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## Faculty of Humanities Launch New *Public Engagement/ Working with Others* Scheme



The new Public Engagement/Working with Others scheme brings together existing University programmes including Widening Participation, Researchers in Residence and Courses for the Public to create a package of opportunities for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) to disseminate their work to adults and/or school children. In addition to existing programmes, the Faculty is organising a Showcase with Research Staff for PGRs to promote their research to the public and local organisations. The scheme provides PGRs with preparatory training, programme specific training and support, post-event evaluation and encourages reflective learning.

The scheme was launched on 28th February with a training day that combined internal expertise with external trainers. In the morning, Ann Barlow (Director of Courses for the Public), Tricia Wood (freelance educational developer) and the participants considered what made a successful learning experience, and how people learn and see things differently.

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## Public Engagement/Working with Others Scheme

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In the afternoon, Kathryn Eade from Thinking People (pictured with participants) focused on working with different kinds of audience. Participants reflected on their own diversity, the diversity audiences bring with them and the kinds of barriers to learning that people may experience. The group discussed how academics themselves might be perceived (not a single 'egg-head' in sight) and set up Action Learning Sets to support each other.



On defining the main reason behind the development of the scheme Dr Julie Reeves notes;

'By the middle stage of my PhD, I was so excited with my research that I wanted to tell the whole world about it! Although I had plenty to say, I only had the occasional academic audience to practice on; whereas I wanted to reach 'hearts and minds' beyond the institution. Providing Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) in the Faculty of Humanities with the opportunity to share their work with the wider public is the main reason behind our new Public Engagement/Working with Others scheme.'

Over the next few months, be sure to look out for an enthusiastic group of PGRs breaking down barriers and taking their research out to the wider community in exciting and inspiring ways.

Places are still available on the PGR Showcase so please contact [Humanities-training@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Humanities-training@manchester.ac.uk)

Dr Julie Reeves  
Research Training Manager

## Editor's Note

Welcome to the first issue of STEPS for 2008, which is packed full of information on forthcoming skills training activities for postgraduate researchers.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this edition of STEPS, in particular to Julie Reeves from the Faculty of Humanities, Sam Bradburn from the John Rylands Library and William Pinnington and Darren Lunn from the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences.

The next issue of STEPS will be available in May 2008 at

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

Best wishes  
Claire Atherton  
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## Skills Training at John Rylands University Library

The John Rylands University Library is currently engaged in a Roberts-funded initiative, developing a skills training programme for post-graduate researchers and post-doctoral researchers at The University of Manchester.

The Library recognises it has a part to play in the enhancement of researchers' generic skills, in particular toward part C, Research Management of the Joint Skills Statement. The Library currently offers face-to-face training courses in the use of Endnote, the bibliographic management software. We are hoping to extend our profile and offer new courses in areas such as 'Government and Official Papers', 'Newspapers' and 'Special Collections' and there are further areas that we could expand into.



In order to provide these services efficiently we are working towards creating web pages dedicated to this target audience. These pages will underpin the training sessions by providing supporting documentation and will signpost useful sources of information. A further improvement will be an online calendar and booking system.

This will be a welcome addition to the range of skills training that University of has to offer to its researchers. It is important to emphasise how important it will be for supervisors to direct researchers to the Library once the programme is in place. The system should go live late this summer.

For further information please contact Sam Bradburn at [sam.bradburn@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:sam.bradburn@manchester.ac.uk)





## What is it really like to do a PhD?

New postgraduate research students, taking part in the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences 'Speed PhD' workshop, were given the chance to get the inside story on undertaking a research degree at Manchester.

William Pinnington and Darren Lunn, third year postgraduate researchers in the School of Computer Science, shared their personal experiences of working towards a PhD and provided some valuable advice about what to do (and what not do!) at each stage of the research programme.

They pointed out that an individual's background would greatly influence and direct the first year's journey. Factors such as having completed a degree at Manchester, a UK university, or an international institution, whether your first language was English, time and experience in industry and familiarity with your chosen subject would all help in determining your progress in the first year.

