

Skills Training Essentials
for PGR Students

STEPS

Issue 9 / April 2007

Part-time Research
Student Training Days

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, the Faculty of Humanities Skills Training Team will be offering an array of training sessions specifically for part-time researchers on **19, 20 and 21 April 2007**. Session topics include presentation skills, publishing, project and time management, careers, academic writing surgery, networking and disseminating.

A plenary and reception will take place on Friday, 20 April from 5:30pm exploring issues pertinent to part-time researchers via presentations and discussions. Dr Caroline Gatrell from the University of Lancaster will present on **'Managing your PhD part-time: systems for success.'**

Dr Gatrell was a part-time postgraduate researcher herself and researches and publishes in this area. Her new book *Managing Part-time Study: A guide for undergraduates and postgraduates* is forthcoming with the Open University Press. Dr Gatrell is a lecturer in Management Learning & Leadership at the University of Lancaster and author of 'Mission impossible: doing a part time PhD (or getting 200% out of 20% - is it really worth it?)', in *How I Got My Postgraduate Degree Part Time*, (eds) Greenfield N, Guardian Newspapers/Lancaster University Independent Studies, Lancaster (2000).

Email humanities-training@manchester.ac.uk to register your place or book online www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/acaserv/pgresearch/training/calendar

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Recruiting PhDs: What works?

This report, launched at the annual Neil Stewart Postgraduate Futures Conference on 15th March 2007, examines the recruitment of newly-qualified PhD graduates by non-academic employers and the experience of doctoral graduates as they move into the labour market. By interviewing employers, careers advisers and PhD researchers the report provides a 360 degree view of the PhD recruitment market and highlights some examples of good practice.

In talking to the different groups involved with the study, it was possible to identify three common themes.

1. Demonstrating an understanding of the unique value of PhD graduates

The employers and careers services who have experienced the most success in their activities have done so through demonstrating an understanding of what PhDs can offer, and have targeted their activities and communications to this group. It is apparent that employers and careers services alike have spent considerable time making sure what they do is relevant, and do not assume that PhD researchers fit into the same mould as undergraduates.



2. The need for further engagement and dialogue

The project highlighted a range of ways to bring employers and researchers together to facilitate a better understanding of each other's needs, expectations and potential. Employers and careers services should look for further ways of supporting links between researchers and employers, particularly in the area of networking events, work experience and internships.

3. The importance of communication mechanisms

On a practical level, the ability to make contact with PhD researchers is vital for careers services and employers. The examples from researchers in this study highlighted a preference for email and web-based communication, although the opportunities to talk in depth were also valued.

The project goes on to identify three ideas for further consideration:

- Having a designated contact in each University Careers Service for employers looking to recruit PhD graduates
- Publications and dedicated websites for employers to publicise their PhD job opportunities
- Labour market information and job search skills for PhDs

To read the full report please visit
www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Publications/Publications_intro/plbfaepa

Redefining the doctorate

The position of the doctorate in the UK has become more complicated in the last five years as doctoral education has had to respond to some major changes, including a new emphasis on skills and training, submission rates and quality of supervision, changes in the examination of the PhD thesis, and the introduction of national benchmarking. Concerns have also been voiced about how the UK doctorate is viewed in other countries, and about the ability of UK universities to complete effectively in the global market for high quality research students. This has led to widespread questioning whether the degree remains fit for purpose.

One way in which UK universities have responded to changing market conditions is by developing a range of new doctoral degrees tailored to particular niche markets. These include the "new route PhD", which contains a significant taught element; the "professional doctorate", which is more applied and work-focused than the traditional PhD; and the "practice-based doctorate", which may involve new forms of output as well as the traditional thesis, such as performance pieces or a portfolio of artwork. This approach is proving quite successful but it poses some challenges in terms of ensuring comparability of quality and standards.

Other new developments in the UK have been the introduction of formalised skills development and research training programmes; the development of doctoral programmes; and the advent of Graduate Schools, which have long existed in the US and are now starting to appear across Europe. The supervision of research students is also becoming more formalised, transparent and accountable.

