Just before lunch, the delegates gathered to listen to a keynote lecture by Sarah Cosgriff on “Opening Doors: Widening Engagement for Underrepresented Groups”. Some participants highlighted this talk as the most useful part of the conference and as “*really interesting*”. The afternoon continued with two more speakers' sessions. Participants praised that “*talks were great and very understandable by non-specialized audience*. *Networking was also great, lots of opportunities and interested people*”.



Talks on careers and experiences in and outside of academia by senior postdocs are a special feature of PERCAT conferences. Speakers covered experiences of being a postdoc for more than ten years, of leaving and coming back to academia, as well as of how a career in academia can fit into family life.

No PERCAT conference would be complete without the competitions for best poster and talks. This year Mani Entezami and Giulio Vita won first and second prize for oral presentations. Elodie Jagu won the Delegates' Choice poster price and Xiaohui She won the Sponsors' Choice poster prize. Tim Softley handed out the prize certificates and delivered the closing note.

After a full day of “*enlightening talks*” (as one of the participants described it), networking, and sharing experiences about career paths, the PERCAT conference closed with a drinks reception. After a long day those who stayed on were able to quench their thirst and make the most of a final networking opportunity.

We cannot finish without mentioning the generous support of our Gold sponsors, Sciex and Shimadzu, our Silver sponsors National Instruments, and Swagelok and our talk prize sponsor PepsiCo, who helped make the conference possible. Representatives of these companies were present at the conference, giving delegates a valuable opportunity to forge links with industry.



The organising committee of postdocs from LES and EPS, guided by PERCAT officer Jennifer Thomson, were very happy about the outcome of this year's conference. After all, organising this conference is yet another training opportunity that PERCAT has in store. And Jennifer is already looking for a new team to organise PERCAT 2020 – so stay tuned for news from PERCAT.

Images courtesy of Albel Singh.

