

Griffins Society Visiting Research Fellowships Programme

EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2008-2009

This evaluation is based on a satisfaction questionnaire administered by e-mail to all six of the 2008-9 Griffins Fellows. The questionnaire had four sections, focusing on their:

1. Thoughts about the four research methods seminars and how useful seminars were (the subjects of each seminar are specified in the table below)
2. Comments on the quality and helpfulness of the academic supervision
3. Feedback on the quality of any help or advice Fellows received from Griffins Society Council members
4. Their overall experience of the Programme.

Fellows were told that their feedback would be collated anonymously and it would not be attributed to them individually. They were assured that their feedback will be taken into account carefully in improving the Programme. The year 2008-9 is the first year that we have run research methods seminars, so we were particularly interested in obtaining their feedback on these so that the seminars can be amended in time for the 2009-10 Fellowships intake. All six Fellows returned a completed questionnaire.

Rating their experience: Fellows were asked to rate their responses to the first two sets of questions, on a scale from one to five. In the questions about the research seminars, the 'overall experience' column refers to the value that the whole seminar programme had for them, and this might include considerations like venue, timings, administration, interaction with other Fellows etc. The scale was as follows:

1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = satisfactory; 4 = good; 5 = excellent.

The total figure in each column below is out of thirty, i.e. six times the maximum satisfaction score of five.

1. Research methods seminars

| Seminar subject | Content Score / 30 | Delivery / teaching Score | Overall experience Score |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. October 2008: Ethics, literature review, planning your methods | 26 | 25 | 25 |
| 2. January 2009: Research design and research methods | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| 3. April 2009: Qualitative data analysis | 18 | 19 | 19 |
| 4. July 2009: Writing a research paper | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| Comments about the research seminar programme in general: | | | |
| <p>"More interactive research seminars would be more useful for me, as I have found that at times it has been a little too abstract for it to be meaningful. The research design was the best one for me, as we were able to put this against some of the methods we had been exploring and it felt like we were able to share ideas with other fellows more"</p> <p>"The seminars were very helpful"</p> <p>"Having completed a MSt recently where we looked at some of these issues in much greater depth I realise that one seminar on these topics is unrealistic, and I am probably judging them rather critically as a result"</p> <p>"...a very useful and productive experience. It is inspiring to work with passionate and committed people whose aim is to motivate and encourage us... The wealth of knowledge and the seminars has enabled me to focus and remain on task, and has continued to motivate me throughout the year"</p> <p>"I had some previous awareness of research methods; some had more, some had less. I think the sessions were pitched well for us to understand and enjoy"</p> | | | |

Comment and recommendations

The research methods seminars attempted, as one of the participants observed, to cover an unrealistic amount of material in just over two hours on each subject. The session on qualitative data analysis was the least well received, probably because it was such a complex matter to cover in one session. More thought needs to be given to the delivery of this session in particular. Some but not all Fellows want the research seminars to be more interactive and less

theoretical. Giving Fellows information in advance of the seminars, and perhaps a short exercise to focus on the subject before coming to the seminar, may be helpful. Nevertheless, general satisfaction with the seminars was high: most people scored them four, or five, out of five.

2. Quality and helpfulness of the academic supervision

The total figure in each column below is out of thirty, i.e. six times the maximum satisfaction score of five.

| Approachability of supervisor, ease of contact | Frequency of contact with supervisor | Usefulness of their help and advice to you | Timeliness of the response to your written work etc |
|--|---|--|--|
| Score 26 | Score 25 | Score 29 | Score 26 |
| <p>Comments: "5 – very approachable and understanding. Meetings were always very easy-going and found that the time flew by" "I really enjoy my time with (name of supervisor). She is easy to talk to and has such a wealth of experience and knowledge I just think it is a privilege to be supervised by her" "...I couldn't have asked for a more supportive person"</p> | <p>"I had very regular supervision sessions and could have had more if I requested them" "Contact has not always been at a time when we have needed it but this may also be our responsibility, not just (the supervisor's)"</p> | <p>"Very well suited to my topic. My supervisor was chosen well. Advice always relevant and tailored to my research"</p> | |

Comment and recommendations

The level of satisfaction with supervisors was very high - indeed only one person gave their supervisor a score of less than five out of five on 'usefulness of their help and advice to you'. The learning point for next year is that Fellows need more regular reminders to keep in touch with their supervisors and to take the

initiative to arrange supervision meetings regularly, rather than relying on their supervisors, who have many other pressures on their time, to get in touch.

