

Skills Training Essentials  
for PGR Students

## STEPS

Issue 6 / September 2006

Young researchers shine at the School of  
Medicine Research Showcase

While the sun was shining in July, the spotlight shone on young researchers presenting at the School of Medicine Research Showcase. During this high-profile event, postgraduate research students and new investigators (within 5 years of receiving their PhD) were able to showcase their research in an oral or poster presentation and compete to win £1,000 towards attendance at a scientific conference. Judging panels of senior academics were kept busy, with 60 oral and poster presentations to assess over the course of the day. Speakers were judged on the quality of their research and their ability to communicate and answer questions from the audience and judging panel. Similar criteria were used to judge the posters, with each presenter grilled by a roving judging panel.

At the end of the day, prizes were awarded by President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Gilbert. The prize for best oral presentation by a new investigator was awarded to Dr Angela Simpson from the Academic Division of Medicine and Surgery, for her presentation on how increased exposure to endotoxin, a poison contained in bacteria found in dust, could help reduce sensitivity to allergies and eczema. Best oral presentation by a postgraduate student was won by Dr Will Dixon of the arc Epidemiology Unit. Will described his analysis of the safety of a new generation of biological drugs used to treat rheumatoid arthritis (*pictured above*).

Continued on page 2

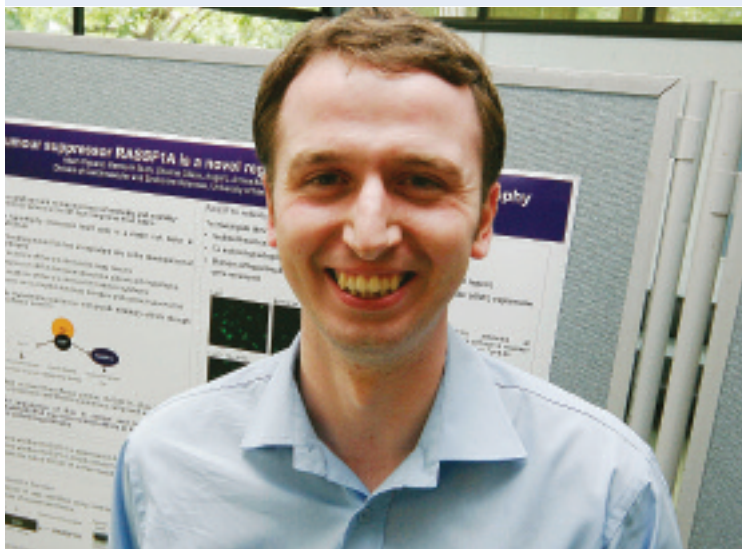
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## Cont...Medicine Research Showcase

### Continued

Dr Paula Sommer of the Division of Cardiovascular and Endocrine Sciences won the prize for best poster by a new investigator. Paula's research is investigating the role of hormone receptors in the survival of one of the most aggressive forms of lung cancer. Adam Pickard of the same Division won best poster by a postgraduate student for his studies into the molecular mechanisms involved in the development of congestive heart failure (pictured below)



The meeting was a great success and attracted an audience of more than 500, including academics, researchers and postgraduate students from across the School of Medicine and The University, and representatives of the School's industrial partners and research funding bodies. Associate Head and Research Director of the School, Professor Phil Baker, said:

"This event is part of a University-wide policy of supporting early-career researchers, as well as publicising their exciting work. We are greatly encouraged by the high level of interest we have received, and very proud of the researchers who have presented their work today."

## Editor's Note

Welcome to both new and returning postgraduate research students to the skills training newsletter STEPS, which is bursting with information on forthcoming activities to put in your diary.

Readers of STEPS can also view the current and past issues by visiting the Graduate Education web page  
[www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/skills/steps](http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/skills/steps)

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this edition of STEPS, in particular to Martin Gisby and Georgina Drury from Life Sciences who organised the Faculty annual away day.



The next edition will be available in November 2006 and I welcome any ideas you may have for future editions.

Best wishes

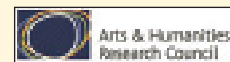
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## Research Council Training Requirements

### Arts and Humanities Research Council

The AHRC highlights within their Guide for Postgraduate Award Holders 2006-2007 that the development of key generic skills should be a compulsory training requirement for all research students. The Council identifies the Joint Statement of Skills Training Requirements for Research students as being a useful tool in helping students and institutions frame their own research training provision.



