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STARTING
WITH
THE END
INSIGHT



Issue 11 | Winter 2015

Doctoral
Times.

The Newsletter for
Doctoral Researchers

Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of the Doctoral Times ‘Starting with the End in Sight’. This issue focusses on how training and development during doctoral studies can help students to achieve their career goals. This issue includes content from current students discussing how to approach the Training Needs Analysis (TNA), and also some examples of the wide variety of non-modular training that our Doctoral Researchers are involved in. We have also included contributions from a number of our Alumni in a variety of careers who have shared their experience of training at The University of Sheffield and how they feel that it helped them get to where they are now.

Thank you to all of our contributors.

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Gavin Boyce, Katie Cahill, Fozia Yasmin

Issue 9 Crossword Solution

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Training Needs Analysis

Rachel Staddon, doctoral researcher in the School of Education



TNA. Training Needs Analysis. Whether this means analysis of training needs (as I suspect), or that the training offered needs analysis (on second thoughts, maybe this one), it's something every DTC student has to complete.

I did not immediately understand the TNA. This document was purportedly for my benefit, but had a column labelled "Evidence/Comments". I know what I've done, I told myself, why would I need to write it down? I slapped some superficial statements on the form and didn't give it another thought.

I came back to the TNA about three weeks later. I changed the peculiar University of Sheffield-specific font to a nice, safe Cambria, and took a look at what I had written. I had indeed given my "evidence" (all rise for the Judge), but in the comment department I was severely lacking. What could I say about what I had done? How did it achieve the skill criterion of "philosophical issues in the social sciences"? It really got me thinking. I could easily point out what I had done that contributed to each skill, but identifying exactly why it had contributed was another matter.

This finally made me understand the point of the TNA. Yes, it was for my benefit, but not as a tick-list. It opened up the opportunity to think not only about what I'd done, but why. As a reflective researcher, the practice of asking why is the most vital. I had received training in a wide range of skills, often despite my best efforts, and I was finally called upon to question the point of it all. This time, I had to produce answers that satisfied only myself.

TNA. Training Needs Analysis. I shall settle on my second, perhaps more sarcastic, definition, as the training offered to me did indeed need analysing, but not in the way I initially intimated. It was important that I had considered what I had been offered in the past, and what I had really learned from it. I didn't write anything extra on my TNA as such introspection is often quite personal, but spent quite some time in careful thought. I came to one, central conclusion: at the end of the day, it wasn't about what training had done for me, but rather what I had done for myself through the training.

Audrey Dugué-Nevers doctoral researcher in the School of East Asian Studies



Filling in yet another form might come across as an additional paperwork task when starting a PhD. However, with hindsight, the TNA is in fact a vital tool to keep a track record of our training. It enables students to have evidence of the academic, professional and personal skills developed throughout their academic journey. More practically, this can also be seen as a PhD diary, listing examples of where the skills have been gained.

The form is designed following the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, which covers public engagement and impact, organisation and research governance, personal effectiveness and subject knowledge. Interestingly, these are highlighting a lifelong-learning achievement, displaying an accumulation of knowledge and capabilities which make our CV stand out during our career, whether in academia or outside of academia.

The TNA is also a unique opportunity to show our initiative, autonomy and personality, as it is up to the student to decide what is important or relevant. Rather than being a record of attendance, it is a chance to reflect on the workshops, conferences and other events. Moreover, it relates to personal choices and desire to learn and gain new skills.

The most important element of the content of the TNA is that the University of Sheffield is a leading institution thanks to its many students' services providing workshops open to all. It is a unique chance for students to take training as part of their degree – for free! One has to think that once employed in a company outside of academia, managing to book a place to take an expensive training in Leadership for instance is quite competitive, and not everybody is given a place. Alternatively, experienced lecturers keep telling us that they wish they had the same opportunities when they were studying two decades ago, or equally wish they could find the time to take some of those workshops with us now.

In short: it is up to you to make the most of the available training in an international, stimulating and friendly environment.

Dispelling the Ambiguity (Woolliness) of the Training Needs Analysis and the ePortfolio

Dr Martina Daly, Faculty Lead for Medicine, Dentistry and Health

Despite the evidence that having defined objectives positively impacts on research performance, the practice of goal setting does not always come naturally to researchers. Similarly, the value of reflecting on one's skills and experiences by undertaking a training needs analysis (TNA) is not always obvious. The terminology doesn't help. When I was once asked to give a presentation about "reflective practice", I had to google it to find out what this was. How does one "reflect on one's skills and experiences", and precisely what is a "training needs analysis"? Perhaps it's just me, but I consider these phrases to be somewhat "woolly".

The TNA process is not unlike the annual staff appraisal, which at the University of Sheffield is known as the Staff Review and Development Scheme. Members of staff spend time thinking about their performance over the previous 12 months; what went well, what not so well, what problems were encountered, and how they were overcome? What would they change if they encountered the same problems again? This process is what I understand by "reflective practice". The annual review also involves "horizon scanning" and thinking about the coming 12 months. Is there a particular area of research, or a course, that requires development, and if so, what resources or skills might be needed to achieve this? For example, this year I realised that I was more likely to achieve some of my goals if I took a short course in technology enhanced learning, something that I am now doing.

