

Joint Statement Of The Research Councils Skills Training Requirements For Research Students

Research students are provided with a range of courses within their research training programme designed to help in the following three ways:

1. The first, considering you in your role as a student studying for a demanding higher degree, will provide you with a range of generic, advanced study skills.
2. The second, recognising that when you graduate you will have re-positioned yourself in terms of available life and/or career choices, will equip you with some of the generic skills you will need in your future life.
3. The third considers your new role as a prospective researcher and provides training in generic research methods and discipline specific skills needed for research in your chosen topic.

Several national bodies have considered the best ways of helping students to develop in these new roles as an advanced student, future research graduate and future independent researcher.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has recently published its Code of Practice for postgraduate research students and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has laid down specific requirements for Universities that provide research training programmes.

For generic skills training in particular, the Research Councils play an important role in setting standards and identifying best practice in research training requirements.

They have produced a Joint Skills Statement which outlines training to be undertaken in the following seven areas:

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| (A) Research Skills and Techniques | (E) Communication Skills |
| (B) Research Environment | (F) Networking and Teamworking |
| (C) Research Management | (G) Career Management |
| (D) Personal Effectiveness | |

The expectations within these seven areas are as follows.

(A) Research Skills and Techniques - to be able to demonstrate:

1. the ability to recognise and validate problems
2. original, independent and critical thinking, and the ability to develop theoretical concepts
3. a knowledge of recent advances within one's field and in related areas
4. an understanding of relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application within one's research field
5. the ability to critically analyse and evaluate one's findings and those of others
6. an ability to summarise, document, report and reflect on progress

(B) Research Environment - to be able to:

1. show a broad understanding of the context in which research takes place
2. demonstrate awareness of issues relating to the rights of other researchers, of research subjects, and of others who may be affected by the research, e.g. confidentiality, ethical issues, attribution, copyright, malpractice, ownership of data and the requirements of the Data Protection Act
3. demonstrate appreciation of standards of good research practice in their institution and/or discipline
4. understand relevant health and safety issues and demonstrate responsible working practices
5. justify one's own research and contribute to promoting the public understanding of one's research field
6. understand the process of academic or commercial exploitation of research results

(C) Research Management - to be able to:

1. apply effective project management through the setting of research goals, intermediate milestones and prioritisation of activities
2. design and execute systems for the acquisition and collation of information through the effective use of appropriate resources and equipment
3. identify and access appropriate bibliographical resources, archives, and other sources of relevant information
4. use information technology appropriately for database management, recording and presenting information

(D) Personal Effectiveness - to be able to:

1. demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn and acquire knowledge
2. be creative, innovative and original in one's approach to research
3. demonstrate flexibility and open-mindedness
4. demonstrate self-awareness and the ability to identify own training needs
5. demonstrate self-discipline, motivation, and thoroughness
6. recognise boundaries and draw upon/use sources of support as appropriate
7. show initiative, work independently and be self-reliant

(E) Communication Skills - to be able to:

1. write clearly and in a style appropriate to purpose, e.g. progress reports, published documents, thesis
2. construct coherent arguments and articulate ideas clearly to a range of audiences, formally and informally through a variety of techniques
3. constructively defend research outcomes at seminars and viva examination
4. effectively support the learning of others when involved in teaching, mentoring or demonstrating activities

(F) Networking and Teamworking - to be able to:

1. develop and maintain co-operative networks and working relationships with supervisors, colleagues and peers, within the institution and the wider research community
2. understand one's behaviours and impact on others when working in and contributing to the success of formal and informal teams
3. listen, give and receive feedback and respond perceptively to others

(G) Career Management - to be able to:

1. appreciate the need for and show commitment to continued professional development
2. take ownership for and manage one's career progression, set realistic and achievable career goals, and identify and develop ways to improve employability
3. demonstrate an insight into the transferable nature of research skills to other work environments and the range of career opportunities within and outside academia
4. present one's skills, personal attributes and experiences through effective CVs, applications and interviews

