**QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY BELFAST**

**DIRECTORATE OF ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

**GUIDELINES ON THE QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

1. **Introduction**

The Graduate School is responsible for managing and co-ordinating the delivery of the Postgraduate Development Programme (PGDP). In collaboration with Schools, academic support units and external consultants, a range of training and development interventions are made available to postgraduate research students throughout the period of their research degrees.

1. **Background To The Programme**

**2.1 The Roberts Review**

The Roberts Review in 2002[[1]](#footnote-1) made the following recommendations relating to the employability and career planning of postgraduate research students.

* Research Councils UK (RCUK) as major funders of postgraduate research students, should make all funding conditional on students meeting stringent minimum standards with regards to their transferable skills development.
* These minimum standards should include the provision of at least two weeks’ dedicated training and development a year, principally in transferable skills, for which additional funding should be provided and over which students should be given some control. There should be no requirement on the student to choose training at their host institution.
* The minimum standards should also include the requirement that Higher Education Institutions (HEI’s) and other organisations in which postgraduate research students work should reward good supervision of students, and ensure that these principles are reflected in their human resources strategies and staff appraisal processes.

The implementation of these recommendations has been supported by RCUK policy since the publication of the Roberts Review. Funding has also been made available for a number of years to help HEIs build their training provision capacity.

**2.2 Statement of Expectations Regarding Researcher Development**

Research Councils issued a document in March 2010 outlining their renewed expectations of HEI’s and research organisations regarding researcher development opportunities and funding. They set the following expectations:

* HEIs should maintain availability of a broad range of career planning, training and development opportunities for Research Council funded researchers.
* HEIs should fully embed researcher development into normal processes within their research and training environments.

This statement of expectations has been recently revised (January 2015) by a statement which sets out common principles for the support of all Research Council-funded students[[2]](#footnote-2). The single statement provides clarity on the expectations of research organisations, students and their training environments across all seven Research Councils. It also aims to simplify administration within research organisations.

Within the Queen’s University Institutional Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes)[[3]](#footnote-3), the following regulation exists:

‘Students must comply with the University’s training requirements, the training requirements of their funding body and with any compulsory or recommended training requirements in place in their School.’

**2.3 Researcher Development Framework and Statement**

The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is an approach to researcher development, which aims to develop world-class researchers and build the UK higher education research base. The Framework details the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and was developed by and for researchers, in consultation with academics and the public and private sector.

The Framework is designed for:

* Researchers within higher education to evaluate and plan their own personal, professional and career development;
* Managers/supervisors of researchers in their role supporting the development of researchers;
* Trainers, developers, human resources specialists and careers advisors in the planning and provision of support for researchers' development;
* Institutions in making decisions about their strategic approach to the development of researchers;

The Researcher Development Statement (RDS) provides a strategic statement relating to the RDF and has been endorsed by RCUK, Universities UK and other leading national organisations. Together both the RDS and RDF support the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and Chapter B11 (‘Research Degrees’) of the UK Quality Code of Higher Education (2011)[[4]](#footnote-4). Detailed information on the RDS and RDF can be found on the Vitae website ([www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)) and Appendix 1 shows the break-down of the four domains within the Framework.

* 1. **The QAA Code of Practice**

The UK Quality Code of Higher Education (2011) requires institutions to be able to demonstrate that they are providing opportunities for postgraduate researcher development, as identified in Indicator 14:

Indicator 14

Research students have appropriate opportunities for developing research, personal and professional skills. Each research student's development needs are identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree; these are regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.

**3. The Queen’s University Postgraduate Development Programme**

**3.1 Programme Purpose and Approach**

The Postgraduate Development Programme (PGDP) is a programme of transferable skills training and development for all postgraduate research students within Queen’s University. The content of the programme maps onto the skills areas outlined in the Researcher Development Framework.

**The Postgraduate Development Programme exists to support research students in the development of research skills and to enhance their employability through career and personal development.**

The following learning approaches are used within the programme:

* Training courses
* On-line Learning
* Experiential Learning
* Personal Effectiveness Programmes
* Developmental Activity
* 1-2-1 Consultancy and Advice
* Careers Consultancy Service
* Employer visits and careers events

The PGDP website ([www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp](http://www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp)) contains detailed information on all areas of the programme together with guidelines on how to identify and register for relevant training and development initiatives.

