

## FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH CONFERENCE FUND

### 2012 FINAL REVIEW REPORT PROFORMA

<b>School:</b>	School of Earth, Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences (SEAES)
<b>Organisers:</b>	Postgraduate students: Dominique Young, Helen Smith, Jennifer Anne, Joe Tant, Lisa Abbott, Georgina Heldreich, Roberto Carrasco-Hernandez, Mark Nottingham, Rosanne Mckernan, Thomas Seers, Jalal Al-Hinaai Staff Advisors: Prof. Hugh Coe, Prof. David Schultz, Julie Samson
<b>Conference Title:</b>	SEAES Postgraduate Research Conference 2012 (SEAES PGRC 2012)
<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 11 December 2012
<b>Location:</b>	The Kanaris Lecture Theatre, The Manchester Museum

## 1. SEAES PGRC 2012

### 1.1. Overview

The SEAES PGRC 2012 was the third annual internal conference at the School, organised by postgraduate students from the School. It was a one day conference which was held at The Manchester Museum on Tuesday 11 December. The PGRC provided an opportunity for postgraduate research students, as well as post-doctoral research assistants (PDRAs), to present and discuss their current research with colleagues from across the School. The attendance of industrial representatives also provided the opportunity for the conference delegates to discuss their research in the wider context of industry and careers. The PGRC enabled students to gain skills in organising such an event, which also acted as a social event for the School.

### 1.2. Interdisciplinary Nature

Each of the seven research groups within SEAES were represented at the conference through the oral and poster presentations. There were also representatives from the School of Environment and Development and the Faculty of Life Sciences. All this provided a great opportunity for the delegates to hear about topics of an interdisciplinary nature. In his welcome address at the start of the conference, the Head of School stated that the event brought the whole School together as well as many more this year.

Members of academic staff and students from all groups from the School as well as students from other Faculties attended the conference. There was a range of topics covered by the keynote speakers and the companies and societies that sponsored the PGRC were diverse, providing a great opportunity for the delegates to explore and discuss a variety of potential future careers. The breaks, poster sessions, and evening events provided the opportunity for interdisciplinary networking and discussion between students, students and staff, and the external delegates.

Through the range of delegates from both within and outside of the School, including representatives from the conference's sponsors, the SEAES PGRC 2012 provided an excellent opportunity to foster interdisciplinary research in the future.

### **1.3. Conference Format**

The SEAES PGRC was a one day event, which began at 08:30 with the delegate registration. At 09:00 the Head of School, Professor Hugh Coe opened the conference with the welcome address. There were four oral presentation sessions each separated by a break; There was a mid-morning and a mid-afternoon coffee break as well as a lunch break. There were two official poster sessions: one during the lunch break and one following the final oral presentation session. The posters were displayed throughout the day and so there were unofficial poster sessions during the two coffee breaks. The conference closed at 17:45 after the final poster session.

The first three oral presentation sessions comprised a keynote speaker and four student presentations. There were two keynote speakers and three student presentations in the final session. Each of the sessions contained a mixture of research themes. In total there were 15 oral presentations, two of which were given by PDRAs and five keynote speakers. There were 30 posters, with 25 presented by PhD students and the other five by PDRAs. Each oral presentation lasted 12 minutes followed by three minutes for a question and answer session.

Three of the keynote speakers were representatives from a range of industries and companies including petroleum companies and instrument manufacturers. One keynote speaker was a SEAES alumnus and the final keynote speaker was an internal member of staff who spoke about scientific communication. Each keynote speaker had a total of 20 minutes to split between their presentation and a question and answer session according on their own preference.

The oral presentation sessions were chaired by one or two committee members who introduced each of the speakers, did the time keeping, indicated when the speaker had two minutes remaining and then lead the question and answer session for that speaker. A short biography was also given for each of the keynote speakers.

Two sponsors of the SEAES PGRC had exhibition stands which were held in the same room as the poster sessions. Again these were exhibited throughout the day. Several sponsors also had free standing vertical posters which were also displayed in the poster room.