3. Helpfulness of Fellowships Meetings

The satisfaction rating scale for this set of questions was: 1 = unhelpful; 2 = not very helpful; 3 = no strong feelings either way; 4 = helpful; 5 = very helpful.

| Question | Score /30 | Comments |
|---|--------------|--|
| How helpful was it for you to have to give an update on your research at each of the Fellowships meetings? | 23 | <p>"Having to prepare for a presentation has been really helpful as it focused our attention on what we were doing"</p> <p>"Not particularly helpful for me, but I understand it was useful for the council to know what was happening"</p> <p>"Assists in providing a focus and to remain on task"</p> |
| How helpful was it for you to hear about how other Fellows were getting on? | 23 | <p>"Can be useful, but when you are in a 'bad patch' it can make you feel worse!"</p> |
| How helpful were the questions Council members asked you about your research (i.e. did being asked questions help you think about solutions that had not occurred to you until then?) | 22 | <p>"I found this an intimidating experience, and it did not feel I was being asked questions, particularly as I often felt that it was rushed"</p> <p>"It has sometimes felt as if discussion about particular fellows research has dominated the sessions, and it can feel a little disappointing if your own research doesn't generate as much feedback"</p> |
| How helpful were the Council member's comments and advice? | 25 | <p>"Extremely- it was good to be challenged and have to justify our conclusions"</p> |

| | | |
|---|----|--|
| How helpful to you was the general supportive experience of the Fellowships meetings? | 26 | <p>"5 ++ - felt encouraged, supported and nurtured"</p> <p>"Can't state this enough! Writing can be so isolating so to meet with other Fellows and also Council members has been invaluable"</p> <p>"Knowing the Griffins are enthusiastic about the research and wish to use it constructively is really encouraging"</p> |
|---|----|--|

Comment and recommendations

The responses to the questions in this section show that Fellows value greatly the input and involvement of Council members, but that there are some problematic aspects of Fellowship Meetings that need to be addressed. This includes ensuring each Fellow gets an equitable level of attention, allowing sufficient time for questions and comments, and ensuring that the physical layout of the room does not create an atmosphere of 'us and them'.

4. Fellows' overall experience

In the next six questions, Fellows were asked to tick 'yes' or 'no' and add comments. The numbers indicate how many ticked 'yes' or 'no'. They were invited to add a comment to each of their responses.

| | | |
|---|---------------|---|
| 1. Was there anything you wanted from the Fellowships meetings that you did not get? | Yes 2 No 4 | <p>"Would have been good in the first session to... meet the outgoing fellows and discuss how they got on etc"</p> <p>"More interactive material and time to share experiences"</p> |
| 2. Was there anything you wanted from your academic supervisor that you did not get? | Yes 0 No 6 | <p>"I couldn't have asked for more from my academic supervisor, who has been absolutely outstanding"</p> <p>"When I needed help I asked for it and got it"</p> |
| 3. Was there anything you wanted from the research methods seminars that you did not get? | Yes 1 No 5 | <p>"A bit more interactive and a little less theoretical... I found sometimes that it was hard for me to digest but that could be more about my learning style"</p> |

| | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| 4. Were there any problems with the general administration of the Programme? | Yes 1 No 5 | (The only problem with administration cited by Fellows was the late payment of the first tranche of research grants, for which LSE were responsible) |
| 5. Was there anything that you wanted from the Griffins Society staff that you did not get? | Yes 0 No 6 | "I think that I have been well supported by (the staff of the Griffins Society) particularly when I had a tough patch in my research" |
| 6. Would you recommend the Fellowships Programme to other people? | Yes 6 No 0 | "It's been a fantastic experience" "Definitely. It's been a great experience" |

Comment and recommendations

The high level of satisfaction with the Fellowship Programme in general is very encouraging. All Fellows said they would recommend the Programme to other people and the support of the academic supervisors, Griffins staff and in particular, the Council members, is very highly valued. One participant wrote: "I have really enjoyed my experience on the Programme... (It) gives you the confidence to explore other areas and go for things that you might not have considered previously". Recommendations are to finish the 7 October Fellowships meeting with a glass of wine so that incoming and outgoing Fellows can meet each other; and to make some improvements to the research seminars to make them more practical, in particular, the qualitative data analysis seminar.

