

Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) Innovative Training Network (ITN): Advice and Top Tips for Applicants

From Prof. Graham Huggan, a successful Coordinator



Graham Huggan, Professor and Chair of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Leeds.

Graham Huggan is Professor and Chair of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Literatures in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures. He was the host PI on the Marie Curie-Skłodowska Innovative Training Network (ITN), [ENHANCE](#), from 2014-2018. ENHANCE was Europe's first doctoral programme in Environmental Humanities, a cross-disciplinary field intended to give historical and cultural breadth to contemporary environmental issues and problems.

The network brought together 3 leading European universities and 6 public and private-sector partners, to train 12 Early Stage Researchers (doctoral students) to be both at the forefront of Environmental Humanities research and employable in a range of careers including environmental consultancy, risk assessment, research and development, green business management, media and communications, and not-for-profit work (environmental and wildlife NGOs).

Having been aware of the ITN scheme for a while, Graham felt that after a successful [HERA](#) bid, and therefore with some excellent partners already on board, it was the right time to go for the 2014 ITN call.

Having worked previously with two of the academic partners, and with good contacts at a couple of non-academic partner organisations, the initial consortium-building process was fairly easy. Engaging additional partners was a harder task and Graham emphasises that *'Assembling a good team is key to success in ITNs and other EU-funded projects, so it helps to have established partners to work with as well as new ones, and to share the team-building effort'*.

In terms of support from the EU Pre-award Team, Graham notes it was *"indispensable, [...] in providing constructive feedback and professional advice. EU-funded projects have finicky rules at the application stage [...] so it's good to have a body of experienced staff to turn to."*

Whilst acknowledging the long and laborious nature of the application Graham is very open about the rewards an EU project can bring, noting that the opportunity to mentor young scholars is extremely satisfying. He concludes:

"Working at an international level has its challenges, but these are greatly outweighed by the rewards. It's inspiring to work with top-quality young researchers, who, if picked wisely and trained properly, eventually come de facto to run the programme themselves".

Graham's top 3 tips for putting together a successful EU proposal are:

1. **Give careful thought to your team, and in approaching people don't ask them to simply join in, but ask them what they want.**
2. **EU-type applications are time-consuming, and there's no getting round that, so make sure the different bits and pieces needed are farmed out to different people, though the overall framing of the project is probably best left to one or two people (in my own case, I co-designed the frame with my late and much missed Leeds colleague Anthony Carrigan).**
3. **Give reviewers, and the EC as a whole, what they want, if necessary by parroting some of their language. This means being attentive, in particular, to the language of the call.**