Similarly, the TNA encourages researchers to review their progress towards their personal, professional and career goals. Potential barriers to achieving these goals are identified, allowing researchers to focus their training and development in specific areas. For example, a researcher who wants to make a good impression when they present their work at an international conference might decide to have some training in presentation skills in order to improve their ability to communicate their findings in an engaging and informative way. Not only would this help with the presentation, but they will probably feel more relaxed and confident as a result. Interestingly, recent reviews of skills needs carried out by the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries¹ and the MRC and BBSRC², have identified communication skills as being of significant concern to recruiters. The TNA is particularly effective when researchers map their training to Vitae's Researcher Development Framework which conveniently articulates the skills and attributes of successful researchers.

A good ePortfolio, that evidences the training and development of researchers over the course of their PhD and beyond, can be equated to a living CV. In addition to summarising specific research skills, the ePortfolio should include details of all research outputs, such as publications, presentations and markers of achievement. Experience of other professional and academic activities, such as referee work, conference presentations, supervision, mentorship and other forms of teaching, as well as contributions to the wider researcher community should also be documented. Most importantly, researchers should be able to articulate the value of their research and to be able to work with others to ensure its wider impact so that the investments made by them, and by the funding bodies, in their research will eventually have positive effects in all arenas.

[1http://www.abpi.org.uk/our-work/library/industry/Pages/101115.aspx](http://www.abpi.org.uk/our-work/library/industry/Pages/101115.aspx) / [2http://www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/pdf/review-of-vulnerable-skills-and-capabilities](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/pdf/review-of-vulnerable-skills-and-capabilities)

What I Look for in a DDP ePortfolio/Summary - Dr Steven McIntosh, Faculty Officer for PGR Student Affairs (Social Sciences)

Completion of research ethics and integrity module (no student should pass confirmation review without this, so this should never not be completed).

Engagement with the core faculty training programme.

Evidence of subject-specific advanced level training. It is only in very rare situations that a student begins their PhD having already undertaken a broad portfolio of doctoral-level (advanced-level) training specific to their discipline. Therefore evidence of such training is normally expected. This could be attendance at advanced level courses put on by departments, by other related departments, by other universities, or indeed by any other provider.

Engagement with the academic community in your field, via conference attendance and presenting at conferences, to aid both research skills and professional development within the discipline.

Evidence of wider professional development, through the many courses, workshops, and seminars that the university put on (though no student is going to be prevented from getting their PhD if they have not engaged in such courses).

Finally, in an ideal world, the DDP summary would not simply be a list of training events, but would discuss (briefly) how each event had aided your development.

Reflecting on reflection, and why the TNA is more than a TLA*

Sarah Bell, Researcher Development Manager -
Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Every doctoral researcher comes to Sheffield with a unique combination of skills, knowledge and life experiences, which is why your training needs analysis (TNA) is personal to you, and why it is important that you take control of your own professional development - supported by your supervisor, the Doctoral Academy and the University's support.

You should undertake your first TNA when you begin your doctoral studies, and you should revisit it with your supervisor at regular intervals during your PhD. Your TNA is an iterative process that encourages you to review your progress towards your personal and professional aspirations, enabling you to focus your training and development activity on areas that will support you to achieve your goals.

There can sometimes be a perception that the TNA is about "ticking boxes" but the value of the TNA process doesn't lie in the form that you complete, it lies in the conversation that you have with your supervisor and the thought and time that you put into identifying and reflecting upon your development needs.

When we talk about the importance of 'reflection' as part of your TNA, what do we mean? Simply put, reflective practice is taking the time to think critically about your experiences, actions and feelings, and using your understanding of these to inform what you do in the future.

You will have formal opportunities for reflection, for example during meetings with your supervisor, however, effective reflection is not a one-off task; over time it should become a habit. This might seem like a big ask, but one simple route into reflective practice is through the professional development activities that you undertake during your PhD.

After you undertake any formal skills training or participate in any other professional development activity, take some time to consider and record the experience, concentrating on these areas:

1. describe the experience/situation
2. your initial reactions to it
3. what you did
4. what you learned from the experience/situation
5. what you will do differently as a result

How you choose to record your reflection is personal, but the act of recording it is an important part of the process. Reflection logs are most effective when viewed over time, enabling you to see your progress, to spot any patterns of behaviour or thinking and to identify areas in which you would like to further develop your skills.

The tools you use to record and reflect upon your experiences should be the ones that work for you and your research; they are much less important than the actual process of self-reflection and thinking critically about your development.

*Three Letter Abbreviation, ofc.

2015 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

Every two years, the Higher Education Academy invites universities to survey their postgraduate research students on their experiences of being a PGR, in order to help them enhance their provision. The University of Sheffield took part in this survey for the third time in 2015, and 1304 of you responded – thanks to everyone who took the time to do this!

The survey asks questions about a range of issues of relevance to PGRs, including supervision, resources, research culture, progress and assessment, responsibilities, teaching and opportunities available.

The results identified a number of areas where you rated the University well (and higher than when PGRs were last surveyed on their postgraduate research experience in 2013) – including supervision, support in developing your research skills, and ensuring you are aware of progress and assessment processes. More of you felt confident that you will be able to complete your research degree within the expected timescale.

