

Postgraduate Research Skills Training Policy

September 2007

Research Degrees and Researcher Development
Directorate and Research and Business Engagement

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Manchester is committed to ensuring its students excel in personal, social and intellectual abilities. As part of its strategy in skills training the University provides students with opportunities to learn skills that will lead to the achievement of personal and career development goals as students and graduates of the University. The University will ensure that all postgraduate research students are provided with high quality, relevant and appropriate skills training and development opportunities through embedding skills development within discipline groupings.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'postgraduate research degrees' refers to doctoral, Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Master of Surgery (ChM) and Doctor of Medicine (MD) degrees.

2. POLICY AIMS AND LINKS TO PGR SKILLS TRAINING STRATEGY

The aim of this policy is to identify detailed University requirements, and roles and responsibilities in support of the implementation of the University's PGR Skills Training Strategy. This policy is informed by the following five strategic goals:

- 2.1. Be the leading UK institution in skills training, providing development opportunities that are recognised as internationally distinguished in their quality and impact.
- 2.2. Engage all postgraduate research students and supervisors across the University in the skills training agenda.
- 2.3. Establish successful mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of skills training.
- 2.4. Improve the capacity of postgraduate research students to understand what and how they are learning and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning, through personal development planning.
- 2.5. Provide training opportunities through a variety of flexible modes of delivery to meet the diverse needs of all researchers across the University.

3. EXTERNAL REQUIREMENTS

Drivers of the national research training agenda have redefined what institutions are expected to provide for postgraduate research students. The three primary changes are:

- 3.1 **Research training programmes:** the Research Councils expect institutions to have formal research training programmes in place, to which all postgraduate research students should have access.
- 3.2 **Training needs assessment:** the QAA Code of Practice expects institutions to have a system of Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for all postgraduate research students, and procedures that keep students' training needs under regular review.

- 3.3 **Scale of training that is expected:** full-time students are expected to receive at least 10 days of dedicated training a year, principally in transferable skills.

4. UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

The following are the University's minimum expectations across the institution:

- 4.1. A programme of skills training and development is a mandatory component of a postgraduate research degree.
- 4.2. All students are expected to engage in the skills training process in the following ways:
 - a) Identify their current skills by completing a Skills Audit¹;
 - b) Prioritise key skills development needs;
 - c) Plan how they will develop the required skills;
 - d) Participate in training opportunities² to develop the required skills where appropriate;
 - e) Reflect on progress in specified skill development areas;
 - f) Review and re-establish future plans / goals.
- 4.3. All candidates for a postgraduate research degrees must undertake a skills audit at the beginning of their degree, and 6 months or annually thereafter throughout their prescribed period of study to determine their research, transferable and generic skills requirements.
- 4.4. Approved prior experience / learning is acceptable but must be evidenced. Through recognising students past experience and achievements, the University ensures that students do not have to repeat skills and knowledge already gained.
- 4.5. Successful completion of the agreed programme of skills development and training will be a condition of progression each year of study.

5. POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1. All postgraduate research degree students are responsible for:
 - a) Participating in the Faculty / School 'Introductory' process;
 - b) Actively seeking out training courses in areas requiring further development;

¹ The purpose of a skills audit (also referred to as training needs analysis or development needs analysis) is to formally identify the areas in which research students will need to develop skills through formal training.

² Training opportunities include the full range of options from self-paced study to professionally delivered workshops, to be decided upon during the personal development planning stage of the process.

- c) Carrying out their research and training to the best of his/her capability;
- d) Identifying their current skills by completing a Skills Audit;
- e) Prioritising key skills development needs;
- f) Planning how they will develop the required skills;
- g) Participating in training opportunities to develop the required skills, where appropriate;
- h) Reflecting on progress in specified skill development area;
- i) Reviewing and re-establishing future plans / goals.

6. SUPERVISORS RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1. All supervisors are responsible for:

- a) Agreeing, in consultation with the student, the competencies that individual students should acquire in relation to the standards expected by the Faculty / School;
- b) Agreeing, in consultation with the student, an annual training plan;
- c) Ensuring that the student is aware of generic training opportunities and promoting their participation as relevant to their specific training needs participation.

7. FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1. All faculties are responsible for:

- a) Ensuring postgraduate research students have access to appropriate training to enable them to acquire the skills they need to design and complete their degrees effectively and prepare them for their subsequent careers;
- b) Responding to requests for training and student development and to seek to meet such requests within the resources made available by the University.

