

Report on the UK Molecular Microbial Ecology Group (MMEG) meeting, December 5-6th 2019

<http://stem.open.ac.uk/research/conferences-and-events/molecular-microbial-ecology-group-meeting-2019>

The annual UK Molecular Microbial Ecology Group (MMEG) meeting was held at The Open University on 5th-6th December, 2019. The event is an inclusive two-day symposium for postgraduate researchers and early career postdoctoral researchers to present their research in an informal setting, and is also attended by group leaders. The MMEG meeting provides an opportunity for networking and discussion of research in the fields of microbial ecology, and was attended by 102 delegates, including 76 Early Career Microbiologists (ECMs). There were 29 oral and 13 poster presentations by ECMs on a wide range of topics in microbial ecology, in addition to keynote addresses from Dr. Sophie Nixon (University of Manchester) and Dr. John Moreau (University of Glasgow). At the start of the conference, Prof. James McDonald (ISME Ambassador) gave a five-minute address to the meeting delegates to highlight the benefits of ISME membership, and promoted *The ISME Journal* and the ISME 18 symposium in Cape Town (see images below). A quick poll of the delegates suggested that approximately 50% were planning to attend ISME 18, and we encouraged those who were not planning to attend to consider attending.

We are grateful to ISME for sponsoring the event by providing two prizes for the best oral presentations (through the ambassador scheme) and also for funds towards a drinks reception prior to the conference dinner. This provided an excellent networking event, with lots of discussion and mixing between ECRs and the academics in attendance – the most important element of a conference! The ISME prizes were awarded to Maria Magliulo (University of Essex) for her excellent presentation on ‘Understanding longevity of halophiles in salt crystals’ and Beth Williams (University of East Anglia) for her presentation on ‘Surface Marine Sediments are Factories for DMSP and the Climate Active Gas DMS’. The latter research was recently published in *Nature Microbiology*. Overall, the standard of presentations and the quality of the science was exceptionally high, and we encouraged all attendees to submit abstracts and attend ISME 18 in Cape Town. I will follow this up with a reminder email to conference delegates once abstract submission opens in Jan 2020.



Images. Top left; James McDonald (ISME ambassador) addressing conference attendees on the society, *The ISME Journal* and ISME 18. Top right; MMEG delegates. Bottom left; Maria Magliulo (University of Essex) receiving an ISME prize for best oral presentation. Right; Beth Williams (University of East Anglia) receiving an ISME prize for best oral presentation.