

College of Life and Environmental Sciences

Postgraduate Research Student

Training Needs Analysis

**This skills audit is designed to help you plan your personal and professional development as you start your research degree. It should help you review your current skills and plan for your future skills requirements.**

A research degree requires specific skills for successful completion – it also fosters skills which will serve you well in a difficult jobs market. Skills development is relevant to both your programme of study and your subsequent career development.

The skills audit will enable you to prioritise your training requirements and direct you to the appropriate modules, workshops and sessions. In discussion with your supervisor, you will then be able to compose a skills and research development plan for the year ahead.

**How to Complete the Skills Audit and the Skills and Research Development Plan:**

**1**

The first stage is to **use the skills audit to measure your strengths and weaknesses** in the different skill areas. There is a short description of the levels in each area (1 to 4) at the top of the document – put a number in the level column on the audit to show how you view your current development.

Please note that there is no expectation that you reach any particular level. The goal is to give an indication of the range of skills you possess and identify those areas which you need to develop in order to conduct and complete your research project successfully.

**2**

Next, complete the **Provisional Skills and Research Development Plan** with ideas about research training modules and other activities which you believe will equip you to conduct and complete your research project successfully. Remember to be realistic when planning the use of your time. Keep this plan updated throughout the year, and keep a note of your reflections on your experiences.

Your skills development plan may include auditing[[1]](#footnote-1) **research training modules**. A balance has to be made between broad and in-depth research training, and your ability to concentrate on your research project.

**3**

**In your first meeting with your supervisor / supervisory team, discuss the audit and provisional skills and research development plan**. Use this discussion to clarify what elements of the audit mean in the disciplinary context of your research activity, what kinds of expectations there are at different levels of your study, and what opportunities there are within your department to gain experience. It is important to identify with your supervisor any specific research training modules which you should follow, and whether any language training is necessary for your research. Adapt your skills and development plan accordingly. (A note of caution: if you do not have a clear research question yet, it is difficult to know what your exact training needs will be. However, the training modules do provide a good overview of different methodologies and approaches which will help you make a decision later about the most appropriate research strategy and method to use. Certain methods are appropriate to certain kinds of questions and types of research, and so it is imperative that you discuss this issue with your supervisor as your research project progresses, and adapt your research development plan accordingly.)

**4**

Speak to the Education Office of the relevant discipline of which modules you would like to attend – they can check to make sure you are able to register for these. If you encounter any difficulty in doing this (particularly if taking modules from outside of CLES), please contact the CLES PGR Support team [cles-pgr-support@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:cles-pgr-support@exeter.ac.uk) Register for any Researcher Development Programme events as soon as possible, as these can fill up very quickly.

**5**

Upload the completed document to MyPGR.

Finally, we would like to emphasise that we don’t consider the development of skills to be a separate process from your research practice – it should support and enhance it. We hope that you will be able to engage with this process creatively and innovatively, utilising the resources of the University to your advantage. This will contribute to a vibrant research culture at the University of Exeter, and ensure you re-enter a challenging jobs market with confidence.

If you have any queries about the skills audit, please contact the CLES PGR Support team cles-pgr-support@exeter.ac.uk

Skills Audit

For each of the statements below, assess the level of your experience using the following scale:

1 = I have very little or no knowledge / experience in this area

2 = I have some knowledge / experience, but I need to develop much more in this area

3 = I have quite a lot of knowledge / experience in this area, but more development would be extremely useful

4 = I have a lot of knowledge / experience in this area, and really do not need further development in order to complete my doctorate

Also, where appropriate, prioritise each skill area (low / medium / high). If you have little experience in an area, but it is an area of low priority in terms of your research project, then you should not need to undertake training in this area.

If possible, provide evidence of any relevant experience you have had previously in each area.

Finally (where appropriate) indicate any ideas you have for ways you would like to develop further in each area. (For example a relevant research training module, or Researcher Development Programme session.)