With this in mind, William and Darren talked about their own experiences of becoming part of a research community, presenting their research and practicing their academic writing at every opportunity, taking advantage of MSc courses, research and skills training opportunities, becoming student mentors, developing a journal review group and sitting on School and Faculty committees. Together their stories demonstrated how to get the best from yourself and your research during your time at Manchester.

Upon reflection of their experiences to date, William and Darren offered the following top tips for successfully working towards your thesis:

- Become part of a community such as a professional body, special interest group or discussion group in your research field. Community links can provide access to useful resources, help develop networks and raise the profile of your own research in a wider context.
- Practice your academic writing style at every opportunity. Attend School and Faculty workshops to revisit the basics of English style and progress to regular peer reviews then most importantly apply what you have learnt on a daily basis.
- Conduct an exhaustive but efficient literature review. Keep ordered and electronic records; these will become invaluable.
- Consider using the LaTeX and BibTeX scientific typesetting and bibliographic systems when producing your documentation. Get started in your first year and reap the benefits in your third when you come to write up your thesis.
- Learn to take constructive criticism about your research. Don't take feedback personally. Take any comments on board and work towards improving your papers and presentations. Your academic supervisors and peers are here to help you produce the very best research you are capable of.
- Set yourself targets. Postgraduate research is a self-directed activity. It is all too easy to let time slide by and get side tracked. Identify what time management techniques work best for you, and set realistic, time-bound goals. Remember that at a given point you will have to stop your research (and that of your Supervisor's) and submit a thesis!

Finally, William and Darren provided some sensible advice for avoiding some common pitfalls:

- Creating work for yourself. At each stage of your progress think about how you can best utilise your time and resources to help move through the next stage.
- Taking on too many optional activities. For example getting involved in your research community is a valuable exercise, but get the balance right between contributing and letting the peripheral opportunities impact on your research progression.
- Suffering in silence! While your experience as a researcher will be unique to you, there are many instances in which others face the same problems you are encountering. Take advantage of available support systems – Supervisors, Advisors, PG Administrators, mentors, peers, skills trainers, counsellors and many others are here to assist you for the duration of your research programme.



## Faculty of Engineering & Physical Sciences – Training Activities

Developing the Postgraduate Manager	1 – 3 April 2008 17 – 19 June 2008
Networking	24 April 2008
Introduction to Research 'Speed PhD'	28 April 2008
Effective Presentations	6 & 8 May 2008 8 & 13 May 2008 13 & 15 May 2008
Creating Ideas	6 May 2008
Academic Writing	12 May 2008 14 May 2008 19 May 2008
Publishing Academic Papers	27 May 2008
Final Year Plan	28 May 2008
Teaching in HE	29 May 2008
Starting a Business	29 May 2008
Pathways 'Career options for PhDs & early career researchers'	13 & 16 June 2008

### Live Online Writing Clinic

Did you know that from Feb to May 2008 you can participate in an Online Writing Clinic and get your questions about academic writing and using the WebCT Online Academic Writing Programme answered in a live chat? For more information, visit:

[www.graduateducation.eps.manchester.ac.uk/graddev/news/index.html#writeclinico8](http://www.graduateducation.eps.manchester.ac.uk/graddev/news/index.html#writeclinico8)

For more information about the Graduate Development Scheme, please visit: [www.manchester.ac.uk/eps/grads](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/eps/grads)

## Faculty of Life Sciences – Training Activities

### On-line Supported Bioinformatics Pilot

A supported eLearning bioinformatics course is currently being piloted to Faculty of Life Sciences postgraduate research students.

The programme will provide a working knowledge of bioinformatics and is supported with virtual surgeries and one-to-one feedback.

This is a 12 week interactive course will enable participants to develop their generic skills in computing, mathematics and statistics whilst addressing problems and issues related to their research field. These skills will improve the opportunities for discipline-hopping between research fields. The course will guide persons through the maze of bioinformatics tools and underlying methods in order for researchers to be able to do basic analysis of their sequence data.