The survey results also highlighted that improvements still need to be made in key areas, particularly the research culture (e.g. whether the research ambience in your department or faculty stimulates your work, and whether you have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond your department).

Faculties have been asked to identify action plans to address the issues raised and once they have done this, the PRES web page will be updated so you can find out exactly what is being done in your own Faculty in response to the survey results.

A week in Parliament

Angela White, doctoral researcher in the Department of Animal and Plant Sciences

Having long been interested in policy-making, I arranged a week's work experience in Parliament last year. I started off working with the staff of the House of Commons Science & Technology Select Committee. This Committee brings together MPs from the major political parties to investigate policy-relevant science issues and scrutinise Government's work. The Committee typically has several reports in the pipeline, so I began by getting to grips with some of the current inquiries, including Biometric Data and GM Crops. After working with the Committee's staff for a couple of days and finding out what goes on behind the scenes, it was great to attend an oral evidence session, held in the ornate and beautiful Palace of Westminster. The Committee had a short private meeting beforehand, which I was able to observe, and then the first panel of witnesses was ushered into the grand, rather sombre room. Three panels gave evidence on Biometric Data, from the vantage points of academia, industry and external organisations, giving breadth and depth to the inquiry.

Later in the week I worked in the House of Commons Library, which answers enquiries from MPs on a huge range of topics. I was given the task of answering an enquiry from start to finish: research on the oil and gas sector. Starting with a brief introduction on Wikipedia to orientate myself, I quickly moved onto trawling through hefty reports to compile my answer. At first glance it was a simple question to answer, but had taken me several hours!

I spent my final day working at the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. POST has 8 specialist advisors who write and coordinate the writing of POSTnotes: succinct 4-page briefings which are treated as fact in Parliament. Many of these are written by POST Fellows from academia, affectionately referred to as POSTies. My task was to collate information on emerging technologies. From a bafflingly long list of sometimes bizarre innovations, predicted by Imperial College London, I researched future technologies to provide descriptions and policy implications. It was interesting to delve into current legislation and come up with possible policy recommendations. One of the POSTies was finishing that day, so the week was rounded off with drinks in the House of Lords bar! Altogether an interesting, informative and inspiring time in Parliament, and a hugely valuable experience for finding out more about careers in policy-making.



Boris Johnson and Matthew Pencharz give oral evidence at an Environmental Audit Select Committee Hearing.

Photo credit Jemma Ridley, House of Commons.



Photo credit: Matthew Burnett

Extracurricular Skills for your Future Career

Billy Bryan, doctoral researcher in the Academic Unit of Medical Education



Something I realised as I planned out this article was that I suffer from an aversion to the word “no”. Whenever I’m faced with an opportunity for a new committee position or a student representative role, I’m the first with my hand in the air. The same was true prior to my post-graduate degree: in my working life, I’ve had 15 different jobs, and even now I still work a few hours a week with the Careers service.

It may mean you don’t get chance to watch this season of “I’m A Celebrity”, but filling your time with extra-curricular activities, particularly committee groups – such as the PGR committee I chair – is the best way to learn transferable skills. Transferable skills are skills that are widely applicable to many different situations or contexts. This is vital to a doctoral researcher because our areas of study are usually limited, given the specificity of the projects we undertake. I believe my “extra-curricular” work has added value to both my studies and my future career prospects, and I want to convince you to explore these opportunities too.

I hadn’t been engaged in any societies during my undergraduate degree, so I wanted to get more involved in the University community this time around. I joined the Medical PostGraduate Society (MPGS) as a departmental representative in my first month, and subsequently took on the role of co-chair four months later. I learnt the skills needed to lead a committee – chairing meetings, organising projects etc – on the job: there’s no better way to learn in my opinion! I also attended staff-student committee meetings, where I had to communicate effectively with tutors to bring about meaningful changes in teaching.

Eight months on, still in the same role, I have gained a plethora of skills: democratic leadership, organisation, delegation and event planning to name a few. That was how it started. Since then, I have co-founded the new Postgraduate representative committee (PGComm) and become PGR councillor at the students union. These things tend to snowball!

Whatever you’re studying, getting involved in your University is important. PGR students usually don’t get the chance to network; we always have lots of work to do, and very specific places we have to do that work, which can be isolating. The great thing about engaging with these kinds of society/committee activities is that you meet and work with people from across the whole university. Effective teamwork and communication are incredibly vital skills for anyone’s future career; these are what active participation in departmental or university wide committees gives you. Not to mention the million other skills and talents you’ll develop in those roles, with interesting stories to back them up.

This issue of the Doctoral Times is especially poignant as the careers landscape is changing for PhD graduates: many are looking less towards traditional academic roles and focusing on interdisciplinary careers. In my case, I don’t have a concretely set vision of my career path, but I’m confident that I’ll be ready for what comes my way in two years’ time.

Effective teamwork and communication are incredibly vital skills for anyone’s future career

Graduate Teaching Assistant Programme

Shazelina Z. Abidin, doctoral researcher
in the Department of Politics



The University of Sheffield is one of those few top-notch universities that offer their doctoral candidates to be part of the teaching process. Named the Graduate Teaching Assistant programme (GTA), PhD candidates work with module conveners to lead seminars at undergraduate level, allowing them the opportunity to acquire the necessary experience for their entry into academia.

