**Develop from Within (DfW)**

*A personal development programme for Postdoctoral Research Assistants (PDRAs) commissioned by the Department of Chemistry, University of Southampton.*

*Designed and delivered by Dr Jeremy Hinks (JH), Director, Alpamayo Coaching Ltd*

**Purpose**

The Department of Chemistry’s commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers led them to commission a personal and professional development programme for PDRAs that would fulfil the following criteria:

* Compliance with and contribution to the institutional response to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
* Actively supported by Southampton Chemistry through the academic supervisors
* Flexible to fit into PDRA workload patterns and primary responsibility
* Focus the attention of the PDRA community on their shared responsibility with the University for their personal and professional development
* Adding value to PDRA’s ‘in contract’ work as well as in a career development capacity
* Affordable, sustainable, scalable for Southampton Chemistry
* Subject to evaluation and continuous improvement on the basis of feedback

**Benefits**

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| **Benefit to PDRAs** | **Benefit to Southampton Chemistry** |
| 1. Enhanced self-awareness | 1. A more resilient and self-reflecting PDRA community |
| 1. Enhanced ability to audit personal values, skills and behaviours | 1. Enhancement of skills supporting innovation and creativity in contracted responsibilities |
| 1. Increased capacity to cope with change (resilience and adaptability) | 1. Demonstration of commitment to Vita Concordate, Athena Swan *etc* |
| 1. Support in thinking on career development | 1. Contribute to the Pathways to Impact aspect for REF and in collective approach to grant applications |
| 1. Opportunity to build a PDRA community with aspects of self-help and empowerment to delivery project work for the Department | 1. Integrate new with existing support creating synergy where possible leading to a reputation of offering best practice in PDRA development. |

**The Programme**

Develop from Within (DfW) is a bespoke programme designed to fulfil the intent outlined above and was created and delivered by Dr Jeremy Hinks. Its design was informed through interviews with experienced PDRAs in chemistry on what they felt were gaps in their development and in collaboration with key members of staff from the Department of Chemistry. A key part of DfW was the use of individual Lumina Spark Portraits that offer a sense of personal behaviour preferences and how they serve individuals in team and leadership positions ([luminalearning.com/products/lumina-spark](https://luminalearning.com/products/lumina-spark)).

The programme was delivered in two sessions:

**Session 1:** A one day group training activity introducing Lumina Spark and using it to explore how individuals understood how their behaviours served their purpose and influenced those around them. Each delegate receives their unique 40 page report which is brought to life through a mixture of taught content, group coaching and peer to peer discussion.

Embedded in the programme are a number of change management tools and calls to action helping delegates to think about exploring alternatives for their post PDRA future and to form a plan of action on the basis of that thinking

**Session 2**: A half day activity scheduled, two to four weeks after session 1 building on thinking about behaviours preferences and enriching it with thinking about purpose, values and strengths. In addition, discussion around resilience and strategies for remaining in competency mode when is challenging situations surfaces some issues relevant to the recruitment processes they are likely to experience.

**Outcomes**

The first iteration of DfW was offered to a group of seven PDRAs. They was approximately equal representation between male and female staff, from four different countries and with widely different PDRA backgrounds and proximity to their next career decision. Some of their feedback is captured below.

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| **Some comments on Lumina Spark:**  ‘It is good to get an opportunity to think about different characteristics of ourselves and see them as strengths instead of negative aspects to fix.’  ‘It allows you to understand more about yourself and how your personality changes depending on the situation.’  ‘Honestly, the ability to think a little inwardly and find out who you are and how you express this in daily life is a huge insight. It might surprise you what you find out about how you are!’ | **Some comments on DfW overall**  ‘Understanding yourself and how you think/ act is a valuable part of self growth. It is something that we all assume we know about ourselves, but this is often not the case. Being able to give time to this was very valuable.’  ‘DfW was very useful in focussing my mind on the importance of career choices. I think the course will be helpful for future cohorts too.’  ‘It was valuable to experience how other PDRAs have very different attitudes and strengths and how this affects our interactions at work with others.’ |

**The Future**

The Department of Chemistry is enthusiastic to offer DfW to its PDRA community in the future. In 2019-20 DfW will run with at least one cohort of 8-12 delegates at a price point of £300 per delegate.

**Interested in knowing more?**

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| If you are interested in knowing more about DfW and how it might support your PDRA community you can get in touch directly with Jeremy Hinks ([jeremy.d.hinks@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.d.hinks@gmail.com), 07780 960777, [www.alpamayocoaching.com](http://www.alpamayocoaching.com)). Alternatively speak to either Dr Lynda Brown ([L.J.Brown@soton.ac.uk](mailto:L.J.Brown@soton.ac.uk)) or Dr Russell Minns ([R.S.Minns@soton.ac.uk](mailto:R.S.Minns@soton.ac.uk)) who can comment on their experience of developing DfW with me, and the experience of their PDRAs in attending it. |  |