If you would like further information about the pilot, please contact: [davina.whitnall@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:davina.whitnall@manchester.ac.uk)

## Faculty of Humanities – Training Activities

Publishing in journals	27 March 2008
Presentations, Practice and Feedback - Year 1	31 March 2008
Effective Presentations	8 April 2008
What makes a great PhD?	9 April 2008
Enhanced Memory	14 April 2008
Improve your Presentation Skills	14 April 2008
Networking	15 April 2008
Speed Reading	16 April 2008
Presentations, Practice and Feedback - Year 1	21 April 2008
Presentations, Practice and Feedback –Yrs 2&3	22 April 2008
How to do a poster	29 April 2008
For further information on the Humanities training programme or to book onto a training course, please visit <a href="http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/acaserv/pgresearch/training">www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/acaserv/pgresearch/training</a>	

## Faculty of Medical & Human Sciences – Training Activities

Effective Academic Writing: getting the message across	13 March 2008
Effective Presentation Skills Course: Day 1	7 April 2008
Effective Presentation Skills Course: Day 2	13 April 2008
Introduction to Research 'Speed PhD'	28 / 29 April 2008
Optimising your Scientific Poster	1 May 2008
Effective Academic Writing: getting the message across	8 May 2008
In the home stretch: preparation of a high-quality PhD thesis	20 May 2008
Effective Academic Writing: getting the message across	3 June 2008
First Year Workshop	10 June 2008
For more information on the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences Graduate Training Programme visit: <a href="http://www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/pg/research/GTP">www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/pg/research/GTP</a>	

## Crossing the boundaries where Art meets Science – Science meets Art

**The Graduate Education Team, in collaboration with Jodrell bank, has planned three FREE Roberts' funded seminars for postgraduate research students which will focus on: Crossing the boundaries where Art meets Science -Science meets Art.**

These seminars will be available in the Summer and Autumn of 2008. Speakers will be drawn from many Schools and will include the Museum and Whitworth Art gallery.

Some themes to be covered will be: Science in Art/ Art in Science; Creativity; The Artist & Scientist in Society; Technology and Creativity; Examples of Literal & Actual Collaborations; Problem Solvers & Mythmakers:

In addition to the presentations there will be a collaborative art project in which participants in groups will use GPS handsets to create 'drawings from space' by walking chosen paths in the grounds of the Jodrell Bank Arboretum. The drawings can be the work of a few minutes, or can be built up collaboratively over time, allowing students to explore the experience of long-term collaborations, if they wish. See [www.gpsdrawing.com](http://www.gpsdrawing.com)

During the day there will be a chance to explore Jodrell Bank, the visitors' exhibits and the arboretum. Jodrell Bank is one of the University's most exciting assets: [www.jodrellbank.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.jodrellbank.manchester.ac.uk/)

Following this series we hope to produce a publication, develop a network of junior and senior researchers interested in the cross over between arts and sciences, future training opportunities and eventually a web-site showing current and future projects and funding opportunities.

Further details will soon be made available at [www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/events](http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/researchoffice/graduate/events)



## Research to Enterprise Summit

**Research to Enterprise Summit**  
**17 June 2008 - 6pm**  
**Whitworth Hall, The University of Manchester**

Research to Enterprise is an exciting event, organised by MSEC (Manchester Science Enterprise Centre) and funded by EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council), designed to raise the profile of enterprise at The University of Manchester.

Hosted by The University of Manchester graduate Maggie Philbin, an impressive line up of enterprising speakers has been assembled who will share their interesting stories with the audience.

Research to Enterprise will be an opportunity for researchers in all faculties, whether at postgraduate, postdoctoral or staff level to be inspired to become more enterprising in whatever their career holds for them in the future be it academia, industry or in starting their own business.

The event also serves as the launch of a series of workshops enabling researchers to spot opportunities from their own work, and of an online resource providing information, links and interactive material for those wanting to get involved.