[www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4\\_98495.pdf](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrb/website/images/4_98495.pdf)

### Biotechnical and Biological Sciences Research Council

BBSRC has endorsed the Joint Statement of Skills Training Requirements prepared by the Research Councils. The BBSRC publishes a handbook on Postgraduate Studentships in which their policy on training schemes is outlined. <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/training/Welcome.html>



### Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

The EPSRC believes that it is important for research students to broaden their personal skills, and it is now a requirement that all EPSRC funded PhD students should attend a UK GRAD Programme Graduate School (or an equivalent) during their second or third years of study.



[www.epsrc.ac.uk/PostgraduateTraining/InformationForStudents/UKGRADProgramme/default.htm](http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/PostgraduateTraining/InformationForStudents/UKGRADProgramme/default.htm)

### Economic and Social Research Council

The ESRC believe that whatever career paths PhD graduates may follow, there are clear advantages to students if they have acquired general research skills and transferable employment-related skills. The ESRC ensures that all the research students they fund receive substantial, formal and broadly based training in research.



[www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/postgraduate/pgtrainingpolicy/index.aspx](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/postgraduate/pgtrainingpolicy/index.aspx)

### Medical Research Council

The MRC expects each student to have a thorough training in generic research skills (e.g. experimental design, data handling, statistics, intellectual property rights, exploitation), and training in transferable skills, (e.g. oral and written communication, IT skills and time management) during their MRC-funded training period, in addition to subject specific training. The Council publishes a Studentships Handbook in which the broad policy is defined.



[www.mrc.ac.uk/heidtbookv3.doc](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/heidtbookv3.doc)

### Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council

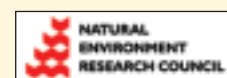
There are simple links from the Postgraduate Studentships web page that highlight the Council's adherence to the Joint Statement and advertising other courses available to graduate students.



[www.pparc.ac.uk/Pg/trnews.asp](http://www.pparc.ac.uk/Pg/trnews.asp)

### Natural Environment Research Council

The Council publishes the Joint Skills Statement as its expectations of training in research and transferable skills for graduate students.



The Handbook appears not to specify more than this at present.

[www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/forms/studentbook2006.doc](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/forms/studentbook2006.doc)

## Context behind the national skills training agenda for postgraduate research students

The development of skills training systems within each of the four faculties has additional importance within the context of emerging government policy. Dating back to at least the Harris Report 1996 the government has been developing policy on how to provide additional support to research students to address two emerging issues in the modern economy, namely;

- Employers require a maintenance of the quality of researchers but an enhancement in the breadth of training
- Employers need to start work with a larger portfolio of learning

In July 2003, the University received notification that the Government had accepted the main recommendations of Sir Gareth Roberts' "SET for Success" review. A primary recommendation of this report was the provision of at least two weeks' dedicated training a year principally in transferable skills for all postgraduate research students. As a result, the Research Councils would be allocated funds to provide additional transferable skills training for postgraduate research students and postdoctoral researchers.

The Joint Skills Statement of the Research Councils' Skills Training Requirements for Research Students outlines the skills a research student should acquire in addition to their main area of research study. These are backed by Government guidelines in response to the Roberts report, newly published QAA guidelines and HEFCE guidance.

To view all the above documents please visit the Research Office PGR Skills Training Webpage at;

[www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/skills](http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/skills)

## Introducing the Faculty of Life Sciences new Statistics Training Course

From October there will be a new FLS Statistics resource available which combines a blended approach to training using on-line resources and face to face training. The course will include training in three main areas: improving the way you handle numbers and units; describing when and how to carry out the most common statistical tests using the computer package SPSS; and showing how you can design better experiments.

There will be some theory but the majority of the time will be spent carrying out hands on work, on the calculator, on a computer statistics package.

The content of the course will cover:

- Manipulating numbers and using SI units.
- Variation: its cause and how to describe it.
- Finding differences: the T-Tests and ANOVA.
- Finding associations: correlation and regression.
- Dealing with categorical data: the Chi-Square tests
- Dealing with non-normally distributed data and non parametric tests.
- Designing experiments: replication, randomisation and blocking.
- Presenting the results of statistical tests.

