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Introduction

The research training provided by both the College and the School of Public Health is intended to underpin and complement a student’s research project. More specifically, its purpose is to equip students with the skills needed:

- to undertake the research project (i.e. planning, design, analyses etc.)
- to write up and successfully defend the PhD/MD(Res) thesis
- to be competitive in the employment market, thereafter

The main training offered by the College is run through the Graduate School. They offer a range of training courses aimed at both professional and personal development, which students can undertake throughout their degree. The School offers more subject specific training which varies in content to ensure that it appeals to students of all years. These sessions are reviewed annually to enable the school to offer the best training possible. Students with suggestions for future training sessions should contact their Student Representative.

The skills needed to undertake a research degree are varied; especially so in the School of Public Health (SPH) which is multi-disciplinary. Students registering for a research degree also vary substantially in their prior research experience and technical expertise, and thus in their training needs. The research training should be customised to the specific needs of the student. This is achieved through the completion of a training plan proforma. This plan is developed by the student in consultation with the supervisors, reviewed by the assessors and approved and monitored by the Director of Postgraduate Studies.

It is important to recognise the need to demonstrate the research skills acquired; both to assure those concerned that they have been successfully gained, and as evidence for C.V. purposes. Research training in the School of Public Health therefore also requires evidence of achievement.

- Responsibility for compiling and presenting this evidence rests with the student.
- Responsibility for reviewing and assessing it lies initially with the supervisor.

Overall monitoring of training is undertaken by the Postgraduate Studies Committee (PSC) in conjunction with the Director of Postgraduate Studies (DPS). The DPS will review individual progress, requiring evidence of achievement before approving Registration, the Early Stage Assessment, and the Late Stage Review. Any concerns will be raised by the DPS at committee meetings.
The Training plan

The training plan states what training the student needs to undertake, how this will be achieved, and when it will be undertaken. The plan should act as a live document that is reviewed at intervals, both to confirm what training has been satisfactorily achieved, and to identify any new training requirements.

No specific quantity of training is stated in these guidelines; how much training is needed depends on the student’s research area/topic, their prior experience, and level of skills. Typically, training should be sufficient to complete the research on time to a satisfactorily level, and to help prepare the student for their future career.

There are, however, 4 elements of mandatory training for all students:

- Attendance at induction courses for PhD/MD(Res) students run by the Department or School
- Completion of the required Graduate School Training by the deadlines set by the Graduate School.
- Attendance at weekly research seminars run by the Department
- Presentation of a research seminar by the student, on his/her research topic

Additionally, there is a 5th element of mandatory training for students who wish to assist with teaching or Masters Projects supervision:

Completion of the Graduate School workshops for GTAs: An Introduction to Teaching Methods in higher Education, and Assessment and Feedback.

Evidence of a training plan will be required at the first milestone; PhD/MD(Res) registration. Evidence of satisfactory completion of training to that date and plans for relevant future training will be required at the Early Stage Assessment and the Late Stage Review. Part of the purpose of training is to help students understand what is required of them, design their projects, and develop the relevant practical skills. For these reasons the plan should be prepared as early as possible after enrolment.
Developing a Research Training Plan

A draft training plan should be produced by the student. This should then be discussed and agreed with the supervisor(s).

Three key steps are involved in developing the research training plan:

- a review of the skills needed to undertake the research and equip the student for employment
- an audit of the student's existing skills and expertise
- specification of the further training needs and of the ways in which these can be met

A template for developing the training plan, and reporting on progress, is attached as Appendix 2, and an example of a partially completed plan is shown in Appendix 3.