One of the most important areas in which the lack of research is hampering the development of both policy and practice, Professor Park argues, is on the links between research training, skills development, employability and the preparation of doctoral students for career paths. Until recently, relatively little was known about the research student experience, but the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) being developed by the Higher Education Academy for use by institutions will help to inform decision-making designed to improve the quality of the student experience. Further details are available at www.heacademy.ac.uk/3919.htm

Together with the UK GRAD Programme, the Academy will be providing opportunities to contribute to the discussion via a series of national workshops and meetings.

Extract taken from www.heacademy.ac.uk/news/20_5208.htm

Editor's Note

Welcome to the ninth issue of STEPS which is once again bursting with information on forthcoming activities to put in your diary.

Readers of STEPS can also view current and past issues by visiting the Graduate Education web page

www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/skills/steps

The next edition will be available in June 2007 and I welcome any ideas you may have for future editions.



Best wishes

Claire Atherton
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Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences Training Activities

Effective Presentations	2 and 3 May 2007 4 and 5 May 2007 9 and 10 May 2007 11 and 12 May 2007 14 and 15 May 2007
Academic Writing	14 May 2007
Creating Ideas	15 May 2007
Academic Writing	16 May 2007
Academic Paper Publication	17 May 2007
Academic Writing	21 May 2007
For further information on the above please visit www.eps.manchester.ac.uk/graduateschool/graduatedevelopment	

Faculty of Life Sciences Training Activities

PhD Away Day This is student-led initiative which aims to improve communication and organisation skills in a fun, dynamic workshop. Email georgina.drury@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk for further details.	1 June 2007
2nd Year workshop	7 and 8 June 2007
1st Year Workshop	14 and 15 June 2007
Student mentoring scheme This scheme has been set up by the Student Reps in the Faculty of Life Sciences to provide support for PhD students during the early stages of their PhD. Initiatives include, help with housing and language for overseas students. This project is in its infancy and is being driven by the students themselves and is fully supported by the Graduate Training Programme (eGTP). Anyone wishing to get involved in the scheme or interested in finding out more should email egtp@manchester.ac.uk	
For further information on the above please visit www.ls.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduate/gtp	

Faculty of Humanities Training Activities

Part-time Students Training Days	19 - 21 April 2007
Academic Writing for the School of Social Sciences	23 April 2007
Academic Writing for Manchester Business School	30 April 2007
Academic Writing for the School of Environment and Development	30 April 2007
Endnote – Online Training	1 May 2007
Word – Onlint Training	1 May 2007
Presentations: Practice & Feedback	9 May 2007
Academic Writing for the School of Education	14 May 2007
Presentations: Practice & Feedback	16 May 2007
Academic Writing for the School of Languages, Linguistics & Cultures	21 May 2007
For further information on all the above please visit www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/training	

Faculty of Medical & Human Sciences Training Activities

Effective Presentation Skills Course: Day 2	2 May 2007
Effective Presentation Skills Course: Day 2	8 May 2007
Second Year Workshop: How to make your PhD work for you	17 and 18 May 2007
In the home stretch: preparation of a high-quality PhD thesis	22 May 2007
Optimising your Scientific Poster	24 May 2007
For further information on the above please visit www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/pg/research/gtp	

Wiki's in the postgraduate workplace

Wiki is a piece of server software that allows users to freely create and edit Web page content using any Web browser, like a blog or chat room, enables users to communicate and leaves a thread or trail of previous communication.

This functionality is currently being utilised by the Faculty of Life Sciences Student Representatives to communicate important information to the postgraduate student population.

Postings include hints and tips on using applications, useful websites and frequently asked questions which enable students to access a wealth of information and skills training resources which have been peer reviewed and recommended. Currently many of the wikis are area or discipline specific which means that the information posted is most relevant to that area. However, all wikis are accessible to all postgraduate students via their eGTP.