104 delegates registered for the conference comprising 61 PhD students, 2 MSc students, 11 PDRAs, 11 industrial representatives, and 19 staff members. There was at least one delegate from each of the research groups within the School. There were also several delegates from across the University including the School of Environment and Development and the Faculty of Life Sciences, where there were cross-overs with the research being undertaken in SEAES.

Following the conference there was a drinks reception and conference dinner held at The Place in Manchester City Centre from 18:30-00:00. The best poster and oral presentations were awarded during the drinks reception.

#### **1.4. Judging and awards for presentations**

There were six judges in total at the conference, three to judge the oral presentations and three to judge the poster presentations. Two judges were sponsors, one was a keynote speaker, one was a sponsor and a member of SEAES academic staff, and two were SEAES academic staff members.

There was a first, second, and third prize for the best oral presentations as well as for the best poster presentations. Each award consisted of a financial prize (£50, £20, and £10 respectively) and a framed certificate signed by the Head of School. The awards were presented during the drinks reception by the two judges who were also sponsors.

Both oral and poster presentations were judged using scoring sheets which were formulated based on the advice given by a judge from both last year's and this year's conference. All oral presentations by PhD students and PDRAs were judged by the three assigned judges. The totals of the judging sheets were collated for each presentation and the top three highest scoring presentations would be awarded for the best oral presentation. Due to large number of posters this year the judges decided to firstly each determine the best posters, which they marked and discussed with other judges, and then comment or mark any other posters depending on time. The scores from the posters that had been marked by all three judges were totalled to determine the top three best poster presentations. Scores for other posters were also collated.

It has been suggested that if there are a large number of posters and a small number of judges at future conferences then the judges should have a brief initial look at the posters and then meet during one of the breaks to decide on the shortlisted posters. All of the judges would then be able to concentrate on those particular posters during the other poster sessions and then meet at the end of the conference to rank the ones that were agreed to be the best out of the shortlist.

#### **1.5. Conference attendees**

The conference was mainly targeted at SEAES PhD students from all years for oral and poster presentations but PDRAs were also invited to present. The conference was also advertised in other departments within the University and several students not from SEAES presented at the conference. Academic members of staff were invited to support their students and find out what other research was being undertaken across the School. Representatives from the companies, industries, and societies that sponsored the conference as well as other representatives were invited.

In total there were 45 delegates for oral and poster presentations, ranging from first year PhD students through to PDRAs. The other 59 delegates were MSc and PhD students and PDRAs who were not presenting as well as staff, sponsors and other representatives.

No abstract submissions were rejected and the majority of delegates were allocated their preferred choice of presentation type (oral or poster).

Below is a summary of the registered attendance:

<b>STATUS OF REGISTRANT</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
PhD student – presenting	38
– not presenting	23
PDRA – presenting	7
– not presenting	4
MSc student	2
Academic staff	17
Representatives from sponsors (of which were also keynote speakers)	11 (3)
Keynote speaker	2
<b>Total registered delegates</b>	<b>104</b>

We initially budgeted for 75 delegates based on the number of attendees registered for the conference in 2010 and the final number of delegates that attended. More people registered for the conference this year than was expected, especially close to the registration deadline but the conference gained more sponsorship at the same time which allowed the committee to budget for everyone. The maximum capacity of the conference venue was 110 and so registration was limited accordingly. As the number of registrants increased everyone was encouraged to register even if their schedules did not allow them to attend the full day, which applied mostly to the SEAES academic staff. This was to make sure there was space in the venue for everyone and to obtain numbers for catering.

#### **1.6. Changes from SEAES PGRC 2011**

The SEAES PGRC 2012 was a much larger event than the previous year's conference, both in terms of the number of registered delegates and the budget due to a greater support from sponsors. Due to the success of conference in 2011 several aspects of the conference in 2012 remained the same including the general title of the conference to encourage a wider participation from researchers at the School and the conference venue remained at the Manchester Museum. The general format of the day remained the same apart from there were no short oral presentations from those presenting posters this year due to the large numbers of posters being presented so it was not possible to fit them in to the one day event. The committee agreed that the time would be better allocated to the poster sessions themselves. The conference was advertised to other Schools across the University this year and so there were a few attendees who were not from SEAES but whose research was relevant or related to that being undertaken in SEAES.