Thus it was that the Politics Department found itself saddled with a Malaysian PhD aspirant in its 2013/2014 GTA programme.

I knew I could teach Contemporary US Foreign Policy, one of the modules that was grounded in real life practice rather than in theory. I had been to the US, I had been an undergraduate, and I could talk. How hard could it be? All the lecturers I had had made it seem easy enough.

That first year as a GTA was a nightmare. The trainers told me that no matter how clever your students are, as a PhD candidate you would still be cleverer than them. That may be true, but keeping one step in front of the students was a lot of hard work – it meant that you had to do the same amount of reading they did, and then some.

Students would come into seminars, all bright-eyed and thirsty for knowledge, and you were expected to be the all-knowing Yoda, sans pointy ears and jedi robe. They would innocently ask what a particular writer meant when he said so-and-so in the article on the reading list. Then someone else would say that another article was much clearer. Sometimes I had the feeling of being set up, that this was a test of sorts, and the questions were not innocent at all. Because it was US foreign policy being discussed, everyone had an opinion, which did not bode well for the GTA transfixed at the front of the room.

It was not until well into the semester that I thought I had a handle on things. The students were warming to me, and I was loosening up enough not to sound like a pre-programmed machine. Just as I was getting into my groove, the essays were falling due, and the semester was close to its end.

I firmly believe that a doctoral researcher who has never marked an essay has missed out on one of the most valuable experiences in academic life. Students' essays teach you to sift through the mass of verbose sentences, of convoluted explanations, and of roundabout paragraphs, to find the answer to the question. It teaches you to live the life of an examiner, to walk in his shoes, and to understand that the best way to make an enemy of your external examiner is to give him a headache just reading your thesis. It is amazing how much you can learn from what not to do, just by marking essay after essay.

The second year I was a GTA, for the 2014/2015 year, I took the same module – Contemporary US Foreign Policy – thinking that this would now be a breeze. Little did I know then that China would start their foray into the South China Sea, the Iran nuclear deal would be forged, and the US would decide to keep their troops in Afghanistan. A real-life practical module also meant that the teachers needed to follow real-life events as they unfolded. It also meant reading more than the reading list stipulated. Maybe I should have stuck to political theory instead.

Despite all my whining and complaining, being a GTA is undoubtedly one of the best rewards of being a researcher. Those who are contemplating a life in academia should cut their teeth as a GTA first. The experience is indescribable, and definitely one to last a lifetime.

What's a 'Remoty' to do?

Dr Eva Hornung, Information School Alumni

When I started my PhD in Information Studies in 2004, there wasn't any prescribed doctoral training as such, if I remember correctly. The White Rose Doctoral Training Centre in Social Sciences was only established in 2011, the year I was conferred. There had been courses I would have been eligible to attend, but as a part-time, remote location student that wasn't really an option. I lived and worked in Dublin. My precious visits to Sheffield were filled with meetings with my supervisor and other students, and with many trips to the University's wonderful libraries.



So, what's a "remoty" to do? Well, being part of a network of practitioners and academics in my subject area really offered lots of opportunities for informal learning. As an active member of two professional associations I volunteered as a committee member, helping to organise CPD events, and became a mentor to other information professionals applying for professional accreditation. My research was about continuing professional development of librarians, so the connections I made in the profession helped me find individuals willing to be interviewed. The librarians I visited gave me new ideas for my own one-person library. Day job and PhD cross-fertilised.

The interdisciplinary nature of my PhD topic, which combined Information Studies with Adult Education, meant that I had to keep an eye on conferences in both fields. Presenting at these internationally makes you aware of how your own little contribution fits into a wider debate. You also get exposed to rigorous questioning, debating and arguing your case. Good preparation for the viva voce. The University of Sheffield offers conference grants for students, and I would encourage everybody to apply for them. One academic I had met asked me to review books for an international journal – this has morphed into becoming an assessor of manuscripts for two periodicals, a complete new venture!

The advanced research skills I gained through the PhD are very valuable in my day job. We have researchers coming into the library, who are at different stages of their own doctorates. Not only can I relate to their experiences of elation and despair (often expressed in the same sentence!), but I am able to point them to resources they might find useful and help them tease out in more detail the type of information they are looking for. The PhD has made me a researcher, but also a better librarian.

The one "official" training session I did attend, however, was one on "how to prepare for your viva". This was an excellent opportunity to get a sense of how this exam would be conducted, what kind of areas to prepare, to learn about common misconceptions, and to ask lots of questions. I would strongly recommend signing up for one of these courses.

Another piece of advice is to follow people on Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social networks to keep abreast with new developments. Whatever you do, think of it as "learning" – don't be afraid to try out new things!

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Alumni Experiences

Dr Julia McClure, Department of History Alumni

The most important skills that are needed to survive in the academic world are patience and persistence. This is what I remind myself when I stare at a document from sixteenth century Spain in an, at first seemingly impenetrable, hand, or when I re-visit an old paper. Archives and documents do not relinquish their secrets easily, but instead set challenges and reward patience and persistence. You need to establish familiarity, and to train the eye. Doctoral students will know that good research takes time and energy, but developing the appropriate language and palaeography skills takes patience and persistence in a different way. Learn which days you have the patience, and which days attempts at patience will challenge your long-term persistence.

