

# Encouraging science communication at postgraduate level - Case study

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Public science communication is not only seen to benefit the broader community, but also the researcher participating in it, yet many researchers still remain reluctant to engage with the community [Watermeyer, 2015]. At a multi-disciplinary marine research institute, we have observed levels of participation in science communication to vary between individuals as well as between research areas. Even though public science communication is becoming an increasingly important metric to assess a researcher's impact, science communication is rarely an integral part of study programmes towards a higher degree by research. Strict timelines and a lack of training opportunities may prevent postgraduate students from partaking in science communication, but demonstrating its efficacy can be a key motivator for researchers to take up these activities [Besley, 2014].

Here, we use a case study to investigate (1) the participation levels of postgraduate students in science communication activities and (2) the students' attitude towards taking up science communication skills, when incentives and training are provided to remove the barriers related to a lack of skills. This case study focuses on video production for research outreach purposes. A video competition was organised at the Oceans Institute of the University of Western Australia that gave students the incentive to partake in video production activities. Throughout this competition students were provided with training in storyboarding, equipment use and video editing, which helped them to sequentially acquire the skills to produce their own outreach video. Participation numbers in the training events were monitored over the entire duration of the competition and compared to final video submissions. Students participating in the video competition had a variety of research backgrounds related to marine research (e.g. biology, ecology, oceanography, engineering, social sciences and law). To evaluate how effective this video competition was to encourage postgraduate students to engage in science communication, participating students were surveyed before and after the video competition. These surveys gauged the previous public science communication levels as well as the intention to continue these activities after the competition. Participants were also asked to share their motives to take part in science communication activities, which were based on the motives used in the National Audit of Science Engagement Activities in Australia [Metcalf et al., 2013].

This study provides valuable insights into whether the removal of barriers improves the output and interest in science communication activities at postgraduate level and what the main motivations are for postgraduate students to engage with the community.

## References

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