If you would like to find out more about this initiative or would like to set up a wake within your area, please contact: Davina.whitnall@manchester.ac.uk

National Skills Training Events

Careers in Focus events for PhD researchers

Are you a doctoral researcher considering your next step?

As well as providing a programme of GRADschools, a chance to Look in dept at your skills and options, and information on where PhD graduates are employed, UK GRAD also offers a Careers in Focus programme.

UK GRAD's Careers in Focus programme was developed in response to requests from postgraduate researchers. It consists of one-day events that focus on careers for PhD researchers in various sectors.

They aim to combine:

information about careers in specific sectors an chance to explore the skills and competencies required to succeed in roles within that sector opportunities to network employees from that sector, find out what it's really like, and how to make a successful application Careers in Focus events are free to all postgraduate researchers. For more information go to www.grad.ac.uk

Forthcoming Careers in Focus - Academia events 14 May 2007, Bristol 3 September 2007, Glasgow 12 November 2007, Manchester

National GRADschools places available

Bournemouth GRADschool, 21 - 24 May 2007 Nottingham GRADschool, 4 - 7 June 2007

FREE* places are still available on the Bournemouth and Nottingham GRADschools. Book your place now before it's too late!

GRADschools offer 2nd and 3rd year postgraduate researchers the opportunity to take a few days out of research studies to gain new perspectives on PhD and career options. GRADschools provide an opportunity to gain motivation, inspiration and insights into how to enhance working relationships. These GRADschools are 4-day courses offering an excellent programme of personal development and career development. If these dates are not suitable please visit our website for details of other GRADschools.

To secure your place, visit www.grad.ac.uk/pgapply and complete the on-line application form now. Places are limited so please hurry!

*FREE places if you are funded by the UK Research Councils or The Wellcome Trust.

Postgraduate Researchers in Science and Medicine (PRISM) 2007

28 June 2007, University of Chester

This free one day conference for postgraduate researches in science and medicine aims to:

- showcase biomedical science and healthcare research in the North West
- offer networking opportunities
- encourage collaboration across institutions and disciplines
- enable students to present posters or talks on the process of their research work or other aspects of the postgraduate research experiences

For further details and to register online visit the events page at www.postgradtalentnw.co.uk

Biotechnology YES (Young Entrepreneurs Scheme) 2007

The Biotechnology YES (Young Entrepreneurs Scheme) is an innovative competition developed to raise awareness of the commercialisation of bioscience ideas among postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers.

The competition is run over three days. In the morning of the first two days participants, grouped into teams of four to five members, attend presentations from leading figures in the biotechnology industry on all aspects of technology transfer and the commercialisation of bioscience ideas. This knowledge is then utilised by participants to prepare an oral business plan presentation for an 'imaginary' biotech start-up company. The plan is prepared by the team, in the afternoon of the first two days and in the morning of the final day, with each member assuming a different role within the company. On the final afternoon the participants make a formal oral presentation of their business plan before a panel comprised of business, financial and academic representatives taking the role of venture capitalists. Six teams are selected to progress through to the final.

Winners of the competition receive **£1,000**, with other prizes also available.

The closing date for entries to the 2007 competition is **30 June 2007**.

Briefing Session	Nottingham	6 August 2007
Northern Workshop	Edinburgh	26 -28 September 2007
Southern Workshop	Oxford	24 – 26 October 2007
Central Workshop	Nottingham	TBC
Final	London	3 December 2007

To access the application form and view full details please visit;