Further details can be obtained by logging onto eGTP or by emailing:

[egtp@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:egtp@manchester.ac.uk)

## Postgraduate Research Student Conference Travel Funds

The aim of this scheme is to assist postgraduate researchers in attending national or international conferences to present their research. The PGR Conference Travel Funds will assist with the costs of travel and conference registration fees, and are intended to supplement the applicant's own contribution or funds from other sources. Students can apply for funding up to £250.00 for a conference visit in the UK and up to £450.00 for a conference visit outside the UK.

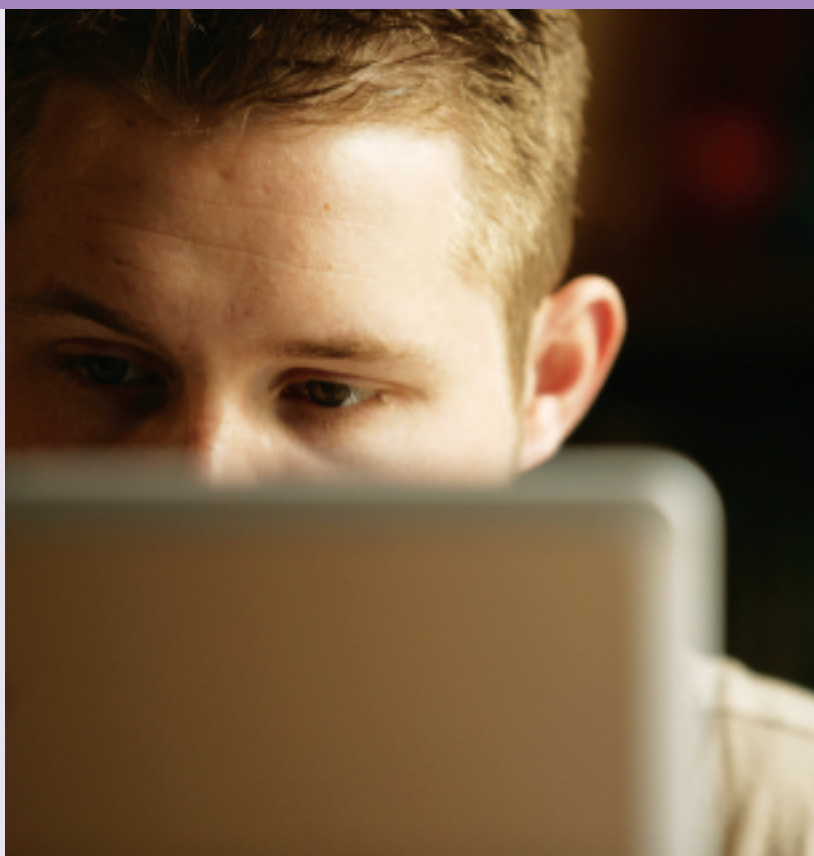
This fund will provide postgraduate research students with the opportunity to;

- refine their research by exposing it to national and international peer review by presenting a paper at a conference
- advance their research activities and also their visibility in the research community
- network and interact with some of the best researchers in their field
- gain essential experience in communicating and presenting their research and ultimately strengthening their communication and networking skills

Funds are open to those students registered for an MPhil, PhD, DBA, MD, EngD or an MA by Research at the University of Manchester (please note that students in their submission pending period are not eligible to apply for funding).

For further detailed information on how to apply for PGR Conference Travel Funds and the application criteria please contact Stephanie Marsh in the Research Office at;

[Stephanie.marsh@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Stephanie.marsh@manchester.ac.uk)





## Faculty of Engineering & Physical Sciences

The new academic year for the EPS Graduate Development Scheme (GraDS) will officially start with the Postgraduate Induction Event, being held on Friday, 22 September 2006 at 2:00pm in the Roscoe Building. There will be welcome talks (including from the EPS Associate Dean of Graduate Education, Professor Andrew Ball), many information tables and food and drink afterwards. This is also where the latest edition of the purple EPS Graduate Resource Book will be distributed to new PhD and MPhil researchers. There will be a chance to book on the Introduction to Research workshop, with the much-acclaimed Speed PhD interactive exercise, which will provide a wealth of information and experience to get started on those new research projects. These workshops will be run 15 times throughout October in order to give all EPS researchers a chance to benefit.