As last year's conference was such a success only a few changes were made to make the conference a more professional event. As the budget for the PGRC 2012 was larger than it was for 2011 there was the opportunity to encourage more delegates at the conference as well as inviting everyone that registered to attend the drinks reception and conference dinner. The budget was spent wisely to improve the quality of some of the merchandise including the conference bags and their contents, the abstract handbooks were printed and bound to a high standard, and awards for best presentations were improved with the winner's certificate being presented in a frame.

The drinks reception and conference dinner were held in a different venue to the previous year. Both of these more social parts of the conference were held in a single location rather than two separate venues. This was partly because there was the funding to allow us to hold a drinks reception outside of the School as well as to reduce the number of different venues the

attendees would have to go to for various parts of the day. This was also to enable those who had travelled far for the conference to at least attend the presentation of the awards if they were not able to attend the dinner. The location of the venue was chosen so that it was close to the bus and train stations to again encourage more people to attend who would need to travel following the event.

## 2. CONFERENCE ORGANISATION

### 2.1. Organising Committee

The organising committee comprised 11 PhD students from various research groups within the School. Each of the committee chose an area of the conference for which they would be responsible for organising or managing. The committee had one administrative staff advisor and two academic staff advisors. Several other members of staff also helped with various aspects of the sponsorship and gave some very valuable advice on conference organisation.

### 2.2. Organisation Timeline

The first meeting for this year's conference committee was on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2012. This was an opportunity for the committee to get to know each other and start planning the EPS funding application. The committee aimed to meet weekly thereafter and smaller meetings took place in between or after the weekly meetings for specific organisational areas.

The main dates for sending out information to the whole School to call for abstracts and deadlines for submitting abstracts and registering are presented below.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>INFORMATION SENT TO DELEGATES</b>
4 October 2012	Start of marketing for abstract submission and attendance
Weekly	Abstract submission and registration reminders
29 October 2012	Deadline for abstract submission
5 November 2012	Extended deadline for abstract submission
15 November 2012	Abstract acceptance notification
16 November 2012	Conference registration deadline

The dates for important tasks carried out by members of the organising committee are detailed below.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TASK FOR ORGANISING COMMITTEE</b>
14 September 2012	Submission of EPS funding application
24 September 2012	Confirmation of EPS funding
19 October 2012	Meeting with Head of School
19 October 2012	Booking of conference venue
12 November 2012	Sponsorship acquirement deadline
20 November 2012	Booking of drinks reception and dinner venue
16 November 2012	Deadline for printing conference bags
29 November 2012	Deadline for sending abstract handbooks to print
4 December 2012	Confirmation of catering numbers to evening venue
5 December 2012	Deadline for obtaining merchandise for conference bags
6 December 2012	Confirmation of catering numbers to conference

### 2.3. Conference advertisements

The conference was initially advertised to potential presenters mainly through posters which were put up in various places across both building of the School as well as regular emails circulated to the whole School. Members of the organising committee also advertised the conference through word of mouth and the information was also passed on to Heads of research groups and Heads of Departments.

The conference was advertised to all through emails from the chair of the organising committee which were circulated to the whole School as well as emails from the Head of School to heads of research groups. Networking sites such as Facebook were also used to advertise the conference. As the SEAES website was not available during the months preceding the conference there was no way to advertise the conference to the School by these means although the other advertising strategies sufficed this year.

## 3. FINANCIAL REPORT

### 3.1. Sponsorship

Based on the financial report from the PGRC 2011 it was estimated that another £2000 would need to be acquired through sponsorship of the conference on top of the funding from EPS. An additional £5749.66 of funding was secured through various sponsors. Details of the sponsors and sponsorship amounts are presented below.

SPONSOR	SPONSORSHIP AMOUNT (£)
EPS funding	3000.00
Kipp & Zonen	1500.00
CETAC	1000.00
Shell	1000.00
Aerodyne Inc.	619.66
BP	500.00
NCAS	500.00
TSI	250.00
Biral	100
Sciolutions	100
Eloquent Science	100
Manchester Geological Association	80
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8749.66</b>

### 3.2. Expenditure

The biggest expenses were the hire of the conference venue, including refreshments and lunch, and the conference dinner. As more sponsorship was acquired the quality of some items were improved from last year's conference such as the printing and binding of the abstract handbooks and the drinks reception was able to be hosted at another venue.