5. Help wanted with disseminating the research

The questionnaire asked Fellows what further help and support they would like in completing their research paper and disseminating their findings. All said that they would like help from their supervisors or the Society with getting their Fellowship paper reproduced as a journal article, including advice on how to condense it to make it suitable for journals. Examples of responses to this question included:

"Speedy feedback mainly for drafts. Advice and guidance afterwards with regards possibly getting research published elsewhere. Inviting relevant individuals to conference. Griffins keeping in touch after the programme ends"

"Help to identify and write up for a journal article"

"Support with ensuring that our research goes to the most influential areas in order to promote further excellent practice with young women – i.e. YJB, Secure Estates etc."

6. Demographics

Fellows were invited to indicate their ethnic origin (using the ONS '16+1' classification), gender, sexual orientation, age and whether or not they considered themselves to have a disability. All but one completed this part of the questionnaire. All who answered described themselves as white British, non-disabled heterosexual women. Three were aged 25-34, and two were aged 35-54. There could be a concern here about the lack of diversity in the Fellowship group and it is encouraging that next year's intake appears to be more diverse, in terms of race at least. For future years, it might be worth advertising the programme with minority organisations that could enable us to reach a wider range of applicants. We should also consider the monitoring of applications.

A copy of the monitoring questionnaire is attached, as an appendix, for information.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This is not a complete evaluation of the Griffins Visiting Research Fellowships Programme because it does not attempt to measure the impact that Fellows' research has on criminal justice policy and practice. However, it does reveal a very high level of satisfaction with the Programme among participants. Nevertheless, we need to consider how to improve the following components of the programme:

- The content of the research seminars, in particular the seminar on qualitative data analysis; and how to achieve a better balance between presentational and interactive teaching methods
- The format of the Fellowship meetings, to ensure that each Fellow gets an equitable amount of time and attention, and to eliminate an unhelpful feeling of division between Fellows and Council members
- A means of ensuring that Fellows and academic supervisors make timely and regular appointments for supervision.

The teaching of basic social research methods in four two hour seminars is probably unrealistically ambitious. It will always be very difficult to ensure that the programme meets individuals' different levels of previous knowledge of research, and their preferred learning styles. But, it will be possible to make improvements to the seminars and Council's advice about the programme, its content and delivery will be appreciated.

Two further questions that Council is invited to consider are: how should we broaden the evaluation to include findings about impact of Fellows' research on

policy and practice? How should we publicise the very positive results of this evaluation?

Apart from being very helpful for improving the Fellowships Programme, this evaluation is timely because the Society is currently making a large number of applications for funding and some trusts ask about how we evaluate our organisational impact.

It seems positive to end this report with a quote from a Fellow about her overall experience of the 2008-2009 Fellowships Programme:

“It has been inspiring to meet like minded people who are prepared to listen and debate and also are fighting to change a system which is so discriminatory to females. I cannot thank you enough”.

Peter Dunn, Director
The Griffins Society
September 2009

APPENDIX

Fellows' demographic monitoring questionnaire:

You don't have to answer the questions below about yourself, but if you do choose to answer them it might help us assess the extent to which the Fellowships Programme is relevant to the diverse range of people working in the criminal justice system.

Please tick the relevant box.

Please indicate your ethnic origin below:

- | | |
|---|---|
| White | Black or Black British |
| <input type="checkbox"/> British | <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other White background | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background |
| Mixed | Chinese or other ethnic group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White and Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White and Black African | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other ethnic group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other mixed background | |
| Asian or Asian British | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indian | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background | |

Your age:

- Prefer not to say 18-24 25-34 35-54 55-64 65+

Your gender:

- male female transgender prefer not to say

And would you describe yourself as:

- gay lesbian bisexual heterosexual questioning
 queer prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a disability:

- yes no. If you have ticked yes, do you think the programme was as accessible to you as it is to a non-disabled person? yes no

