

New Masters Programme Recognition

The NWDTC acknowledges that, since the original bid to the ESRC in 2010/2011, master's provision in the three institutions will naturally evolve and that this needs to be recognised and captured.

When changes to masters provision occur at any of the pathways, a report should be produced by the institutional pathway lead and submitted to NWDTC, if they wish the course to be considered as a research training masters for ESRC students. The details provided will then be used to assess whether the programme is eligible as the '1' of a 1+3 studentship and as sufficient research training for a student applying to a +3 studentship. Please see Annex 1 from the *2009 ESRC Guidance 'Expectations for Core Research Methods Training'* below for details of what constitutes core research methods training in this context.

Please note: It is expected that any reports will be circulated amongst all pathway leads within the relevant pathway for comment before submission to the NWDTC.

Submissions will be reviewed once a month. Reports should be submitted by 4pm on the last working day of the month, and the NWDTC will aim to respond within 4 weeks. Please send to Hayley Meloy (hmeloy@liv.ac.uk).

The report should include as much detail under the following headings*:

1. Masters programmes that were previously approved which still exist but that have undergone substantial changes (i.e. for which the compulsory modules have been changed).

Please detail all changes that have been made to previously approved programmes – detail each module that has been changed, explain the change and why this has enhanced the programme, with reference to the 2009 ESRC Guidance 'Expectations for Core Research Methods Training'. Any changes to research training in the programme and/or the dissertation component should also be detailed.

2. New Masters programmes which have been developed since the 2013 Masters Review, which should be considered as sufficient research training for the 1 of a 1+3 ESRC funded Studentship.

Please give all details of each programme: the name, course structure, compulsory and optional modules and credits. Attaching programme specifications (which contain all this information) to the report will suffice. Explain why this course is deemed eligible, with reference to the 2009 ESRC Guidance 'Expectations for Core Research Methods Training'.

3. If relevant, the Masters programmes that have been previously approved which have now been discontinued/are no longer deemed eligible due to programme changes.

A list of discontinued programmes will suffice.

***As relevant – not all reports will require all three sections**

ANNEX I

Expectations for Core Research Methods Training

Training Outcomes

As a result of their training in research methods, students will be expected to acquire the following skills and to be able to apply them:

- comprehension of basic principles of research design and strategy, including an understanding of how to formulate researchable problems and an appreciation of alternative approaches to research
- competence in understanding and applying a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods and tools including mixed methods approaches
- capabilities for managing research, including managing data, and conducting and disseminating research in a way that is consistent with both professional practice and the normal principles of research ethics
- understanding the significance of alternative epistemological positions that provide the context for theory construction, research design, and the selection of appropriate analytical techniques.

Principles of Research Design

Students must be able to develop and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the connection between research questions or hypotheses and the tools required to address them, as well as to gain practical experience of applying those tools.

Students need to be able to set out and demonstrate their understanding of these issues in the course of their postgraduate research training.

Data Collection and Analysis

Students must acquire a basic understanding of the potential and pitfalls of the range of methods of data

collection used in the social sciences. The ESRC is not prescribing what this should include but expects that students will be exposed to a breadth of approaches, tools and techniques.

Students must also be able to gain direct practical experience of analysing data, using a range of tools, including appropriate computer packages. By the end of their doctoral training, students should be able to demonstrate, through practical application, appropriate uses of primary and secondary sources of statistics, and, more particularly, proficiency in the analysis of research data. As part of this they must be able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis in terms of the effects of contextual factors on the collection and meaning of the evidence.

Students are expected to acquire, during the course of their postgraduate study, more advanced levels of competence in quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis (including data analysis techniques that are appropriate for survey and aggregate data analysis or for specific experimental, quasi-experimental or evaluation methods), depending on the subject area or discipline. Students should also have an understanding and appreciation of how to combine quantitative and qualitative techniques through mixed method approaches.

Use of Research Methods – Exploiting Regional or National Provision

Whilst a rich and varied range of methods may be available to students locally, there may be certain specialist methodological tools and techniques which need to be sourced from elsewhere. The ESRC has played a lead role in the development of quantitative and qualitative methods and in mainstreaming these methods across the social science community. The ESRC funded *National Centre for Research Methods and Researcher Development Initiative* provide high quality, leading edge research methods training that is available across the UK. It is expected that all students should be aware of such provision and supported in their efforts to attend specific training courses.

The Use of Datasets – Exploiting Existing Data Resources

The ESRC invests over £15 million a year in the creation, maintenance and dissemination of datasets. These range from quantitative and qualitative data generated from ESRC funded research projects through to very large and complex cross sectional and longitudinal datasets such as the *Understanding Society Study* and the *2012 Birth Cohort Study*. In addition, the ESRC acquires a wide variety of data from other sources including many important surveys generated by government departments and the Office for National Statistics. All these data make up one of the most comprehensive data infrastructures available to social scientists anywhere across the world. The data are available through the *Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS)* based jointly at the Universities of Essex and Manchester.

The ESRC is keen to ensure that this rich and high quality data infrastructure is fully exploited. It would therefore encourage institutions to ensure that training programmes expose students to the potential of using these data. This could be done in a number of ways. Firstly, by using particular data sources as a means of demonstrating the application of specific research methods. This sort of integration during formal training could constitute part of core training or more advanced training. Secondly, students could be encouraged to exploit the potential of using these data for secondary analysis during their doctoral programme, particularly as an alternative to, or in combination with, primary data collection.

Depositing New Data

Where doctoral research will result in the creation of new datasets, students should be encouraged to offer them for deposit in the ESDS collection.

