Marie Curie Workshops

Year 1

In the first year of the PhD trajectory we propose to organize workshops on time management and project management along with presentation skills to provide the PhD students a flying start of their trajectory. We can give these workshops combined in a two-days program.

Time management
PhD students will learn the difference between the time management of a day/week, of a long-term project and of a research program. They learn to analyze the way they spend their time in different ways, which will give them insights into their strong points and also provides options for improving their working method.
To make more effective use of time, the first thing one needs to do is to formulate clear goals, and translate them into concrete steps. Next the crucial thing is to give strict priority to these steps in your daily/weekly/monthly/annual schedule and not allow yourself to be distracted by other, interesting activities. It is also important to clearly communicate to colleagues and managers what your priorities are and to deal with your own work rhythm effectively.

Project management
In this part of the training, PhD students get to make use of a planning schedule for the entire PhD program. This seems difficult at first, because how do you plan a project when the outcome of the research is not yet known; what's more, when it is dependent on so many uncertain factors? We can show you that a large part of the PhD can be planned very well and participants can learn to apply the rules of project planning to their PhD. Using the PhD planner, everyone makes a concrete planning schedule. This system is free for everyone to use and can be found at www.projectmanagementforphds.com

Overall, participants learn to:

- Set specific goals
- Determine their optimal working hours
- Make a weekly planning schedule
- Apply the rules of project management
- Make a planning schedule for the entire PhD program

Materials: the book Project management for PhDs.
Website: www.projectmanagementforphds.com

Presenting
When giving a verbal presentation, it is very important to appear convincing, motivated and on top of your subject, and to be able to make an enthusiastic and powerful case. At the same time, posture and vocal skills also play a role. The presenter has to be able to persuade the audience that he/she is a scientist with talent and drive, with the vision to set up a research project and bring it to a successful conclusion. This applies to both research presentations and to shorter discussions in a more informal setting.

In this program, we will therefore be concentrating on the following:

- Clarity and conciseness
- Body language
- A captivating introduction and a powerful conclusion
- Enthusiasm
- Contact with your audience

An extra option is to dedicate half a day extra to the correct use of PowerPoint.

Year 2

When people think of negotiations they often imagine a hard-fought battle between two parties with irreconcilable viewpoints. But negotiation is actually an everyday occurrence and need not result in battle. The two parties can even both come out of negotiations as winners, if you deploy a little creativity and pay respectful attention to everyone's interests. Researchers in the academic world are already often negotiating without even being aware of it. During the writing of a paper with multiple authors for example, when dividing education and management tasks, or collaborating with government and industry. In this workshop participants learn how to prepare negotiations thoroughly and how both parties can book success.

The training elements:

- Stages in negotiation
- Creativity
- Distinction between person and issue
- Communication

Work-life balance
Nowadays, scientists often experience a too high workload. This is probably caused, amongst other things, by teaching duties, necessity for obtaining finances for the research and the pressure to publish. As a consequence, the balance between work and private life suffers as well. In this workshop we will look at the possibilities to say 'yes' to all the duties and activities that fit personal choices and to kindly say 'no' to oneself and others when the tasks do not suit your plans. Working efficiently often doesn't mean trying to do more in less time, it entails having a well thought-out plan for you to work and act accordingly.

Networking
Networking has a bad reputation with academics because they feel it is like selling themselves to others to get what they need. There is also the misunderstanding that it is a good thing to acquire as many contacts as possible. But that is not what networking is about. Networking is about showing interest in others and their work, looking for shared interests and finding out in what ways you can help each other. Networking is investing in relationships without wanting an immediate return. Building networks can be fun and rewarding. In most academic disciplines it is helpful to participate in a strong consortium.

The network training focuses on:

- Discussing the do's and don'ts of networking
- Practicing short and enthusiastic presentations
- Looking for common interests
- Discussing how to prepare best for network conversations at a conference

Blogging for scientists
Take your research online, join discussions about important scientific topics and quickly reach many colleagues as well as other interested parties.
In this workshop we talk about the various reasons to start a blog, show examples of good and bad science blogs and get the participants started on writing a blog post of their own.

We will give the blog a flying start and hands-on practice, addressing the following elements:

- Text content, text format, web design and editorial choices
- Narrative and engagement
- Standard structures
- Use of images

After the training each participant will have at least one concept draft ready to post.

Year 3 & 4

Transferable skills
PhD students who enter the job market, should be aware of their skills and should be able to communicate them. That is difficult. Most scientists can present their scientific knowledge and their research- and practical skills very well. They are, however, less aware of the social, communication and directing skills they have.

But PhD students do have experience with completing a thesis, maybe also with applying for grants, organizing conferences and directing other co-workers. They clearly possess a collection of skills one could label as 'Transferable Skills'; these are skills they can use in any situation and which make them valuable for the job market.
With use of practical exercises this workshop will make sure the PhD students get a better view on their own skills. They will be able to present them with the use of good examples during e.g. a job interview.

Pitching your research
For scientists, it has become increasingly important to be able to present their research and proposals in a concise and convincing manner. Be it in a meeting with colleagues, for a potential partner outside of the university or in a presentation to procure funding or grants.

Compared to regular research presentations, enthusiasm, a structured approach with compact contents as well as subtle references to one's own achievements, are vitally important.
In this workshop we concentrate on a variety of short exercises looking at how to tell an inspiring story, how to formulate the key message best and how to achieve a powerful

introduction as well as a conclusion. In addition we focus on putting one's vision into words and on the effective use of metaphors.

Communication with the media and the general public
As a researcher you will like to disseminate your findings among a wider audience. It can be important for you to have your findings implemented in society, to find funding for your research, to broaden your network or to promote science and research in general. You can address this audience directly in a presentation, or indirectly via the media by doing an interview or writing a short article for a website with scientific news. It is important to realise that these forms of communication require different skills than when communicating with other scientists. When you communicate with the media and the general public, whether it is in an interview or writing for a website, you need to be concise, you need to use well-chosen examples, start with the most important findings of your research and avoid jargon. Furthermore, it helps when you are able to convey your enthusiasm about your work.

How do you put together a pithy presentation? How do journalists operate? How can you best prepare? How do you stay in control during the interview?
We practice the following:

- Preparing an interview
- My research in three minutes
- Enthusiastic narrative
- Difficult questions
- Colourful language

Entrepreneurship
Starting a new business has increasingly become an interesting career path for PhD students. At the same time, within the "business" of scientific research, researchers need to be more and more an entrepreneur and need to think about the valorisation of their work.
In this workshop we discuss what competences and personality traits it takes to be an entrepreneur. Step-by-step we follow the 9 topics of the Canvas Business Model, (which contains, amongst other things, product/service, customers and resources) and help you to formulate your personal business plan. We follow up with exercising giving a pitch.