

SSPC named winner for Excellence in Education and Training at the HR Leadership & Management Awards 2017



Dr Sarah Hayes, Education & Outreach Officer at the Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC) hosted at the University of Limerick.

7th March 2017: The Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC), funded by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) were announced winners for Excellence in Education and Training, at the recent HR Leadership & Management Awards. The HR Leadership & Management Awards celebrate excellence and emerging roles of HR as a strategic management device that aligns with organisational business objectives, will underpin both business profitability and sustainability. The SSPC headquarters are in the Bernal Institute at the University of Limerick.

The programme is co-ordinated Dr Sarah Hayes, SSPC's Education and Outreach Officer (ETO), who provides support for the bespoke programme linking the PhD curriculum with industry sector needs, including the delivery of trainee industrial placements. The ETO Officer also develops and implements bespoke outreach activities to promote greater knowledge of science and its applications to general audiences.

Dr Sarah Hayes, SSPC's Education and Outreach Officer, commented:

“We are very excited to have received this award as we firmly believe it acknowledges the significance of this aspect of our PhD programme. The placement is designed to be mutually beneficial for both the company and the student, providing specialised expertise and knowledge for the company and relevant experience for the student and to date has prepared a significant number of our graduates for high-level industry employment”.

The role that industry members play within the SSPC is a multi-faceted one that is successful in both responding current needs of the sector and anticipating the skills and training necessary to mentor future research leaders. The programme’s purpose is to deepen a student’s understanding of the discipline, or to address potential knowledge gaps within a student’s background with advanced modules that directly benefit the student and his or her research topic.

Commenting, Louise O’Neill, Communication Officer at the SSPC, said: *“We were absolutely delighted to be nominated for this award in the first place. This award particularly focuses on the SSPC Structured PhD programme, which gives our students a unique advantage of a 3-month placement in industry. But also, acknowledges the SSPC for its innovative group collaborations”.*

Speaking about their experiences on industry placement, Carol McCarthy, PhD candidate at University College Cork, who did a three months placement at Pfizer in Newbridge, said:

“It is a fantastic opportunity for us to get some experience to help us in our career after our PhD. My mentor worked with me on a research product that had some interesting results and they were significant for the company. This was very exciting and offered me great training in new techniques I would not have had experience with before”.

Vivek Verma, an SSPC PhD candidate based at the University of Limerick, added: *“I’ve talked to my colleagues on their experiences of industry placement and it helps in their decision to stay in academia or pursue a career in industry. I personally would like to go on and work in industry, so the placement is an unbelievably good opportunity for me”.*

Since the programme started two years ago, the SSPC programme has placed twenty-two PhD students in industry. The companies involved to date are Pfizer, Eli Lilly, GSK, Janssen, MSD, BMS, Roche, Alkermes, Abbvie/Fournier Labs, Clariochem Ireland and APC Ltd. SSPC’s PhD Industry Placement provides students with relevant insight into industry by matching individual research expertise to company projects, resulting in a mutually beneficial experience for both the student and company.

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Notes to the Editor:

About the Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC)

The Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC) is a Global Hub of Pharmaceutical Process Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing, funded by Science Foundation Ireland through its Research Centres programme and the Pharmaceutical industry. It is a unique collaboration between 22 industry partners, 9 research performing organisations and 12 international academic collaborators. The SSPC comprises over 150 active researchers and has funding of over 40 Million Euro for 6 years from mid-2013. This large research collaboration has particular skills in active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) synthesis, purification and crystallization.