For more information; email Dr Robert A. Phillips  
 (Robert.Phillips@manchester.ac.uk)

To book; email Claire Gill (Claire.Gill@manchester.ac.uk)

## Careers in Focus: Academia

Are you considering your career options? Are you thinking about where you'd like to be...next year...in five years time? Do you want to continue working in an academic environment?

Around half all postgraduate researchers take up jobs within the education sector immediately on graduation. But not all of those are in research positions.

Following the success of previous Careers in Academia events, UK GRAD are running a further two one-day events in 2008, to explore what a career in the academic environment is really like.

Like most careers, there are many elements that make up a career in academia, and you need specific skills to succeed in what can be a very competitive environment. Here's your chance to find out what really is involved, what skills and strengths it will take to succeed, and to decide if this is the career for you.

These one-day events give participants an insight into some of the areas that make up a career in academia.

### Events dates & locations

Monday 28 April 2008, Bristol  
 Monday 6 October 2008, Manchester

For further information on how to book a place at the above events visit [www.grad.ac.uk](http://www.grad.ac.uk)

## UK GRAD – PGR Tips

Looking for hints and tips to help you with writing up?

You can't start the process of writing up too early. If you've structured your work towards this ultimate goal from day one, it is a much less daunting task. Have a look at the checklist below to see how you're doing. If you can tick more than half you're well on your way. If you haven't started yet why not start today!

### Getting started

- Break your research down into manageable chunks and make a plan of all the sections and chapters in the thesis. Break these into sections and keep breaking it down until you are almost at the paragraph level
- Have you checked your plan with your supervisor? They will be your best source of support
- You could structure your paper and computer filing systems in the same way as your thesis by creating folders for each chapter
- Have you checked your institution's requirements for length and style etc?
- Remember to back up your work regularly!

### If you want some ideas on thesis style and structure why not:

- Visit your university library to find other theses in your subject area
- Visit the Electronic Theses Online Service (ETHOS) project website at [www.ethos.ac.uk](http://www.ethos.ac.uk) to search for and access online theses
- Ask your supervisor and other academics what they look for when they are examining PhD theses
- Ask your colleagues, especially those who have recently completed a doctorate, to review your thesis or a chapter for content, and ask other friends to proof-read
- Have a look at the writing up section in 'The Unwritten Rules of PhD Research' by Gordon Rugg and Marian Petre (ISBN 0-335-21344-8)

### When reviewing your drafts ask yourself the following:

- Does the content match the title?
- Are important points emphasised enough?
- Is the content within each section appropriate?
- Is there a logical sequence?
- Are information sources acknowledged?
- Do the conclusions relate to the objectives?
- Is the meaning of each sentence clear - or open to interpretation?
- Can long sentences be broken down?

For more tips on writing up visit [www.grad.ac.uk/writingup](http://www.grad.ac.uk/writingup)



## GRADBritain Issue 4: Spring 2008 Now Available

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;

- Researchers in Residence
- Dr Flo (regular)
- Geoffrey Thickett (regular)
- On the benefits of blogging
- Why not work for: A Start Up?
- Doing a PhD long distance

To access ISSUE 4: Spring 2008 please visit;

[www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Publications/GRADBritain/plLagilj](http://www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Publications/GRADBritain/plLagilj)

## Faculty Training Contacts

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences	<b>Dr Jim Boran</b> – Graduate Development Manager <a href="mailto:jim.Boran@manchester.ac.uk">jim.Boran@manchester.ac.uk</a>
Faculty of Humanities	<b>Dr Julie Reeves</b> – Research Training Manager <a href="mailto:julie.reeves@manchester.ac.uk">julie.reeves@manchester.ac.uk</a>
Faculty of Life Sciences	<b>Davina Whitnall</b> – eGTP Officer <a href="mailto:davina.whitnall@manchester.ac.uk">davina.whitnall@manchester.ac.uk</a>
Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences	<b>Dr Rachel Cowen</b> – Researcher Training Facilitator <a href="mailto:rachel.l.cowen@manchester.ac.uk">rachel.l.cowen@manchester.ac.uk</a>

## 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 May 2008

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)



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