The same applies to the world of publications; some journals have rates of acceptance in single figures. Don't be dispirited, instead accept the challenge. Think about which parts of the argument are essential, and which you can do away with. Think about what the readers weren't convinced by and why. Decide what is most important, and whether you should clarify the explanatory pathways or find other routes. Remember that this exploration is all part of the process.

As anyone learning languages and skills such as palaeography or developing research for publication will know, progress is not always linear. It is more like navigating a ship in a rough sea. There are days when favourable winds take you onward at a high rate of knots, and there are other days when you are adrift in the doldrums. Sometimes you may arrive in unfamiliar territories, and erroneously think that you are in another place altogether. Don't be disheartened, as this is the way that 'New Worlds' have been born.



Full articles from all of our Alumni contributors can be found at (<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/postgraduate/research/>) from February 2016.

Dr Dr. Olalekan D. Adeniyi Department of History Alumni

Studying at The University of Sheffield (UoS) has greatly improved my confidence in delivering seminars, training and lectures to diverse group. I have also been able to successfully supervise bachelors, masters and Ph.D. students. I have been promoted to Senior lecturer in Chemical engineering as a result of the improvement and collaborations that I bring to my university.

The training I received at UoS has been instrumental in my appointment as a representative of the Postgraduate School, Federal University of Technology Minna, Nigeria at various Ph.D defenses across different schools and faculties. The mentoring, demonstrating and teaching assistant jobs carried out at the University of Sheffield Enterprise (USE) and the department of Chemical and Biological Engineering (CBE) has further enriched my team work ability with colleagues and other from different backgrounds.



Dr Veronica Biga, Department of Automatic Control and Systems Engineering Alumni

The results of research work are only partly manifested in research findings. The bulk of it is something intangible, which you have gained and will follow you for the rest of your life. It is called knowledge! The best skill you gain during your PhD is a strategy for acquiring more knowledge: first you need to find reliable sources of information; then you filter through to find what you need and finally you build upon existing knowledge to create new ideas. Sounds pretty simple right? Except it is not. Knowledge is hidden from your view in different journals or disciplines each with their own language and symbolism. The same ideas appear in different areas of science and many paths to understanding the same concept exist out there. So how do you decide which branch of this infinite tree of literature to climb up? Usually, you take the most visible path that can connect you from where you are in your current knowledge (the main branch) to the final outcome that you envisage (the fruit branch). This path is never the shortest! Once you find one fruit branch it tastes sweet so you go in search of another and then another. Over time, you find yourself on thinner and thinner branches because they hold the best fruit. You are addicted to research!

Alumni Experiences

Dr Sidahmed Gaffour, Department of ACSE Alumni

One of the most useful parts of the time I spent during my research, was the academic external seminars, brain-storming internal seminars, symposiums and conferences. For example, the annual IMPETUS Colloquium saw a large number of presentations of the works taking place giving some idea of the range of skills on offer and debates the plans for the next year and the longer-term strategy.

My research work has hitherto led to a number of publications in peer reviewed journals and conference proceedings. I strongly recommend attending such events to anybody doing a PhD – you never know what you might get out of it!

Finally, I can say I have been developing strong academic, research and engineering skills, the participation in relevant staff development programmes which have all provided me with comprehensive organisational, and teamwork experiences. I feel certain that all my job specifications fit with my qualifications and abilities gained from the University of Sheffield.



Dr Lisa Low, School of Medicine Alumni

A memorable scholastic activity that I had undertaken as a doctoral student had enabled me to pluck up my courage to come upfront to present the preliminary findings from my doctoral study in an oral conference presentation. As a neophyte research student, being able to participate in a research conference was seen to be very grand, especially when you have the opportunity to meet academic/research scholars in your field of interest, or the authors of textbooks that you have just read. At the time of submitting for a conference abstract, I recalled the feelings of uncertainties and nerves that were quite overwhelming when deciding to go for a poster presentation or an oral presentation. To the doctoral research students who find themselves in this situation, I simply must say that undertaking an oral presentation is definitely more challenging. However, once you have plucked up the courage to do it, you will overcome that fear, and you will enjoy listening to yourself talking and answering the questions afterwards. You see when you come upfront to present your findings it is a way of sharing your work (your 'Baby') with the audience. Your responsibility as a presenter is to say it as concisely, logically and clearly as you can in just those crucial 10-15 minutes to an audience who knows little about your work.



Dr Muhammad Sameer Qureshi, Department of MBB Alumni

Studying PhD at The University of Sheffield is not just a matter of earning one's doctorate degree; it's a lifestyle. It's rather grooming of a person (in academic context of course) to fit in the society, covering non-academic aspects of life too. During my PhD, I had an opportunity to embellish my communication & interpersonal skills. I had attended workshops on leadership skills and how to be an effective team player. Apart from academic excellence, there was significant emphasis on social values and ethical norms. I had gradually learned that I wasn't supposed to limit myself just to the section / department that I was linked to. I felt myself connected to most of the campus, if not all. This gave me a sense of belonging & team work. On returning to my homeland after completing PhD, I applied the same principles at my work place (Dow University of Health Services), and stood out as a successful team leader. I sometimes feel that there is something special in the soil of Sheffield that makes you a rising sun.