Check out the new schedule of workshops for the entire year on the GraDS website: [www.manchester.ac.uk/eps/grads](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/eps/grads)



### Faculty Training Contact

Dr. Jim Boran is the Graduate Development Manager for the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences. Jim has worked on graduate development issues since 1999 (formerly at UMIST) and works with Claire Gill, Will Myddelton and Jessica Henderson at the Graduate Development Scheme in the EPS Graduate School. Contact them at [eps-grads@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:eps-grads@manchester.ac.uk)

## Faculty of Life Sciences

### eGTP Launch in the Faculty of Life Sciences

Welcome to eGTP the electronic Graduate Training Programme. This innovative new system provides an electronic portal to training resources and opportunities within the faculty of Life Sciences. It is also a research management system that tracks student progression with interactive timelines and time management tools. Log on and explore eGTP by clicking on 'My intranet services' on the Faculty Intranet. eGTP is available to first year postgraduate students joining in September 2006 and FLS staff. A user guide is also available from the graduate office or can be downloaded from your programme intranet storage area on:

[www.intranet.ls.man.ac.uk/graduate/phd](http://www.intranet.ls.man.ac.uk/graduate/phd)

[www.intranet.ls.man.ac.uk/graduate/mres](http://www.intranet.ls.man.ac.uk/graduate/mres)

[www.intranet.ls.man.ac.uk/graduate/msc](http://www.intranet.ls.man.ac.uk/graduate/msc)

All existing 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students within the faculty will eventually be phased onto the eGTP system with further details on this to follow.

### Forthcoming Training Activities

Faculty intro week – induction and health & safety training as well as a range of introductory courses, starting 18th Sept '06

Endnote Training, starting in intro week from 18th Sept '06

Academic Literacy (formally the Critical Writing Skills Course) starting on 21st Sept '06

Faculty Research Symposium – 22nd Sept '06



### Faculty Training Contact

The eGTP Project Officer in Faculty of Life Sciences is Davina Whitnall who has been with University for the last year is a project development role. Davina is responsible for the development and management of the eGTP which is being launched in September for all new FLS students to find out more email Davina on: [Davina.whitnall@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Davina.whitnall@manchester.ac.uk)

## Faculty of Humanities

The Faculty of Humanities Skills Development programme is designed to provide postgraduate research students with opportunities to develop and refine their existing skills, and to acquire new skills while studying at the University of Manchester.

The programme of courses has been created because postgraduate students benefit from help in developing their skills outside their specific subject area. Competency in these transferable skills can be acquired in a variety of ways and the courses are designed to identify some of those methods of skills development.

### Faculty Training Contact

Julie Reeves joined the University in January 2005 as the Faculty of Humanities' Research Training Officer. She completed a PhD at Southampton University in culture and international relations and has worked for the Office for National Statistics on the Census Coverage Survey and the Civic Education Project as a Visiting Faculty Fellow in Belarus. Her role is to organise the PGR training programme in the Faculty, which includes setting up and occasionally running training courses. Currently, she is looking forward to the new academic year and welcoming postgraduate research students at Induction sessions.

To find out more about Humanities training opportunities visit [www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/training/](http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/training/)

## Faculty of Medical & Human Sciences

The Faculty offers both generic and specialised training providing students with the skills, competencies and subject-based training necessary to complete their research. The emphasis is on an organic programme of training that is tailored to the individual needs of students.

For further information on training events visit [www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/pg/research/GTP/calendar](http://www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/pg/research/GTP/calendar)

### Forthcoming Training Activities

Welcome Event	25th Sept 06
Introduction to Research 'Speed PhD'	28th & 29th Sept 06
Introduction to Research 'Speed PhD'	2nd & 3rd Oct 06
Introduction to Research 'Speed PhD'	9th & 10th Oct 06
Academic Writing in English	11th Oct 06
Introduction to Research 'Speed PhD'	16th & 17th Oct 06
Academic Writing in English	18th Oct 06
Introduction to Research 'Speed PhD'	23rd & 24th Oct 06
Academic Writing in English	25th Oct 06
Mini first year workshop	31st Oct 06



### Faculty Training Contact

Judith Williams takes the lead in FMHS in the organisation and delivery of a high-quality graduate training programme. She helps provide a high level of support for postgraduate research students, developing both generic and tailor-made training that meets the diverse needs of research students across the Faculty. Contact the FMHS graduate training team at [mhspg-training@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:mhspg-training@manchester.ac.uk)