**RESEARCH CONTEXT**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Skill Area | Level | Priority | Examples of previous experience and level | Ideas for further development |
| 1 – 4 | Low / Medium / High |
| I have a good knowledge of the research community in my field |  |  |  |  |
| I am up to date with recent advances and literature in my field |  |  |  |  |
| I am good at evaluating the quality of others’ research |  |  |  |  |

**RESEACH PRACTICE AND SKILLS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Skill Area | Level | Priority | Examples of previous experience and level | Ideas for further development |
| 1 – 4 | Low / Medium / High |
| I have a good understanding of research methods and techniques which are relevant to my research project |  |  |  |  |
| I have a good understanding of a variety of different research methods and techniques |  |  |  |  |
| I am familiar with identifying and using Library resources, including electronic sources |  |  |  |  |
| I am used to citing and referencing in a rigorous and correct way |  |  |  |  |
| I understand how to avoid plagiarism |  |  |  | [Information about academic honesty and plagiarism](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/staffdevelopment/aspectsofacademicpractice/assessmentandfeedback/academichonestyandplagiarism/) |
| I have experience in writing a literature review |  |  |  |  |
| I have the information technology skills necessary for my research project |  |  |  |  |

**RESEARCH PLANNING AND TIME MANAGEMENT**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Skill Area | Level | Priority | Examples of previous experience and level | Ideas for further development |
| 1 – 4 | Low / Medium / High |
| I have experience of presenting a plan of purposes, stages and outcomes of research |  |  |  |  |
| I have experience in setting targets and timescales for different stages of a research project |  |  |  |  |

**COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING SKILLS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Skill Area | Level | Priority | Examples of previous experience and level | Ideas for further development |
| 1 – 4 | Low / Medium / High |
| I am able to effectively communicate my research through my writing skills |  |  |  |  |
| I am able to verbally present and defend my research |  |  |  |  |
| I am able to interact successfully with others researching in the same field |  |  |  |  |
| I have attended academic conferences |  |  |  |  |
| I have experience of presenting research at conferences |  |  |  |  |
| (Where research is in non-English language environments) I have the necessary language skills to conduct my research  (This does not refer to English language skills) |  |  |  |  |

The following section is optional, and depends on the type of research you are doing

**ETHICAL AND LEGAL UNDERSTANDING**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Skill Area | Level | Priority | Examples of previous experience and level |  |
|  | 1 – 4 | Low / Medium / High |
| I have experience of submitting my work for ethical approval |  |  |  |  |
| I understand issues relating to privacy and confidentiality |  |  |  |  |
| I understand the importance of intellectual property, data protection, and issues around the commercial exploitation of research |  |  |  |  |

**Mandatory online training for all Postgraduate Researchers**

**There are four online courses which are mandatory for all staff and mandatory for all Postgraduate Researchers. These four courses should be completed as part of your induction.**

There is also a course for all Research Staff which should be undertaken by Postgraduate Researchers working with Research Data.

When you have completed each of these courses you can update your training needs analysis form in the table below and upload the updated form to MyPGR. Your supervisor will check completion of the mandatory training courses with you when you review your Training Needs Analysis together. These courses are available to you online via our Postgraduate Researcher Development ELE (Exeter Learning Environment) site here:  
<http://vle.exeter.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=6718>

If you require any further advice, please speak to the Researcher Development and Research Culture Team in the Doctoral College : [researcherdevelopment@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:researcherdevelopment@exeter.ac.uk)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mandatory training courses for all Postgraduate Researchers** | **Completed?** |
| [**Research Integrity**](https://vle.exeter.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=6594)This course is compulsory for all researchers at the University of Exeter, and is designed to help you to understand research integrity, why it is important and how to apply it to your work |  |
| [**Health and Safety**](https://vle.exeter.ac.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=629482)This course gives you an introduction to health and wellbeing at the University of Exeter, and how to stay safe whilst working on campus. This course is for ALL PGRs. |  |
| [**Equality and Diversity**](https://vle.exeter.ac.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=629486)This course outlines the University of Exeter's commitment to equality and diversity, including key legislation, university processes, and your responsibilities. |  |
| [**Information Governance and Security (Postgraduate Researchers)**](http://vle.exeter.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=6718)This information security awareness course provides all postgraduate research students with an overview of the main issues relating to securing your data, and must be completed as part of induction. Please follow the instructions on the web page |  |

Provisional Skills and Research Development Plan

**Research training modules:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Module code** | **Title** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Other activities and sessions (eg Researcher Development Programme events, language training etc.)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity or Module** | **Date of activity or duration of module** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
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|  |  |
|  |  |

1. ‘Auditing’ means attending a module, but not being assessed in it. No credits are awarded for auditing modules. However, if in discussion with your supervisor it is decided that it is appropriate to take the assessment, this is possible. You will need to register for the appropriate modules through the relevant Education Office. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)