Students should take time to familiarise themselves with all training and development activity promoted within the PGDP. They should discuss their training and development needs with their supervisor(s) at the beginning of each academic year and review these on a regular basis. Students should make their supervisor(s) aware of any training and development activity that they intend to undertake to ensure that they are agreeable to their participation. Each student should ensure that the training and development activities selected are relevant to their particular research area and meet their specific skills requirements.

The role of the supervisor is key to the successful implementation of the PGDP. Supervisors are advised to take time to discuss with their student(s) the training and development activities that will best suit their needs. This discussion should be conducted at the beginning of each year and reviewed on a regular basis. Supervisors should be aware of any training and development activity that their student intends to undertake.

**3.2 Programme Guidelines**

Full time research students are expected to undertake 30 days of training and development activity throughout the course of their degree.

Within the programme training and development activity is defined in the following way:

Training

* Training courses co-ordinated centrally (The Postgraduate Skills Training Programme).
* On-line learning materials (videos, training courses and webinars).
* School/subject specific training co-ordinated at School level.
* Other instructor-led and on-line training delivered by external bodies (e.g. research councils, Vitae).
* Personal Effectiveness Programmes.

Development Activity

* Attending or presenting at a conference
* Involvement in writing a paper/poster
* Teaching\*
* Demonstrating\*
* Job shadowing and employer visits
* Careers events
* Mentoring\*
* Supervision of project students\*
* Postgraduate-led Initiatives

Public engagement activity

\* In relation to each of these areas, a maximum of 5 days can be claimed.

In addition individual Schools may expect students to complete a number of training and development days in advance of differentiation. Students should check for any additional requirements with their School.

There is no explicit number of training days expected in relation to part-time students although it is expected that they should be aware of the training and development options available within the Programme.

**3.3 Training Courses**

Training within the Postgraduate Development Programme is primarily designed to develop knowledge and skill in relation to areas identified as important to postgraduate researcher development within Queen’s University. A programme of skills training is provided by the training team based at the Graduate School and is called the Postgraduate Development Programme (PGDPP). The individual courses vary in length from a quarter day to 2 days. They are led by academic and academic–related staff within Queen’s and also by external providers who are chosen based on their specialist experience. Some Schools also develop more subject-specific training courses for research students. Students can also attend training courses held by other Universities and external bodies.

Students are required to register and cancel courses through MyFuture. All instructions in relation to MyFuture are outlined on the website ([www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp](http://www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp)). The system records all training attended through the Postgraduate Development Programme. Students are required to record any other training undertaken as well as all developmental activity. (Do we need to add in here about manually updating QSIS record.

Each student should ensure that the training courses selected are relevant to their particular research area and meet their specific skills requirements.

**Postgraduate Development Programme Booking and Attendance Policy**

The policy applies to all postgraduate research students and aims to establish guidelines in relation to attendance on centrally organised PGTP training courses. The policy refers to course attendance requirements, late cancellations of attendance (defined as cancelling within 48 hours of the scheduled date and time of the training course), non-attendance (defined as failing to attend a course on which a place has been booked without notifying the PGDP team) and course cancellation by the training team. The policy can be found on the Postgraduate Development Programme website ([www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp](http://www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp)).

**3.4 On-line Learning**

A range of on-line resources exist to support students with regard to their transferable skills development. These include videos, webinars and on-line training courses. These tools are useful to those students who are less able to attend class-room based training e.g. part-time students or students spending significant time in the laboratory as part of their research degree. The resources can be found at [www.qub.ac.uk/prdp](http://www.qub.ac.uk/prdp).

**3.5 Personal Effectiveness Programmes**

Personal effectiveness programmes are highly interactive and experiential development programmes targeted at second and third year postgraduate research students. An example is the Future Ready Programme. The programmes take place over three to five days and are non-residential. They are developed and delivered with the support of professional academic-related staff and external specialists.