## Faculty of Life Sciences PhD Students Embrace the Challenge of Organising the Annual PhD Away Day

**The Faculty of Life Sciences annual PhD Away Day was organised by two current PhD students, Martin Gisby and Georgina Drury who are based in Molecular Plant Sciences and have kindly offered an account of the days proceedings below;**

'The away day took place on August 4th and set out to inspire students to increase personal effectiveness by improving communication, organisation and skills. The afternoon began with our visiting speaker, Piero Vitelli providing an interactive lecture on effective communication skills. Piero works in communication consultancy and frequently works with PhD students on residential courses ran by UK GRAD. Piero's lecture included interactive exercises in which students explored both good and bad communications. Communicating our research to others with passion and clarity can be a daunting challenge to say the least, however, exercises such as 'How to explain your research to someone in the most boring way possible' had us all entertained and the message was firmly embedded that the way in which you communicate your research is important!

Dr Rachel Crossley, the Public engagement officer for the Faculty of Life Sciences here at The University of Manchester presented a session on non-research related scientific careers and talked about her own experiences which led her to her current role in public engagement. Rachel, Martin and Georgina each presented opportunities available to PhD students such as becoming a public engagement volunteer, and getting involved in outside events such as Biotech Yes, Researchers in Residence, and attending a GRADSchool residential course.

We ended the afternoon on a high, as six teams welcomed the challenge of a 2minute presentation in an anything-but-scientific style to communicate to the audience what one team member's research was about. We fell about laughing in the aisles as the arts/sciences divide disappeared and PhDs transcended into amateur dramatics. Thanks to Rachel's generous donation of HMV vouchers and two iPod Nanos, we were able to award the students who most embraced their thespian talents without inhibition. If things don't work out with research careers then there are some students who could undoubtedly pursue a career in the theatre!

## Employers Need Highly Skilled Social Science PhDs

A newly published ESRC report (May '06) sets out the findings of a review it has commissioned that evaluates both the needs of non-academic employers for highly skilled social scientists, and the extent to which social science PhD-holders in such employment are using the skills and knowledge developed during their doctorate,

This report entitled '*The employment of social science PhDs in academic and non-academic jobs: research skills and postgraduate training*' provides clear evidence of demand across a range of employers for the skills and attributed acquired during a social science PhD. It illustrates that PhD holders are highly employable in a number of sectors.

The review, which was conducted by Kate Purcell, Professor of Employment Studies at UWE, and Peter Elias, Professors of Employment Research at the University of Warwick, underlines the crucial importance of equipping UK social scientists with core research and related professional skills from an early stage in their career.

To view the full report, please go to;

[www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/employment\\_of\\_soc\\_sci\\_phds\\_tcm6-15385.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/employment_of_soc_sci_phds_tcm6-15385.pdf)



## UK GRAD Careers Events

[www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Events/Diary\\_of\\_events/pleeXddcp](http://www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Events/Diary_of_events/pleeXddcp)

**Careers in Focus Event, Careers in Academia – Monday 2nd October '06 – Cardiff**

**Careers in Focus Event, Careers in Academia – Monday 13th November '06 - Glasgow**

Participants have the opportunity to;

- Meet with current academics from a range of discipline and hear about their experiences
- Explore how to market yourself for a career in academia, both within your department, and at an interview
- Look at how to write and win grant applications, and put some of the skills you've learnt into practice
- Work with fellow researchers and share experiences with other participants

**Careers in Focus Event, Investment Banking – Tuesday 3rd October '06 – ABN, AMRO, London**

The event will provide you with a real insight into this challenging career through a series of dynamic activities, including;

- Interactive workshops on core investment banking areas such as equities, fixed income and foreign exchange
- Watching the banks in action during a tour of the trading floor
- Networking with representatives from the world's most prestigious investment bank
- Careers fair and CV clinic

**Online Careers Chat**

**Careers in Focus: Investment Banking online chat – Tuesday 17th October '06**

**Careers in Academia online chat – Tuesday 21st November '06**

## Part-time Student Away Day - Faculty of Humanities



Studying for a PhD presents a challenge but when this is combined with work and family commitments, it can be especially difficult. In recognition of this, and also to better identify the needs of its part-time researchers, the Faculty of Humanities held a skills training away day for part-time PGRs on 24th June. The away day took place at Chancellors and on a Saturday to enable part-time PGRs the opportunity to access training.

