# ENCOURAGING SCIENCE COMMUNICATION AT POSTGRADUATE LEVEL – *A CASE STUDY*

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## Challenge

### The challenge of engaging Postgraduates in Science Communication

1. Many researchers remain reluctant to public engagement, although it benefits both the broader community and the researcher [1].
2. If scientists think they can do well at science communication, they are more likely to engage in it [2], which requires them to try it.

**Q: Can a video competition encourage postgraduate students to engage in science communication in the long term?**

### Broader challenges in Postgraduate Training

Research Skills ✓

Complimentary Skills?
- Public engagement
- Research translation
- Planning for impact

Complimentary Skills also prepare Postgraduates better for academic and non-academic careers.

The National Innovation and Science Agenda in Australia [3] aims to:

- *"Deliver graduates with the skills required to build careers in academia and other sectors of the labour market";*
- *"Support collaboration with industry and other research end-users; and introduce innovative structures and arrangements, which increase the skills and employability of research graduates, such as business placement and relevant coursework in appropriate research fields"*

## Case Study

### The UWA Oceans Institute Student Video Competition

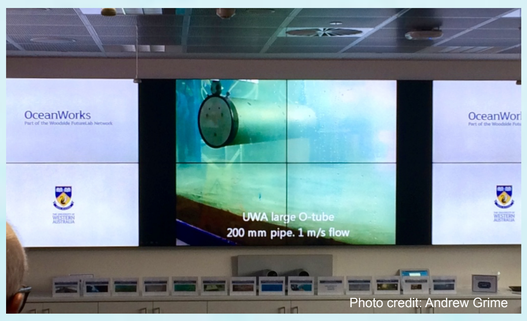
**The primary goal of the competition was to increase the impact of postgraduate research on industry, government and society.** In addition, this competition was designed to help:

- Showcase the talent of the **next generation researchers** to potential future employers
- Provide postgraduates with the **skills to communicate their research** to industry and society in innovative and effective ways
- Encourage postgraduate students to adopt **novel and effective communication methods**

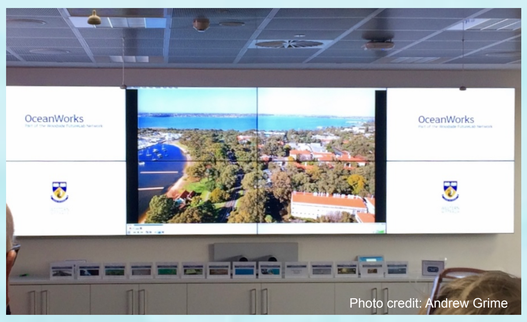
To watch the videos scan the QR code or go to http://tinyurl.com/gq5vmx3

### Training Component

A series of workshops was run alongside the competition to provide postgraduate students with **skills in storyboarding, video techniques and video editing**.







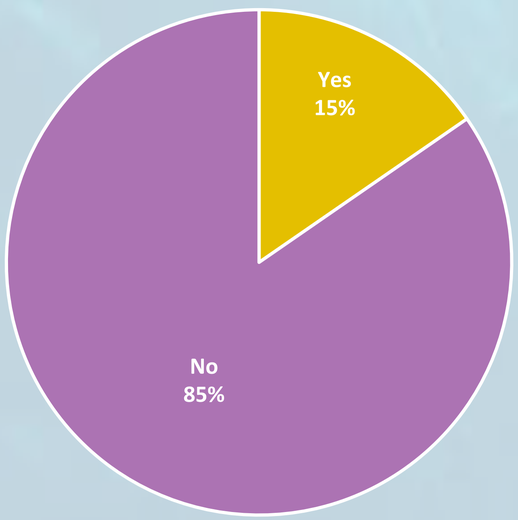


**Awards were presented at an official event sponsored by our industry partner with representatives from The UWA Oceans Institute, the University's executive, industry and postgraduate students**

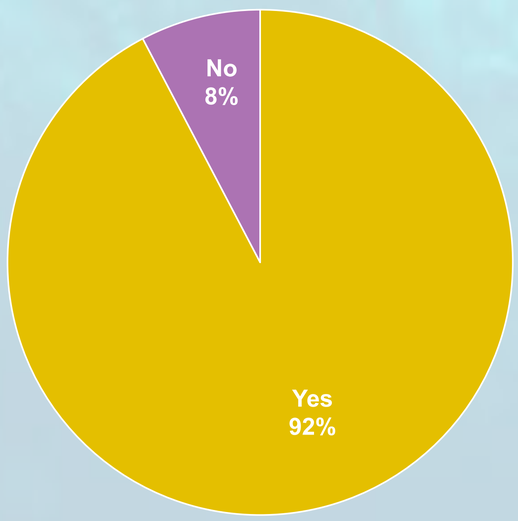
## Evaluation

### Student feedback

**Did you have any experience in video production prior to this competition?**




**Will you continue to use videos to promote your research?**




**What was your main reason to prepare a video for this competition?**

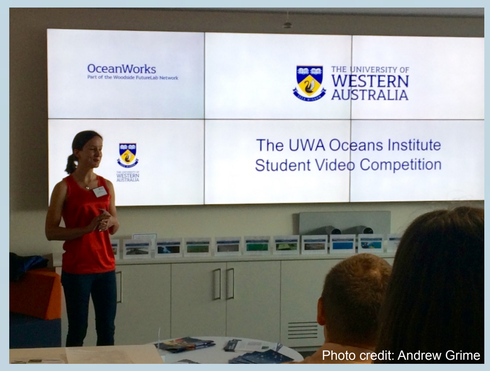

13 responses from 15 participants

## Conclusions

1. The **video competition is likely to increase research communication** through video in the future.
2. **Self-motivation and encouragement from seniors** (i.e. top-down) are equally important.
3. Many students reported participation was a **positive experience, although they had prior reservations** regarding participation in the competition (e.g. lack of time).

A **video competition can be a useful tool** to engage postgraduate students in science communication, if the environment is supportive of it and/or the student sees benefits in promoting their own research.

These findings confirm Besley's theory [2], that researchers are more likely to engage in science communication, if they think they are good at it, i.e. they must have had a positive experience.




[1] Watermeyer, R. (2015), Lost in the 'third space': the impact of public engagement in higher education on academic identity, research practice and career progression, European Journal of Higher Education, 5(3), 331-347, doi: 10.1080/21568235.2015.1044546.
[2] Besley, J. C. (2014), What do scientists think about the public and does it matter to their online engagement?, Science and Public Policy, doi:10.1093/scipol/scu042.
[3] Australian Government, Department for Education and Training (2016), "Sharper incentives for engagement: New research block grant arrangements for universities", Consultation paper