**3.6 1-2-1** **Personal Effectiveness Consultancy Service**

This service offers one-to-one confidential consultancy to postgraduate research students with regard to issues relating to academic support and personal effectiveness. Typical issues students present with are: managing difficulties in working relationships, dealing with criticism, difficulties with differentiation, stress and motivation. The approach is practical and combines systemic principles for understanding complex work systems with cognitive behavioural principles.

**3.7 Careers Consultancy Service**

The Graduate School offers dedicated careers advice and guidance for postgraduate research students. Students can arrange an appointment to discuss any career-related issues, such as exploring career options, job search strategies, CVs/applications and interviews.  The Graduate School also organises a range of careers programmes and activities to enhance employability and career management skills.

**3.8 1-2-1 Advice on Developing Transferable Skills**

Students can seek general advice with regard to developing transferable skills by contacting the PGDP team pg.skills@qub.ac.uk).

**3.9 Developmental Activity**

Developmental activity within the Postgraduate Development Programme is defined as any activity which enables students to put into practice the skills they have learnt. Such activity is most beneficial, when supported by personal reflection and feedback with regard to identified areas of strength and areas for improvement. The following are examples of developmental activity which students may wish to engage in:

* Attending or presenting at a conference  
  • Involvement in writing a paper
* Creating a poster and presenting at a conference/Graduate School Annual Poster Competition  
  • Teaching  
  • Demonstrating  
  • Job shadowing and employer visits   
  • Careers events  
  • Mentoring  
  • Supervision of project students  
  • Postgraduate-led initiatives  
  • Public Engagement Activity

Postgraduate-Led Initiatives

Funding is available throughout the year for Postgraduate-Led Initiatives. This funding is allocated for initiatives developed and delivered by postgraduate research students for the benefit of other postgraduate students. The initiatives can involve organising a conference, research seminar or some other appropriate training activity for a wider postgraduate audience. They encourage research students to develop their transferable skills through working independently and in teams on activities that benefit other research students. To apply for funding students must complete an application form outlining the purpose and scope of the initiative and the funding required. The submission must be endorsed by the Head of School. In addition funding is available to support the delivery of training and development interventions for research staff and postgraduate research students.  Unlike other funding available from the Staff and Training and Development Unit and the Graduate School, this fund is not targeted at either research staff or students separately but instead is intended to meet the needs of research staff **and** students working together in research clusters and other research groups.  Applications with an interdisciplinary focus are strongly encouraged.

**3.10 Employer Visits and Careers Events**

A range of careers fairs, on-campus presentations, and employer-led skills sessions take place throughout the year

**3.11 Mentoring**

A programme of peer mentoring support is available to Schools for first year postgraduate research students. The programme is facilitated by the PGDP team. Peer mentoring aims to address the diverse needs arising out of the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate research education. Mentoring at the early stages of a research degree enhances the student experience through offering a longer and more tailored induction thereby facilitating integration into the research environment. There are also benefits for mentors, who receive hands-on experience of applying skills such as communication, problem solving and team working. Mentors, who are typically in the second or third year of the research degree cycle, receive skills training credits and can gain valuable experience for their future careers.

**3.12 Conferences/School Seminars**

Students can attend research seminars taking place in the School as well as relevant conferences and these are included within the 30 days expectation. Students will also be informed if they are required to give a seminar on their work at any stage in their research. Depending on their source of funding, students may be able to claim limited expenses from their funding body for conference attendance.

1. **Personal Development Planning**

In order to get the most from their ongoing skills development, students are expected to take responsibility for a continuous cycle of personal development planning (PDP). This involves taking the time to reflect on skills, identify personal strengths and weaknesses and plan and record progression. As identified in Indicator 14 of the QAA Code of Practice (2011) development needs should be identified, jointly agreed and regularly reviewed and updated.

The QUB Personal Development Planner is a tool based on the RDF and which aims to support students in identifying and planning their development needs. Students should use the Personal Development Planner to record priority development areas and those activities which will support the actioning of the development. The QUB Personal Development Planner can be found at the following website: [www.qub.ac.uk/sites/PostgraduateResearcherDevelopmentPlanning/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/PostgraduateResearcherDevelopmentPlanning/)

Students should take time to familiarise themselves with all training and development activity promoted within the PRDP. They should discuss their training and development needs with their supervisor (s) at the beginning of each academic year and review these on a regular basis. Students should make their supervisor(s) aware of any training and development activity that they intend to undertake to ensure that they are agreeable to their participation.