Several sponsors sent merchandise to put in to the conference bags, including leaflets, brochures, pens, note pads, sticky notes, bookmarks, and mini screw drivers.

The total expenditure is detailed below.

TYPE OF EXPENDITURE	RATE incl. VAT (£)	QUANTITY	AMOUNT (£)
Conference venue	34.50	100	3450.00
Conference dinner	24.13	80	1930.40
Drinks reception	10.04	85	853.60
Printing and binding of abstract handbooks	4.33	100	433.60
Production of full colour cotton shopper conference bags	3.03	100	303.60
Coach to drinks reception	114.00	2	228.00
Purple rulers for conference bags	1.80	100	180.00
Sundry items			178.60
Prizes for Awards (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> )	50, 20, 10	2	160.00
Thank you gifts			140.33
Ink, paper, laminating resources and other stationery items			126.89
Mouse mats for conference bags	1.20	100	120.00
Name badges and lanyards			115.00
Certificate Paper and Frames			81.21
Thank you posters	21	3	63.00
Printing of dinner tickets	0.21	80	16.86
Printing of dinner menus	0.53	10	5.32
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>8386.42</b>

The amount remaining in the budget following the conference was £363.24. If possible, this remaining money will be used as part of next year's conference. Any remaining or reusable items, such as the name badges, will be passed on to the organising committee for next year's PGRC.

## 4. CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

We gathered feedback regarding numerous areas of the conference from the delegates, including students, academic staff, and sponsors, at the end of the event. A summary of the feedback from the forms and any other forms of feedback such as via email from sponsors following the event will be given to the committee organising the PGRC in 2013.

### 4.1. Conference advertisements

The table below indicates which method of advertisement the delegates were able to find out about the conference through. Multiple options could be selected.

How did you hear about the event?	Number
Email	26
Facebook	3
Poster adverts	7
Other	13

‘Other’ included word of mouth, mainly by a few people on the organising committee.

### 4.2. Satisfaction questionnaire

The feedback form included a satisfaction questionnaire and space for other comments. Overall, the feedback for the conference was very encouraging, with high praise for the organisation and execution on the day. Other comments included the space and lighting in the poster room needs to be improved for next year and the poster boards either needed to be bigger or higher to allow the full poster to be viewed. Several comments regarding the diverse range of topics presented at the conference were positive as well as the fact that students from other Faculties attended. However, some commented that the conference would have benefitted from an increased number of oral presentations from certain research groups which appeared under represented or that presentations should only have been specific to research undertaken at SEAES. Finally, the delegates would have preferred a detailed programme to have been circulated prior to the conference, especially to allow a greater attendance from staff to support their students.

The feedback has been addressed and a document containing suggestions and recommendations has been compiled for the organising committees of future conferences based on this feedback. One of the key suggestions for the PGRC 2013 organising committee is that, depending on sponsorship, a larger venue to host the conference should be explored if the demand from registrants is as great as it was for the 2012 PGRC.

Below is table summarising the satisfaction questionnaire, where the delegates were very satisfied or satisfied with nearly all the areas of the conference.

<b>How satisfied were you with the:</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>	<b>Indifferent</b>	<b>Dissatisfied</b>	<b>Very dissatisfied</b>	<b>Total feedback</b>
Registration process and pre-event organisation?	<b>23</b>	12	5	1		41
Organisation of the day?	<b>29</b>	11	2			42
Venue and facilities?	<b>27</b>	11	3			41
Arrangements and quality of the catering?	<b>28</b>	10	4			42
Variety of the topic areas?	<b>19</b>	15	6	2		42
Relevance of the topic areas?	11	<b>23</b>	5	2	1	41
Presentations that were delivered at the venue?	<b>22</b>	18	2			42
Selection of keynote speakers?	<b>19</b>	13	10			42
Time keeping at the event?	<b>30</b>	10	2			42
Access at the venue (technical, physical or other)?	<b>36</b>	5	1			42
Please rate your overall satisfaction with the conference.	<b>27</b>	13	2			42