

Graduate School

Research In Contemporary Context

Module Booklet – Oct 2017 starters

USSJLK-30-M

*30 credits*

Module Leader: Neil Willey

**Introduction**

In the UK, until relatively recently research degrees consisted solely of a piece of research. This contrasted with research degree provision in many other parts of the world. It also meant that the transition to research degrees from undergraduate was so abrupt that, even though a Masters was seldom a prerequisite, in many disciplines recruitment occurred almost entirely from those holding Masters degrees. Towards the end of the 20th C UK research degrees had low completion rates and numerous studies showed that in the years after graduation postgraduate researchers were unsure what they had gained from their research degree. It was concluded that personal, professional and career development for postgraduate researchers should be taken much more seriously. The Robert’s review of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematical subjects (2004) included a chapter on postgraduate degrees that focussed on PhDs, and essentially concluded that they did not provide the skills employers expected. The [Robert’s review](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/set_for_success.htm) proved very influential, so its focus on STEM and employers’ demands is significant. There are still occasional rumblings, that can be traced to the Roberts review, that the UK research degree does not equip graduates very well for work other than research.

Postgraduate researchers develop advanced skills. We believe that postgraduate researchers might want to develop these skills for either personal or professional reasons and that we should be supporting them in doing so. We think the evidence shows that advanced research skills are learned primarily through practice – there’s no substitute for research experience – but that both an understanding of intellectual foundations and of the development of complementary skills helps the process enormously. We believe that UWE should provide the opportunity for postgraduate researchers to engage with activities that might help their personal, professional and career aspirations because it will increase their chances of enjoying their degree, and therefore completing it and getting what they want out of it.

The [QAA ‘Doctoral Characteristics’](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Doctoral_characteristics.aspx) (Sept 2011) is clear that Graduate Schools should play a key role in the delivery of personal and professional skills development for research degrees. Such skills are now an essential component of UK research degrees, with particular emphasis on professional development. The [QAA Quality Code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-B11.aspx)’s chapter on research degrees includes key indicator 14 to ensure that institutions provide and monitor the provision of personal and professional skills for postgraduate researchers. Vitae (<http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>) was supported over a number of years by the UK Research Councils and others to enable ‘personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers‘. They have proposed a widely used Researcher Development Framework (RDF). This UWE Graduate School module, ‘Research in Contemporary Context’, uses Vitae’s RDF to focus the provision of personal, professional and career development for research degree students. In a recent review of postgraduate education in the UK, the [Smith Review](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http:/www.bis.gov.uk/postgraduate-review), there were clear recommendations that Universities should work to QAA guidelines on skills development and within the Vitae framework.

**Aim of the Module**

On the RD1 form that postgraduate researchers use to register their projects, there is a needs analysis for skills development. The ‘Research In Contemporary Context’ module (30 M credits) is intended to complement other module(s) that postgraduate researchers and supervisors may choose/advise for skills development. Our intention is to use this module to help make skills development at UWE enjoyable, useful and flexible in meeting needs. The aim of the module is to embed personal, professional and career development in each postgraduate researcher's individual research degree to help them make the success of it that they want.

**Module Content**

Learning on the module will be enabled by workshops in two complementary strands – workshops for ‘Professional Researcher’ and for ‘Researcher Skills Development’ (see below). A series of 6 Professional Researcher workshops will be run (topics below). The Graduate School already runs a significant number of Researcher Skills Development workshops and, from those attended, students will be expected to choose 6 to focus their learning on this module.

Workshops will generally be 3 h in duration giving 36 h contact time across 12 workshops. Each workshop will provide a free-standing opportunity to support learning. Postgraduate researchers need to complete their credit requirements before graduating so it is proposed that they attend the workshops and complete this module in any year of study as and when it complements their research. It will be expected that they will ordinarily register on this module in the first year of study for FT or first 2 years of study for PT, although the module might not be completed until later on. Professional Researcher workshops will run about 1 every two months. Researcher Skills development workshops run regularly through the year. All Professional Researcher and many Researcher Skills Development workshops will be webcast via Panopto – which requires an internet connection to view, that is all.

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| ***Professional Researcher***  *(workshops)* | ***Researcher Skills Development***  ***(****example workshops****)*** |
| 1. What’s a Doctorate? 2. Epistemology & Research I 3. Epistemology & Research II 4. Governance & Impact 5. Public Engagement & Research 6. Transdisciplinarity in Research | 1. Art & Sci of Communication 2. Digital Media 3. Academic Publishing 4. Project Management 5. How to Win Funds 6. Social Enterprise |

**Registration and Timetable**

The module run for 2017 will start in October via registration through the GS office. Students can register on this module in any year of their doctorate and if they register early will have a module run of up to 3 years.