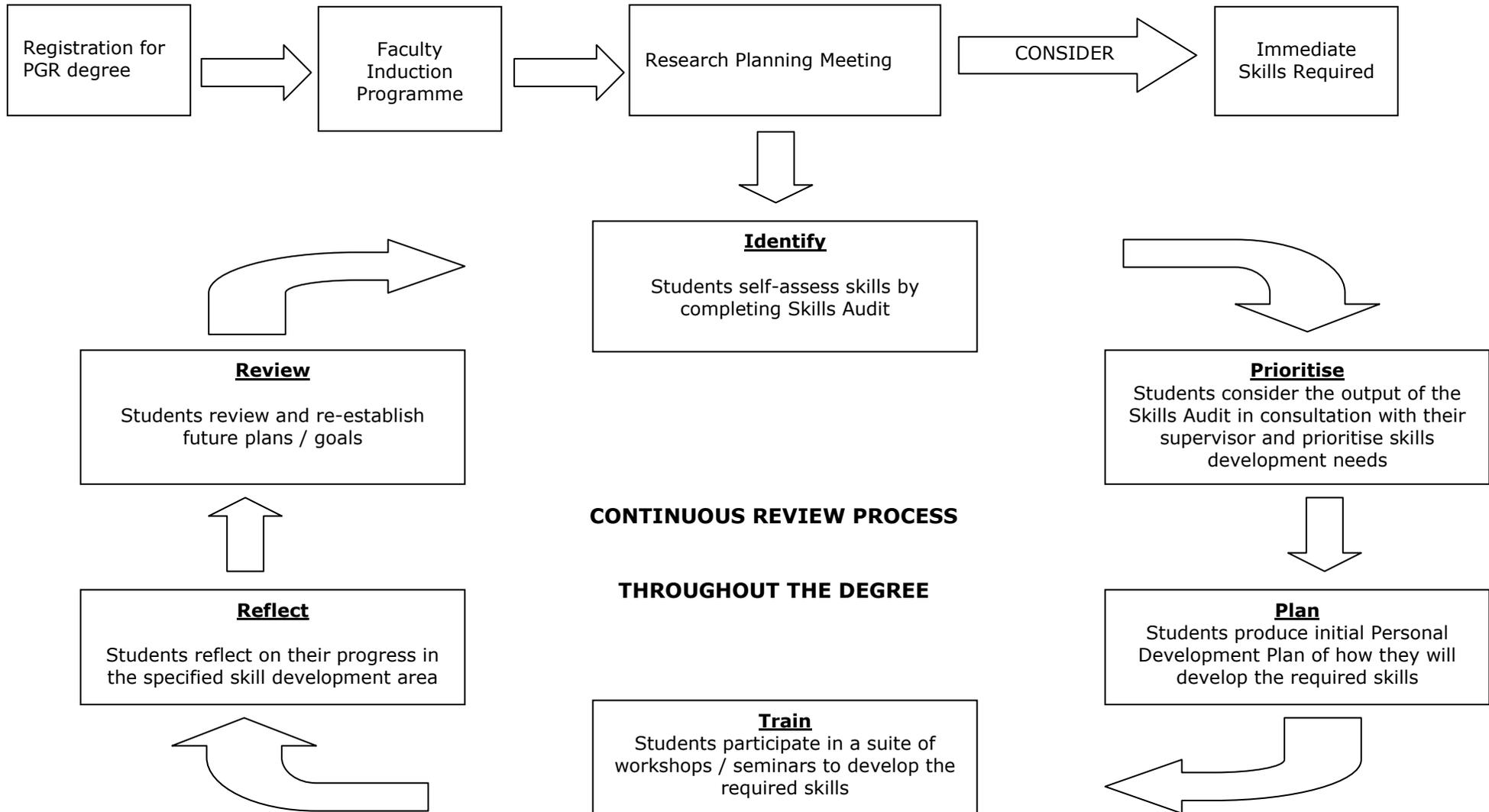
8. SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

8.1. Sources of support and guidance include:

- a) Supervisors;
- b) Student Handbook;
- c) Faculty / School training coordinators;

- d) Faculty / School Skills Training web pages;
- e) Graduate Education Skills Training web pages;
- f) The University of Manchester's Business, Careers and Community Division;
- g) UK Grad.
- h) Relevant learned professional societies

9. SKILLS TRAINING FRAMEWORK FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER



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