The role of the supervisor is key to the successful implementation of the PRDP. Supervisors are advised to take time to discuss with their student(s) the training and development activities that will best suit their needs. This discussion should be conducted at the beginning of each year and reviewed on a regular basis. Supervisors should be aware of any training and development activity that their student intends to undertake.

**5. Induction**

The Graduate School co-ordinate induction events for all postgraduate research students which complement the induction programmes delivered by Schools. These events relate to the process of undertaking a research degree as well as to the role of transferable skills training within the research degree. They normally take place in early October and February.

**6. Monitoring and Evaluating Training and Development Activity**

Students are personally responsible for participating in the PGDP and for maintaining a record of their participation within Qsis. The Graduate School monitors overall participation levels and can produce attendance reports for supervisors if requested. The importance of participation in the programme should be built into each student’s research plan and supervisors should inform the Head of School if they become aware of any problems in relation to a student’s level of participation e.g. failure to attend mandatory School courses or complete the 30 days requirement.

The effectiveness of the Postgraduate Development Programme is monitored through a continuous process of evaluation and review. This is conducted using an evaluation model called the Rugby Impact Framework.

**7. Training for Supervisors**

The Graduate School also organises and co-ordinates supervisor training both for members of academic staff new to the supervisory role and for more established supervisors.

The Supervising Research Students course is compulsory for new probationary members of staff. The course is also open to more experienced members of staff, if deemed necessary. Booking of these courses is through Queen’s On-line, I-Trent.

**8. Further Information**

All information relating to the Postgraduate Development Programme is accessible from the Graduate School website ([www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp](http://www.qub.ac.uk/pgdp)). Should you have any enquires, email [pg.skills@qub.ac.uk](mailto:pg.skills@qub.ac.uk) or telephone 028 9097 2590.

**Researcher Development Framework Appendix 1**

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| **Domain A: Knowledge and intellectual attributes** | |
| **Knowledge Base (A1)** | Knowledge of:   * The area of research, the advances within it and its relationship with other research areas * The methods and experimental techniques appropriate for research design * Sources of information, bibliographic software and other information technologies * Literacy and numeracy skills and language abilities appropriate for research   Behaviour   * Makes original contributions to knowledge * Identifies, applies and develops methods and experimental techniques appropriate for research projects * Conducts effective and comprehensive information searches * Records, manages and handles information/data using appropriate bibliographic software and other information technologies |
| **Cognitive Skills**  **(A2)** | Behaviour   * Analyses and evaluates findings using appropriate methods * Thinks originally, independently and critically; develops theoretical concepts * Critically synthesises information from diverse sources * Evaluates progress, impact and outcomes for research * Recognises and validates problems; formulates and applies solutions to a range of research problems   Attitude   * Willing to give and receive constructive criticism |
| **Creativity (A3)** | Behaviour   * Develops new ways of working; has novel ideas and realises their potential * Identifies new trends; creates new opportunities * Develops convincing and persuasive arguments to defend research * Takes intellectual risks; challenges the status quo   Attitude   * Takes a creative, imaginative and inquiring approach to research * Is open to new ideas |

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| **Domain B: Personnel effectiveness** | |
| **Personal Qualities (B1)** | Attitude   * Approaches research with enthusiasm, passion and confidence * Is resilient and perseveres in the face of obstacles * Is self-reflective; seeks ways to improve performance and strives for research excellence * Is pro-active, independent, self-reliant and takes responsibility for self and others * Shows integrity |
| **Self-management (B2)** | Behaviour   * Anticipates and responds to directions and trends in research * Plans, prioritises and conducts research in a proactive way * Delivers research projects and results on time and effectively * Develops awareness of, and helps to achieve, work-life balance for self and colleagues   Attitude   * Has a strategic approach to research * Has focus, commitment and ambition * Is flexible and responsive to change |
| **Professional and Career Development (B3)** | Knowledge   * Career and employment opportunities inside and outside academia   Behaviour   * Takes ownership of and manages professional development * Shows commitment to continuing professional development and enhancing employability * Maintains and develops relevant skills set and experience in preparation for a wide range of opportunities within and outside academia * Actively networks for professional and career purposes and seeks to enhance research reputation and esteem * Actively networks for professional and career purposes and seeks to enhance research reputation and esteem |

