

Researcher-Led Initiative Fund Application Form

Thank you for your interest in applying to the Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund.

Applications are invited from University of Sussex doctoral researchers and early career research staff for funding to support short-term, well-defined training and development or public engagement projects.

The deadline for applications is Friday 16th November 2018.

Please ensure that you have read the [guidance](#) before completing your application.

1. Name

[REDACTED]

2. Sussex e-mail address

[REDACTED]@sussex.ac.uk

3. Contact telephone number

4. School and department of lead applicant

Life Sciences, EBE

5. Are you a doctoral researcher or early career research staff?

Doctoral researcher

Type of activity

Do you wish to apply for funding for a training and development initiative, or a public engagement initiative?

Public engagement initiative

About the public engagement initiative

Please tell us about the purpose of the public engagement initiative.

You may select any or all of the options below. Please explain your rationale when prompted.

Is the purpose of your activity to inform and inspire the public?

Yes

Please explain your rationale

Planet PhD is a new podcast in which we [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will interview PhD students* to ask them about a) their research and b) their experiences as doctoral students.

We have called the podcast Planet PhD to acknowledge the fact that a PhD can often feel like a unique world or 'planet', an existence somewhere between a student and a traditionally-understood occupation that can lead to misunderstanding or confusion. Information on the actualities of PhD study can often be difficult to obtain, therefore, we hope to bridge this gap in understanding to provide candid accounts of what it means to be a doctoral researcher in short 20-25 minute podcast episodes. The podcast will also provide a platform to celebrate the research of PhD students at Sussex and elsewhere, giving early career researchers the opportunity to speak about their work to a novel audience.

The interview format will be mostly light-hearted and humorous, giving the idea that we, the interviewers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], are being hosted by the guest on their PhD planet while they 'show us around' and tell us a bit more about how they got to where they are now. This will break the ice for both guest and listener in the introduction sequence, lend a personality and theme to the podcast, and highlight the informal nature of

the interviews to potential listeners.

A podcast is an effective means of communication, successfully used to discuss topics ranging from politics (eg. Reasons to be Cheerful), culture (eg. Kermodé and Mayo's Film Review, Art Detective), and issues around modern-day feminism (eg. The Guilty Feminist) to popular science (eg. Radiolab, Why aren't you a Doctor yet?, The Infinite Monkey Cage podcast). In creating PoPP, we hope that the accessible and popular format of a podcast has the potential to reach a novel and diverse audience. Our 20/25-minute interviews have the potential to open discussion on a variety of topics related both to guests' research and to their experiences as a PhD, while the episode length necessitates succinct, accessible, engaging content which will retain listeners' attention. Importantly, as far as we know, there are not many female-led amateur podcasts that discuss science and/or research, and we are excited to add our voices to address this imbalance.

We are both PhD students, and the content of this podcast has arisen through our conversations with other researchers at similar stages of study. For example, while working as a Research Hive Scholar in 2017-18, [REDACTED] spoke to PhD students working in all disciplines, and found common themes of isolation, imposter syndrome, mental health issues and other challenges, as well as learning about the incredible and varied work of doctoral researchers here at Sussex. Our three core objectives in creating this podcast (see Qu. What are the objectives of the activity?) arose from these and other conversations, and are explained in detail in the relevant section.

* Our guests will chiefly be PhD candidates, although we will also interview some Masters and Post-Doctorates in order to maintain variety and build a resource that also provides information about other stages of early career postgraduate research. For the purpose of simplicity during this application, all guests will hereafter be referred to as PhD students.

Is the purpose of your activity to consult and listen to public views?

No

Is the purpose of your activity to collaborate with the public?

No

Why do you want to engage with the public? What do you hope to achieve by engaging?

We want to inform and engage a general non-academic audience by discussing PhD students' research in an accessible and light-hearted style (see Core Objectives 1 and 2 for full detail). Through this we hope to bridge the gap between researchers and public knowledge of research, particularly that of doctoral students, which may often not reach members of the public through publication or media interest.

We also hope to engage with anyone who may be considering postgraduate study, particularly students at all stages of school and undergraduate education, to provide information and inspiration for this target audience.

What are the objectives of the activity? Please list the steps you will take to achieve these objectives.

Core objective 1: To engage and inform anyone who may be considering postgraduate study, particularly students at all stages of school and undergraduate education.

We aim to de-bunk the idea that doctoral study is "not for me", with a particular emphasis on engaging young women who are often less likely to pursue an academic career in subjects including STEMM (1). As an important part of our first core objective we hope to build an approachable and realistic outlook on what it means to be a doctoral researcher (ie. the actualities of everyday life, common challenges, the level of commitment that doctoral study entails, possibilities during a PhD, and future prospects) since this information can be difficult to obtain.