Dr Burama L. J. Jammeh, School of Education Alumni

The training and development during doctoral studies has helped me to set and achieve my career goals. Many students may associate a career goal with a swift or progressive vertical mobility in the job market. That is, increased chances to be employed or promoted to a higher position. This is not the case in my situation, since I still remain as Director of Curriculum Research, Evaluation and Development of the Gambia Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, a position I held since 2005.

The doctoral journey has had a lot of impacts on me, some of which are the skills and values I acquired. These combined with my position, enabled me to facilitate the implementation of my recommendations and to impact positively in the formulation of the new Educational Policy.



My Experience on the Sheffield Doctor of Education Programme

Dr Andre Rodrique Hill, School of Education Alumni

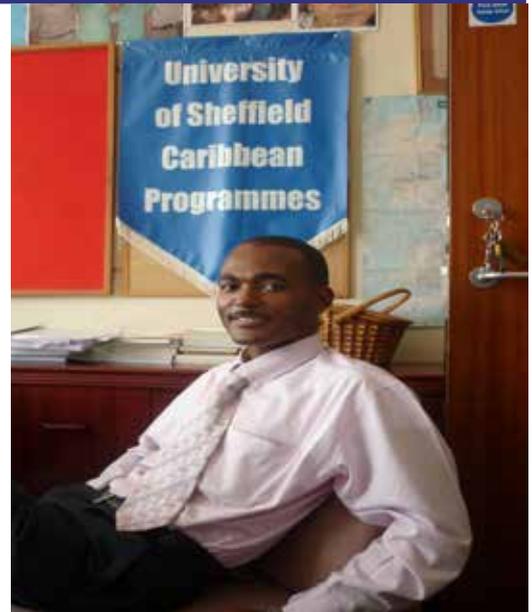
I was very excited to start my first set of classes on the University Of Sheffield Doctor of Education Programme, which I enrolled to pursue in June 2006, when I was still a high school English teacher. The idea of reading for a doctorate was overwhelming in itself, but I think the passion and sheer delight that fuelled my aspirations were far greater than what I perceived at the time to be a daunting project. Indeed it was wonderful to meet and chat with my fellow students, to share our thoughts and feelings about our expectations of at least four long years of study that lay ahead of us.

Attending classes was always a fascinating experience. The engagements were usually rich and diverse, with lots of opportunities to ask questions, revise our thinking, and learn from both our professors and fellow students.

In reflecting on my experience as a former doctoral student of the University of Sheffield, I am amazed at the extent to which my studies have impacted my personal and academic development. It is no exaggeration when I say that the idea, the meaning, the value, the beauty of primary and secondary research appeared very fresh to my mind, as it were, like some wonderful vibration from another world unexplored, but longing for exploration, inviting exploration if but because it was there to be seen, to be felt, to be tasted, to be understood. My studies were compelling and instructive; consequently, my grasp and appreciation of academic research took on new vistas. Today, I happily tell my colleagues in Jamaica's Ministry of Education and my university students that I am a qualitative researcher on a campaign to get others into my kingdom!

My studies at Sheffield made me recognize the importance of listening to the voice of the subaltern, the other, the forgotten, the outcast; my studies have made me braver, have given me the tools of social investigation into the multiple realities that are alive and struggling for recognition, for legitimacy in the world. My studies have empowered my mind, disciplined my personality, and extended my social and professional influence. Today I teach Research Methods at the International University of the Caribbean, supervise graduate and undergraduate research students, as well as teach many courses in psychology and education. I am also the National Literacy Coordinator in Jamaica's Ministry of Education, with the responsibility of advising on literacy and language arts instruction; responsibility for the construction of Jamaica's new National Standards Curriculum, the management of the implementation of the Ministry's National Comprehensive Literacy Programme, the supervision of several Reading Specialists who work with hundreds of schools in Jamaica, as well as the greater engagement of the community in literacy education across Jamaica.

The key to succeeding in doctoral studies is to have vision, passion, hope, support, and a well-defined strategy for designing and executing one's research project. The student must know where they want to go, culture the emotional and psychological energy needed for the journey, believe that the end is attainable, secure the support of their professors, fellow students, family, and friends, and then jump into the rabbit hole for the adventure!!! The experience is fantastic and evolutionary.



Developing Leaders for Global Impact

Dr Eduardo Ali, School of Education Alumni

I completed my doctor of education (EdD) degree with the University of Sheffield in January 2011. I am presently a senior university administrator responsible for strategy, quality assurance and institutional excellence in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. At the time of commencing my studies I was a technocrat working with my government to develop policies for the advancement of its higher education sector.

There were many advantages gained throughout and after completion of my doctoral training. The School of Education's EdD programme has developed my reflective practice, in that, my self-awareness as a researcher and the appreciation of my professional contexts are always critical issues for me as a researching practitioner. The programme enhanced my knowledge and skills of developing an ethical stance in my research practice. This influenced my comprehension about integrity in research and educational practice. For the past 7 years I have consistently adopted ethical approaches in my work and sought after opportunities to champion ethical values within my profession and the workplace. So convinced about this, in 2012, under my guidance, a group of Caribbean education alumni started a Sheffield Caribbean alumni network to advance educational development through research.