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| **Domain C: Research organisation and governance** | |
| **Professional Conduct (C1)** | Knowledge   * Health and safety issues, confidentiality and ethical requirements of his/her research field. * The legal requirements and regulations relating to the area of research and the research environment. * The principles of intellectual property rights (IPR) and copyright issues, as they relate to research, its commercialisation and dissemination. * Organisational and professional requirements and environmental impact of research. * The concept of corporate social responsibility.   Behaviour   * Respects, acknowledges and attributes the contribution of others * Seeks to protect, where appropriate, the intellectual assets arising from research and to maximise the wider value of research findings * Acts with professional integrity in all aspects of research governance * Uses institutional/organisational resources responsibly and appropriately * Seeks ways of working in a sustainable manner   Attitude   * Respects, upholds and meets professional standards and requirements |
| **Research Management (C2)** | Knowledge   * The contribution of research to the health of disciplines and institutional missions * Project management tools and techniques   Behaviour   * Applies appropriate project management tools and techniques * Sets goals and plans and manages resources to deliver results * Effectively assesses and manages risks * Evaluates the effectiveness of research projects |
| **Finance, funding and resources (C3)** | Knowledge   * The requirement for research income generation and financial management * Mechanisms for funding, the range of funding sources and the processes for making applications * Local administrative systems, reporting procedures and infrastructure processes   Behaviour   * Responsibly manages finances, resources and infrastructures related to research |

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| **Domain D: Engagement, influence and impact** | |
| **Communication and dissemination (D1)** | Knowledge   * Appropriate communication and dissemination mechanisms for different audiences * The importance of engaging in the processes of publication and dissemination of research results and impacts   Behaviour   * Communicates effectively in both written and oral modes with a range of audiences formally and informally through a variety of different techniques and media * Actively engages in publication and dissemination of research results and impacts |
| **Working with others (D2)** | Behaviour   * Actively works in an inclusive, respectful and constructive way with colleagues, stakeholders and research users * Recognises and acknowledges the contribution of others and own part in team success * Builds relationships in academic and commercial contexts; approachable and interacts constructively with others; manages expectations and resolves conflict * Supervises, mentors and develops the potential of less experienced researchers and colleagues through support and advise * Leads, motivates and influences where appropriate; persuades through listening and convincing discussion * Builds and sustains collaborative relationships and works pro-actively to create and develop knowledge with a range of stakeholders, including researchers, funders and users of research   Attitude   * Respects the inclusive and collegial manner in which researchers conduct relationships within and beyond academia * Recognises the potential for working in sustained partnerships with a range of stakeholders to generate new ideas, insights and maximise the potential for wider societal and economic impact * Respects individual difference and diversity |
| **Engagement and impact (D3)** | Knowledge   * Global, organisational, cultural and environmental contexts, and the wider impact of research * The social and ethical implications of research, and public attitudes to these issues * The range of mechanisms to support knowledge transfer and maximise the impact of research in academic, economic and societal contexts   Behaviour   * Engages with and shares research through research-informed and student-focused teaching * Contributes to increasing public awareness, engagement and understanding of research and associated impacts * Identifies innovative trends, ideas and applications; is enterprising and entrepreneurial within and beyond academia * Works collaboratively with all stakeholders to create, develop and exchange research knowledge to influence and benefit policy development, society and the economy * Seeks new outlets and promotes the application of research in innovative ways * Appreciates and works with diversity and difference in research and education   Attitude   * Values the contribution of research to teaching and teaching to research * Recognises the importance of accountability of research with regard to social and economic impacts, internationalisation and global citizenship |

1. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set_for_success.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/skills/statementofexpectation.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/ResearchDegreeProgrammes/SkillsDevelopment/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.qaa.ac.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-4)