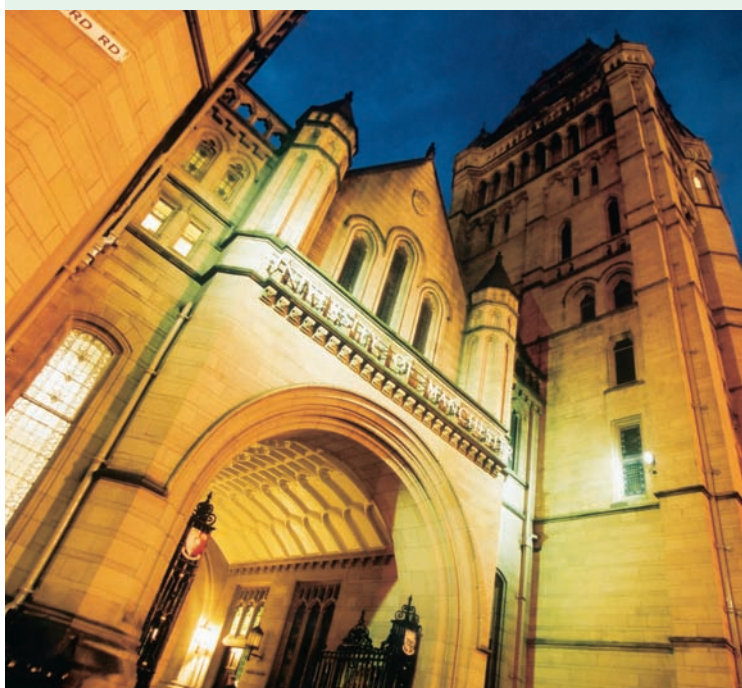
www.biotechnologyyes.co.uk



16th International Postgraduate Linguistics Conference

And international it is!

At this year's conference, we will be pleased to welcome over 40 students coming from Australia, Italy, USA, Spain, Hungary, Germany, France, Poland and various prestigious universities in Britain. The Postgraduate Linguistics Conference (PLC) in Manchester is now one of the biggest events for postgraduate linguists in the UK and has managed, since 1992, to establish a renowned tradition in the field of Linguistics. Financed jointly by SAGE (Skills Awareness for Graduate Education) and the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures, the conference constitutes an excellent opportunity for postgraduates to, firstly, find out more about current research topics and researchers; secondly, to widen their network of fellow linguistics aficionados; and finally for those who present, to obtain essential feedback in a relaxed atmosphere. The conference will be held on 20th April in the Whitworth Building (Council Chamber room and the Knowles Committee room). Lunch will be served in Christie bistro where a wine reception will be offered at the end of the day.



The topics discussed will emanate from a wide range of linguistics sub-disciplines (sociolinguistics, Creole linguistics, syntax, applied linguistics, language acquisition, translation studies, phonology, cognitive linguistics, language attitudes, language contact, language endangerment, language in education etc) and will deal with an eclectic representation of languages: Chinese, Bierebo (Oceanic language), Italian, English, German, Spanish, Polish, Greek, Latin, French and Portuguese. Two plenary talks will be supplied by two internationally distinguished professors: Professor Yaron Matras (University of Manchester) will discuss the language situation of Romani and issues related to its codification or lack of codification. Professor April McMahon (University of Edinburgh) will present a paper entitled "From Shetland to Chicago and Dublin to Devon: phonetic comparison of accents of English". The conference is a worldwide event organised for postgraduates by postgraduates. On this year's organising committee are: Andrea Donakey (MA in linguistics), Christiana Themistocleous (PhD in Linguistics), Esther Nuñez (MA in Linguistics) Filippo Nereo (PhD in Linguistics) and Aurélie Joubert (PhD in Linguistics).

For more information, please contact us at:

email plc@manchester.ac.uk

www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/Research/Conferences/plc

UK GRAD – PGR Tips 'The seven secrets of highly successful PhD students'*

Researchers who know and make use of these seven secrets get through their doctorate more quickly, and just as importantly are happier, according to the Staff Development and Training Unit, Flinders University Australia.

1. Care and maintenance of your supervisor

- Meet regularly with your supervisor
- Discuss and negotiate your progress regularly
- Understand your different styles
- If it is not working out, do something about it. Don't just think it will get better or that you can do it on your own.