The day combined focus-group activity with introductory training in IT skills, project and time management. It gave part-time researchers in the Faculty the opportunity to meet, network and to exchange ideas, whilst also providing Faculty with valuable information on the problems part-time PGRs face. Chief among part-time researchers concerns were how to juggle work and research, the lack of interaction with other part-time students and administrative issues, for example, the difficulty of accessing the library outside of usual office hours.

Faculty invited participants to draw up a 'wish-list' of the things that would make part-time study easier. Among the items listed were dedicated training for part-time researchers, blocks of training such as a 'summer school,' more on-line provision and a network. As a direct consequence of the concerns expressed, the Faculty of Humanities will hold a block of three days training on April 19th, 20th and 21st (Thursday, Friday and Saturday). Part-time researchers are invited to register their interest in these training days via the on-line booking system [www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/training](http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/training)

The Faculty is also looking into providing more resources on-line and setting up a specialist web-page for part-time researchers. Comments and suggestions from part-time students are always welcomed at: [humanities-training@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:humanities-training@manchester.ac.uk)

## Erratum: STEPS Issue 5, pg 2

In the June 2006 issue of STEPS the web link noted for the DL Nursing PhD unfortunately lost its hyphen between mphil-phd. The correct link to access further information about the DL Nursing PhD is: [www.nursing.manchester.ac.uk/graduate/mphil-phd](http://www.nursing.manchester.ac.uk/graduate/mphil-phd)

## Feedback

We would welcome all feedback on the content as well as ideas for forthcoming issues of STEPS.

Please email any thoughts and comments you may have to Claire Atherton at [Claire.l.atherton@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Claire.l.atherton@manchester.ac.uk)

## National Skills Training Events

**Doing a PhD in the UK - 7th November 2006**  
Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London WC1  
(near Euston Station, Central London)

This course is intended to provide you with the opportunity to work with others and find out how you can make a success of your time in the UK. During the day's course you will have the opportunity to submit your own questions in confidence for the course tutor to suggest how you find answers.

[www.missendencecentre.co.uk/phd06.htm](http://www.missendencecentre.co.uk/phd06.htm)

### Join the Next Generation of Researchers

BBSRC is holding a special event for its final year PhD students and early career postdoctoral researchers to enable them to discuss different career paths and future funding opportunities, with established researchers and senior BBSRC officials.

This year's programme includes a mix of plenary sessions on early career issues, grant awards, international opportunities, entrepreneurial training and career breaks; as well as two separate discussion groups on postdoctoral and postgraduate career issues.

The event takes place on 20 – 21 November in York. There is no registration fee, and BBSRC will pay for participant's accommodation and meals. Participants are required to pay travel costs. All participants must be BBSRC funded or working on BBSRC grants.

To register an interest, contact: Dr Sharon Hussey at BBSRC [Sharon.hussey@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:Sharon.hussey@bbsrc.ac.uk) and supply your contact details.

[www.bbsrc.ac.uk/news/events/20-21\\_nov\\_nextgen.html](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/news/events/20-21_nov_nextgen.html)

### Public Engagement Training Day for AHRC Postgraduate Award Holders 23 November 2006 – London

This is the first event of its kind for the AHRC and this trial workshop will be aimed at AHRC postgraduate award-holders who are interested in communicating their research to non-specialist audiences outside academia, and will provide practical tips on how to go about it.

The day will cover reason for engaging with the public, how to explain your research in an accessible way, case studies and an opportunity to design a public engagement event. The training day is free and will be held in central London from 9:45am – 5:30pm.

Places for this first event are limited to a maximum of 16 and will be offered on a first-come, first served basis. If you would be interested in attending please contact Claire Varley as soon as possible at [c.varley@ahrc.ac.uk](mailto:c.varley@ahrc.ac.uk)

[www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrb/website/holders/postgraduate.asp](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrb/website/holders/postgraduate.asp)

## UK Grad Schools 2006

[www.grad.ac.uk](http://www.grad.ac.uk)

18 – 21 September	3 days Careers	Newcastle
10 – 14 October	4 days	Brighton
6 – 10 November	4 days day of outdoor activities	Windermere