We aim to achieve these objectives with the following steps:

- > showcasing guests from a variety of Schools to provide a broad cross-disciplinary resource for those considering postgraduate study
- > showcasing a high proportion of female postgraduate researchers as female role models
- > interviewing female guests in varied subject areas including Physical Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Mathematics, and other research disciplines that have a lower uptake by women (1).
- > highlighting how varied the route to postgraduate study can be (and often is), by asking each interviewee about their “journey to ‘Planet PhD’”
- > creating relatable accounts of doctoral researchers’ everyday working life through specific questions on this theme and informal interview style
- > providing candid accounts of both the rewarding and challenging nature of doctoral study through specific questions on this theme

Core objective 2: To inform, engage and educate a non-academic audience by discussing PhD students’ research in an accessible and light-hearted style.

Through this objective we hope to bridge the gap between researchers and public knowledge of research, particularly that of doctoral students, which may often not reach members of the public through publication or media interest. Since many DRs are passionate about (for example) societal, environmental or cultural issues in their own research and wider research area, the podcast will also function as a platform to educate and inform listeners by raising awareness of such issues.

To achieve this objective we will take the following steps:

- > ask interviewees to provide accessible descriptions of their research that is suitable for a non-academic audience, for example by avoiding jargon
- > clarify any specialist topics through further questioning by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
- > include questions linked to the direct application of guests’ research where appropriate, including (if applicable) the specific question: “what can listeners do to help with this issue?” to involve people directly in the topics discussed. This has been successful in pilot episodes.
- > showcase guests in wide-ranging subject areas for a broad educational reach

Core objective 3: To provide a resource to build solidarity among doctoral researchers.

Studying for a PhD can be isolating, difficult for friends and family to understand, and incredibly challenging. In providing this podcast we want to celebrate PhD researchers by highlighting the quirks, struggles and achievements of their PhD, as well as their passion for and commitment to their subject. We will acknowledge the challenges of doctoral study in a light-hearted humorous way, an effective method of communicating and discussing real issues (effective examples include the Guilty Feminist Podcast, Reasons to be Cheerful). In this way we hope to create a positive resource that will help to normalise any issues DRs may be facing, and to provide useful personal accounts of and recommendations for

navigating doctoral research. As well as our emphasis on women in research, as part of our third core objective we will ensure we promote equality and diversity, and adopt a wholly inclusive approach both in guest representation from all communities and in interview content.

To achieve this objective, we will take the following steps:

- > use a light-hearted interview style with a balance of questions designed to initiate discussion
- > ensure overall positivity in the podcast format and questioning style
- > ensure we interview a diverse cohort of guests, in line with Sussex's Equality and Diversity policy (and just because we want to): interviewing "individuals and groups of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and distinctive backgrounds" (2), including members of the LGBTQ+ community who have strong networks and representation at Sussex.
- > address issues common to doctoral researchers through themed episodes with two guests, published once for every 4-5 interview-style episodes.
 - Current ideas for these special episodes are: Imposter Syndrome, Mental Health, Fieldwork Fails, PhD Parents, Women in STEMM, and ...What Next?. We will add to this list based on themes that may emerge during the core interview episodes.

(1) Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2016/17. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/qualifications>

(2) Equality and Diversity policy, Sussex University (2006, updated 2011) <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=equalitydiversitypolicy.pdf&site=302>

How will you evaluate whether you have achieved the objectives of the activity?

Evaluation metrics will include qualitative and quantitative methods, which will be used continually in order to monitor audience engagement and tailor content in response. We expect to gradually build a listener base and social media following over time with the release of successive episodes and ongoing promotion. Therefore, as well as continual monitoring, we plan to have a more formal longer-term quantitative evaluation after releasing 20 and then after 40 episodes, to align with our timeline.

Quantitative evaluation will include podcast listener statistics on Podbean and Twitter analytics to quantify the level of engagement. Through these we can explore any trends in engagement with specific episodes, and use insights from this to design future content. We will also include the number of applications to be a guest in our formal evaluations after 20 and 40 episodes, since as well as recruiting guests directly we hope that we will receive applications to be interviewed as we build and promote the podcast.

Qualitative evaluation will be collated from listener feedback via email and social media, and any comments or discourse on social media. An important form of qualitative feedback will be from the interviewees themselves. We will ask each guest if they would be happy to fill out a brief feedback form two months after the podcast has been released. The short evaluation form is designed to evaluate the self-perceived benefit to the interviewee of being on the podcast, as well as extending the reach of our listener feedback collation. We will email the form to the guests two months following the release of their episode, with the following three questions:

- 1) Did you enjoy being on the podcast, and was there anything you would change?
- 2) Have you received any listener feedback (positive or negative) since your episode was released?
- 3) Has there been any benefit to you from appearing on the podcast? (eg. any public engagement opportunities; outreach or research collaboration opportunities; increase in confidence in talking about your

research; none, etc.)

Who are your target audience/participants and how many people do you expect to engage with?

Our target audiences align with our three core objectives. We aim to engage with other doctoral and early career researchers and expect that our main listener base would derive from this audience initially. We will also promote the podcast to a general audience, with an emphasis on engaging with younger women who may be considering postgraduate study.