For 2017-2018, the details of all the Researcher Skills Development workshops are available on the Graduate School [Skills Development](http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/postgraduateresearchstudy/skillsdevelopment.aspx) webpages. All the University’s research workshops are also available to you and details are available via the UWE Events listing under ‘[research](http://info.uwe.ac.uk/events/eventlisting.aspx?categoryID=43)’, these include the workshops aimed at research degree candidates plus many aimed at researchers at UWE – as a research degree candidate you can attend any of them and use any of them to contribute to this module. These workshop programmes and the ones listed below run, in a fairly similar form, every year so you can access them at a time appropriate for your studies.

For the Professional Researcher workshops the dates are as follows:

Weds 1st Nov 2017 - What’s a Doctorate? 2S604

Weds 6th Dec 2017 – Epistemology I. 2S604

Weds 24th Jan 2018 – Epistemology II. 2S604

Weds 14th March 2018 – Res Governance and Impact. 2S604

Weds 18th April 2018 – Public Engagement & Research. 2S604

Weds 16th May 2018 – Transdisciplinarity in Research. 2S604

All Professional Researcher Workshops will be from 9:30-12:30 GMT/BST in 2S604 and will be webcast, and be recorded for later viewing, via [Panopto](https://uwe.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Home.aspx).

**Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

* Demonstrate an understanding of the intellectual foundations of research in a contemporary context including the creative and cognitive abilities necessary to carry it out
* Understand the responsibilities of research governance necessary to lead research in a contemporary context including professional conduct and research management
* Evidence personal exposure to a variety of epistemologies and research paradigms
* Actively promote research findings including communication to a variety of audiences, including engagement with other researchers and stakeholders
* Understand and develop the personal qualities necessary for carrying out high quality contemporary research including personal effectiveness and career development
* Evidence personal experience of demonstrating the importance of the research endeavour in a contemporary context

**Learning Strategies**

It is proposed that this will be a ‘Research-Based Learning’ module that will utilise the pedagogy of Work-Based Learning but in the context of research. This approach will embed the development of skills for postgraduate researchers into their research context. This learning strategy has been chosen for two reasons. First, to help break down the gap that postgraduate researchers and supervisors sometimes perceive between their skills development and their research, by explicitly embedding the former in the later. Second, much ‘skills’ development for postgraduate researchers at UWE, and often elsewhere, has focused on methodological or discipline-specific training. This only addresses part of the Researcher Development Framework and embedding other aspects of Professional and Personal Skills in research will emphasise their importance. The workshops will be run by a module team drawn from across Faculties and disciplines, with each workshop leader drawing on their specific expertise.

Postgraduate researchers from all Faculties will participate in workshops providing a significant cohort with different experiences to draw on - so a key learning strategy will be to enable PGRs to learn from each other about key aspects of contemporary research. PGRs' primary learning will be from evidencing and reflecting on aspects of contemporary research in action in their own research. They will keep a reflective portfolio of evidence of topics covered in the workshops in action in their own research or research discipline. The structure of the portfolio will be derived from the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. PGRs will also prepare a case study on one aspect of the RDF in action in the research. It is expected that for each hour spent in workshops students will spend 2h of research-based learning evidencing and reflecting for their portfolio and case study.

**Learning Support Materials**

### Hinchcliffe R, Bromley AP, Hutchinson SJ (2007) *Skills Training in Research Degree Programmes*. Open University Press.

Boud D, Lee A (2009) *(Eds) Changing Practice in Doctoral Education.* Routledge.

### Marshall S & Green N (2010) *Your PhD Companion: The Insider Guide to Mastering the Practical Realities*. How to Books Ltd 3rd Ed.

### Phillips E.M & Pugh D.S. (2010) *How to get a PhD: a handbook for students and their supervisors* Open Uni Press, 5th Ed.

**Assessments**

* The assessment approach is informed by that used by professional practice modules, which means that a competency framework will be used for assessment. Vitae’s RDF will provide the framework against which evidence of engagement and competency will be assessed.
* Summative assessment via portfolio of evidence and reflection on Professional Researcher and Researcher Skills Development workshop topics in action in student’s research or research discipline. This Portfolio will provide evidence of professional engagement and must be passed to pass the module.
* Summative Assessment by case study of chosen aspect of Research Degrees Framework in action by presentation, demonstration, report or other appropriate format. Assessed by module team and peer-review.