The EdD programme emphasized the inter-linkages in planning curricula, developing one's profession and the adoption of educational research methodologies that enhance educational policy and development within the Caribbean. Guided by expert supervisors, I learned educational policy research skills and applied them when designing policy analysis models for education policy development. Professional reports and publications I wrote opened doors for my professional engagement with international organizations. Whilst a student, and after receiving my doctorate, I was commissioned to undertake educational program evaluations and policy research in multi-country studies within the Latin American and Caribbean region with UNESCO, Commonwealth of Learning, European Commission and the Inter-American Development Bank.

A major emphasis of my thesis research looked at accreditation systems in higher education within the Caribbean region. I examined national, regional and global higher education policy trends that support the advancement of external and internal quality assurance and accreditation movements and systems. This positioned me as a leader within my Caribbean region, and I was appointed to positions where I had oversight of advancement projects within multiple accreditation agencies and higher education institutions in 15 Caribbean countries. The seminar-style approach in the EdD cohort model developed my self-confidence and presentation skills that propelled me into the world of academia and policy discourse where I became a strong advocate across the region, openly shared my understandings of higher education policy and accreditation systems, taught/supervised graduate students and published book chapters and articles that were read by many across multiple localities. Furthermore, being a holder of a University of Sheffield doctorate has opened several doors to me in the Middle East and the USA where I have given lectures, seminars and projects to advance higher education policy, leadership and quality assurance. These are just a few highlights of my life and professional experiences that have been shaped by the University of Sheffield.

Are PhD Students Leaders? Employers Think So.....

Dr Kay Guccione, Research Mentoring Manager

My work involves, in short, linking researchers up to other people to talk about the things that matter to them. I spend a lot of time myself listening to PGRs talk about what's going on for them, what they like and dislike about the PhD, what the challenges are and how they overcome them, and what's easy to get done, and what's plain baffling. In workshops, mentoring programmes and coaching groups we discuss the barriers to making progress, dealing with working relationships, getting what you need, and being the best version of yourself - the one who gets stuff done, is on top of things, can cope. In these discussions, doctoral students as a collaborative hive-mind are amazing at sharing wisdom and crafting really sensible ways to deal with really difficult issues of working relationships — i.e. — negotiating with other people, influencing someone more senior than you, how to say no to the unimportant time-wasting things, and how to know what IS important, and what's simply a way to procrastinate. This self-leadership, the ability to navigate systems and structures to get what you need, may feel difficult, but it's gold dust for your future employment.

How do I know? Because I also talk to a lot of PhD graduates through v i s t a who work in all kinds of post-PhD sectors from the water industry to the BBC, to the NHS, to research policy development, to data analytics, to business strategy. And what have I learned from hearing more than 75 career stories...that the 'soft' skills they gained in their PhD have been crucial to their success today. 'Soft' skills is a misnomer, these are actually the hard skills (the ones students bring to coaching and mentoring sessions): the negotiating with other people, the influencing someone more senior than you, the how to say no to the unimportant time-wasting things, and the how to know what IS important. Literally EVERY v i s t a speaker has cited the self-governance and self-leadership development they experienced in their PhD as vital to their current career success. This was summed up very well recently by Dr Clare Wood, Global Head of Investment Assurance at First State Investments who said that your analytical skills, and research techniques may be enough to get you the interview, but being able to talk about how you get along with people to get the work done, will get you the job. And so...some sample questions you may want to think about interview answers for are...

(1) Talk about a time when you changed someone's mind. (2) Tell me how you would go about getting senior colleagues on board with your ideas. (3) When starting a new project what steps would you take to prevent you having to give more than you wanted? etc etc etc.



Meeting with excellent PhD students and realising that everyone has confidence issues or qualms about something encourages me that there isn't one 'style' that works for everyone and that what I consider to be a good leader may not work for someone else and perhaps what is best is to be able to adapt to an environment and be mindful.



Thinking of a Career Outside Academia - What do Employers Really Want?

Jane Simm, Careers Adviser for Researchers

An interesting piece of research from the Research Councils UK and the Higher Education Funding Councils for England and Wales gives a very positive view of how doctoral graduates contribute to the competitiveness and innovation of businesses. It also goes a long way to counter the views some employers may have of recruiting researchers. As someone who has been involved in conducting two surveys into the attitude employers have of recruiting researchers for positions outside academia*, I was impressed with a study that surveyed nearly 2,000 researchers who had graduated with a doctorate seven to nine years ago, and interviewed over 250 in the survey. To top this they also interviewed nearly 100 employers who had recruited doctoral graduates. This research builds on such studies but considers their current roles, career history, value to employers and contribution to innovation and wider socio-economic impact.

The report which can be accessed via the RCUK website – www.rcuk.ac.uk/skills/impact provides an encouraging view on the value businesses who employ PhDs place on their specialist knowledge, research skills and problem solving ability. It goes further by stating one in five employers view doctoral graduates as business critical. This particularly applied in research and development and manufacturing and engineering sectors. Add businesses who are built on science and technology then you have a very marketable commodity! But, it is not just in these sectors that demand for researchers occurs, employers value research and analytical skills, new approaches to problem solving skills, and capacity for critical thinking. The list is endless and very encouraging if you are reading this wondering how my PhD will be viewed by an employer.....they appreciate how you can innovate, develop new or improved goods, services, processes and ways of working.'