Based on listener rates for similarly themed podcasts, and mindful of the fact that building a following takes time, we would like to reach between 20-40 listens per episode after releasing 20 episodes, and increase this to 30-60 listens per episode after releasing 40 episodes. After our second formal evaluation (40 podcasts) we aim to reach 500+ followers on Twitter and 25+ followers on Podbean.

We plan to engage young women through the 500 Women in Science pod Brighton (is a pod coordinator) and its allied networks, as well as through our specific Planet PhD social media (Twitter and Instagram) and promotional materials including flyers, posters and news items through the University and other networks.

Participants will be doctoral researchers (as well as some Masters students and Post-Doctorates) initially recruited by and and eventually also through application (via email and social media).

What is the timeline of the project? Please include start and end dates, and key milestones.

Overall, we hope to release 40 episodes, with one every week for the first 20. After releasing 20 episodes, which we would consider a first key milestone, we would take stock of our evaluation metrics, including listener rates and feedback. If the feedback is positive we will continue to release an episode every week; if we have a smaller following than our target (25+) we may release following episodes once fortnightly to allow for our academic commitments. After 40 episodes, the second key milestone (roughly September-October 2019), we will consider whether our academic commitments allow us to continue the podcast.

Start: November 2018

End: after 40 episodes, roughly September-October 2019 (with potential for extension after this depending on our academic commitments)

How does the suggested project relate to your own research? Please indicate how the activity will benefit yourself and your research.

The podcast relates to our own research indirectly through reference to our work since we both study bees, which will be used as a theme through the podcast for continuity.

The podcast will strongly benefit our progression as early career researchers since it will demonstrate impact/public engagement on our CV. We consider that its main benefit to us will be through building our experience in research dissemination techniques and inter-disciplinary public engagement, and developing our communication skills, necessary tools for early-career researchers to maintain competitiveness in job markets both in and external to academia (3).

(3) Section C.3, Vitae Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers 2008

What is the potential legacy of the project?

In creating a series of podcast episodes, we hope to build a resource that will be freely available to members of the public, indefinitely. This lasting resource will provide a guide for people, particularly young women, who are considering postgraduate study. An additional legacy will be the benefit to guests through the public engagement experience it provides.

Please outline your public engagement experience to date

PubhD speaker, Sussex Festival of Doctoral Research - 2018.

Speaker at Weald Beekeepers' Association meeting - 2018

Speaker, pub-based 'Salon' event, Newhaven – 2017

Workshops assistant at the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects ("Plants for Bees" (talk and demonstrations on nectar collection, pollen and foraging ecology to groups of workshop participants);

"Varroa Management", "Hygienic Behaviour" (general assistance)) – x9 workshops, 2016-2018

Assisting [REDACTED] with a "Bright Sparks" pollination syndrome demo at the Brighton Science Festival - 2016.

Assistance with banana extraction demos at a Booth Museum Lates Evolution-themed event - 2018.

Worked on the 'Honey Detective' stall at the Wakehurst Kew Science Festival with Kew's chemical ecology lab - 2018

Workshop assistant at the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects ("Plants for Bees") - 2017

Speaker at Weald Beekeepers' Association meeting - 2018

Speaker at the Brighton 2018 Soapbox Science event - 2018

Presented a poster at the South of England Show, 2018, on the differences between social and solitary bees

Worked on the 'Honey Detective' stall at the Wakehurst Kew Science Festival with Kew's chemical ecology lab – 2018

Entered the BBC Earth Presenter Watch competition with a one minute video on the importance of bees - 2018

Blog author, discussing various aspects of my research [REDACTED] – 2017-ongoing

Budget

Please provide a detailed budget indicating what you would spend the funding on if you are successful in your application.

Your budget should include a breakdown of costs and justification for each item (e.g. lunch for 30 people at £6 per head from Sussex Food; accommodation for external speaker at £80 per night at a University approved hotel or guest house). See the guidance notes for further advice on your proposed budget.

Budget details

Item details	£
Samson Meteor USB Microphone: to record podcast episodes with good quality sound	£48.00
Flyers and posters to promote the podcast at the University and elsewhere, to increase listener rates and recruitment of a diverse cohort of interview guests	£60.00
Graphic design of a logo: to ensure the podcast looks professional, and to use on our PodBean listener platform website, social media accounts, promotional materials, any merchandise and in any other promotional material such as internal news items.	£150.00
Merchandise to offer guests as an incentive for being interviewed, and to further promote the podcast to increase listener rates/guest recruitment: £5/per person	£150.00

Planet PhD themed merchandise (eg. mugs, pens and badges with the logo) x 30
= £150

Travel costs for anyone journeying to Sussex from outside of Brighton, or vice versa if it is more efficient for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to travel to them for the interview. £300.00

Total: £708.00

Total requested
£708.00

Budget code
RF006-04

Supporting statement

You must submit a supporting statement (in PDF format) from your School's Director of Doctoral Studies (for doctoral researchers) or Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange (for research staff).

Your School's Director of Doctoral Studies or Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange's name, title and electronic signature should also be included.

If you have any difficulty with this, please contact researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk or call 01273 873366.

Upload your supporting statement here

Pending Supporting Statement from [REDACTED].pdf