2. Write and show as you go: This is show and tell, not hide and seek

- Writing and showing your work focuses you to stay on track and refine your thinking
- Set deadlines for your writing and handing in
- Generally it is a good idea to write journal articles (on your exact thesis topic) as you go
- Practice writing with your peers, this can be very effective

3. Be realistic: It's not a Nobel Prize

- When you are doing a PhD you are learning how to do a PhD, you are not expected to know this in advance
- Original work does not mean a cure for cancer. In reality it means one small step in advancing existing knowledge
- Do not go off in tangents in the hope of answering 'The question', stay focused

4. Say no to distractions: Even the fun ones you think you must do

- Set priorities and be realistic about what you can do
- Do the important rather than the immediately urgent
- The golden rule to avoid over-commitment is don't let anything eat into your set study times, or as you would with a job, make the time up if interruption is unavoidable

5. It's a job: That means working nine to five but you get holidays

- You may not work from nine to five, but you definitely need fixed hours
- Set up a proper workplace
- Like a job, if you take time off, make it up somewhere else

6. Get help: You are not an owner-operator single person business

- This means you are allowed to get help
- Use any and all formal assistance in the University including tutors and graduate schools, skills development and faculty staff

7. You can do it: A PhD is about intelligence and persistence

- Persistence is at least as important ingredient; this comes from habits like meeting regularly with your supervisors, treating a PhD like a job
- So in fact the final habit of a highly effective PhD researcher is to know and believe that you can do it, and when the going gets tough, keep going!

* Extracts from 'The seven secrets of highly successful PhD students' by Hugh Kearns & Maria Gardiner, SDTU, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.

Researchers in Residence

what
mpst

how
pom

why
mpa

What is 'Researchers in Residence'?

Researchers in Residence facilitates a mutually beneficial relationship between researchers and secondary school students by placing researchers (PhD and post doctoral) in secondary schools across the UK.

We achieve this through the placement of researchers in schools throughout the UK with funding from the Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust. The scheme is delivered by a consortium of regional partners, led by the University of Edinburgh.

The forming of connections between researchers and school students benefits everyone:

- The school students are given the opportunity to engage with contemporary research and researchers. This can raise motivation, aspirations and stimulate interest in current research.
- The researchers have the opportunity to develop valuable skills like communication and team working.

To find out more about Researchers in Residence please visit www.researchersinresidence.ac.uk/rir

GRADBritain Launched

GRADBritain is a magazine written by and for postgraduate researchers in the United Kingdom. It is published once per academic term (three times per year) and contains articles written by PGRs of all ages and backgrounds from a variety of disciplines in the sciences, arts and humanities.

GRADBritain provides a platform for PGRs throughout the country to share experiences, advice, and ask questions in order to improve the experience of their PhD. On occasion, it may even make you laugh.

Here's a taste of what's in store in the first issue;

- Top ten ways to avoid writing up
- Beijing-bound for a conference
- Presentation tips
- Stuff wot' undergrads say
- Dr Flo solves isolation woe
- The art of time domination

To access ISSUE 1: Spring 2007 please visit;

www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Publications/GRADBritain/pleLagilj



The British Association for the Advancement of Science Events

Science Communication Conference 14 - 15 May 2007, Savoy Place London

The conference seeks to address the key issues facing science communicators in the UK.

In 2007, it will take place over 2 days with the second day focusing on climate change and the first on more generic and varied aspects of public engagement. Each day the conference will run sessions in three strands - engaging to inspire & educate, engaging to involve and engaging through the media & PR.

Perspectives Poster Competition 16 May 2007 - closing date

Postgraduate and postdoctoral scientists, engineers and social scientists funded by one of the UK research councils are encouraged to explore the social and ethical implications of their research by entering perspectives - a poster session with a difference.

In 2007 Research Councils UK are providing funds for the scheme, and up to 36 scientists will be selected to design and exhibit a poster at the 2007 BA Festival of Science held at the University of York.

Visit www.the-ba.net for further information on the above

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Feedback

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

The next issue of STEPS will be distributed in June 2007.

Please email any thoughts and comments you may have to Claire Atherton at Claire.l.atherton@manchester.ac.uk