I was also impressed by comments made by speakers at the Energy Postgraduate Conference I attended recently at the University. There was much emphasis placed on your transferable or soft skills. All the speakers outlining their career progression advised researchers not to underestimate your communication and presentation skills. One speaker from industry even said if you can't demonstrate these skills then you are no use to anyone so make sure you find time to enhance and develop these skills through not only your research but all aspects of your life. Many of you take part in a range of enterprising and creative activities. Your PhD is based on creativity and project management.

I also liked the comment that a PhD is part of a journey learning new skills. With the research environment now encompassing industrial and other external links you have the opportunity to develop the kind of skills employers outside academia seek and that includes commercial awareness or understanding how businesses operate. Perhaps you are working in interdisciplinary teams and conversing with a range of academic disciplines. Use your enquiring and curious mind to take advantage of professional development during your research career at Sheffield. As you will read in the other sections there are many ways you can get involved.....

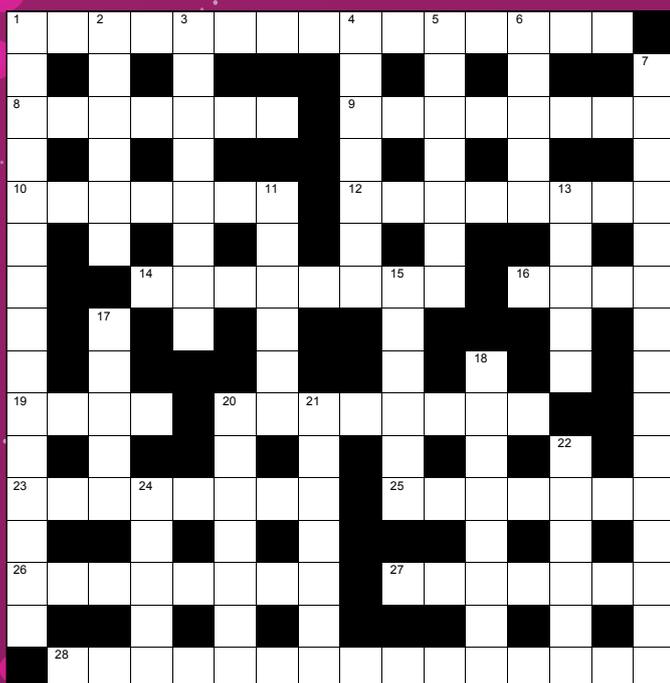
* SEARCH -Survey of employer attitudes to postgraduate researchers (2006)

* Recruiting researchers – Survey of employer practice (Vitae 2009)

* Skills of researchers – there is a link via our website to the flipping book – skills of researchers



Cryptic Crossword



Setter: Proljx

Correct entries will be named in next issue.

First past the post will not only have the glory of their name in print they will have the option to compile a future crossword should they wish to do so!

**Please complete if you are submitting your entry*

Name:

Department:

Return entries to GRC, Dainton Building, Brook Hill

Clues

Across

1. Redundant prolixity when the answer is staring you in the face. (5,3,7)
8. Spotted ova seen about in petri dish? (7)
9. Binding is a result of unrecoverable read error occurring after list item tag backed up... (8)
10. ...and resulted in crimped education. (7)
12. 28 across remembers methaqualone from a quad party organised with University of East London. (8)
14. It speeds things up if, when going from A to B, Tom takes a small Libyan side street. (8)
16. Princetown University leaders take on life insurance for small dog... (4)
19. ...is a Californian police officer the source of fret? (4)
20. University of Lancaster fellow in the middle of short English education course is overwhelmed. (8)
23. Fellow from 4 goes to the English Institute of Sport and takes a New Testament approach of deference. (8)
25. Hanger-on is left in danger. (7)
26. Is 'Don't walk' a neon sign about awkward gait? (8)
27. Crazy man with guts can be all that is needed to catch feral, but not wild, horse. (7)
28. Excited geneticist gains reconstituted constituent components for Gerontologist. (6,9)

Down

1. Stephen Sondheim biographer on fools' errand? (4,2,3,6)
2. Who leads electromagnetic pulse technology after Assistant Director is taken away? (6)
3. The Spanish radio is about to take in ten to start with. (8)
4. Alumnus taking short question in the midst of Open University in Libya gets public condemnation. (7)
5. Peripatetic takes five before Association of Graduate Recruiters employs worker. (7)
6. Radical from Lewisham Youth Theatre takes small company back. (5)
7. Default kingmaker doesn't get left after genetic legacy. (10,5)
11. Confused graduate briefly takes on mythical beast. (6)
13. 25 across is in the University of Lapland under ultra-violet light. (5)
15. Researcher approached subject obliquely due to not working within standard deviation. (6)
17. Laboratory accreditation program takes direction that leads to oversight. (5)
18. Poet Laureate, effected by tension around New York without me. (8)
20. Unconfined joy as a result of elastication experiment without a senior technician in charge? (7)
21. Sing about taking tea party as French researcher smokes? (7)
22. American Law Institute takes key asset list of PhD without a doctorate; it's greater than seven! (6)
24. Researcher uses initial integrated mapping and gravity estimation for representation. (5)

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