**Review of skills needs**

The first step will usually be a review of the skills needed by the student. In doing this, attention should be given to three different types/levels of skill that the student might need:

### Generic Skills

- Transferrable Skills include:
  - Library and Data searching
  - Presentation
  - Writing Skills
  - Teaching Practice

- Knowledge of:
  - The PhD/MRes Process
  - What is expected/required of doctoral students at Imperial

### Project Specific Skills

- Relate to particular research projects and are likely to include:
  - Lab or data collection
  - Health and Safety Matters
  - Analysis Skills

### Discipline Specific Skills

- Relate to the discipline/broad subject area within which the work is nested in and might include topics such as:
  - Project design
  - Research paradigms or philosophies
  - Extended academic writing techniques

**Skills audit**

The second step will usually be to review the student's existing skills. The student should be able to give evidence of how and where generic and specific skills have been acquired (e.g. as part of an
undergraduate or Masters degree, through specialist training, through work experience etc.). Past experience needs to be considered not only in terms of what has been done, but also the level and when it was done.

**Future training needs**

From the review of skills needs and the skills audit of those already attained, it should then be possible to define further training required by the student. In defining these future training needs, consideration should be given not only to what skills are required, but also:

- how they can be obtained
- when they are needed (and available)
- how will they be demonstrated and applied

Training is available in a number of ways:

- Training in many of the *generic skills* is likely to be available centrally, through the Graduate School’s training programme. The Centre for Academic English at Imperial College provides courses, workshops and consultations to help international doctoral students communicate their research more effectively in English. Additional generic training should be available within the Department / School of Public Health.

- *Discipline-specific skills* might be available, for example, from Masters programmes run within the School of Public Health, via seminar programmes run by the department, or through attendance at external workshops, conferences etc.

- *Project-specific skills* are likely to be provided mainly by the supervisor(s) (or colleagues in the department), and to some extent learned on the job

The timing of the training should match the needs of the student and the dynamics of their research programme. In most cases, the majority will need to be completed by the Late Stage Review. Some training, however, might be better carried out later in the course of the degree; for example, specific guidance on writing up, or on career development. The timing of training may also be conditioned by the availability of relevant courses. These factors should be taken into account when developing the training plan.
Sources of Training

Training is available from many sources, all of which should be utilised by students as much as possible.

**Key training resources at a glance:**

**Graduate School activities and courses**
- Professional Skills Requirement by LSR:
  - Online Plagiarism Awareness Course
  - **AND**
  - A minimum of **FOUR** professional skills courses
  - **OR**
  - The Residential Skills & Development (RSD) course **AND** two Professional Skills course
  - **OR**
  - One of the Graduate School’s International Summer Schools **AND** two professional skills courses

**Departmental Training**
- Research Seminars
- **+** Induction & Core Training in the 1st term

**Other Sources**
- Attending Masters Lectures
- **+** Supervisor based training
- Attending courses at the Centre for Academic English
- Courses External to SPH & Imperial College
**Graduate School activities and courses**

The Graduate School currently provides transferable skills, professional development and research skills training sessions ([Appendix 1](#)) as well as other activities such as the annual Students’ Research Symposium, and 3-day residential ‘Research Skills Development Course’. The Graduate School expects all research students to meet the professional skills requirement.

**Professional Skills Attendance Requirement**

The Graduate School's professional skills requirement exists in order to ensure that all students receive some generic skills training while at Imperial and have the opportunity to engage with the programme, alongside their laboratory and other work.

Students are required to meet minimum attendance requirements by their Early Stage Assessment. All students must attend:

- A minimum of two professional skills courses

  **OR**

- The Residential Skills & Development (RSD) course

  **OR**

- One of the Graduate School’s International Doctoral Summer Schools

By the Late Stage Review, students must have completed a further two Graduate School courses.

Students are encouraged to continue their professional development throughout their degree and attend at least 2 additional courses per year.

**Exemptions** to the training requirement can be sought through the Director of Postgraduate Studies. Students who have attended equivalent courses elsewhere can request their training requirement be reduced or omitted. Those who have successfully applied for an exemption though, **must attend** at least two Graduate School courses prior to the Late Stage Review.

Course information, and details on how to book can be found on the Graduate School’s website [http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/)

**Courses do not take place in August and September and students are therefore encouraged to book onto the required courses as soon as possible.**
Online Plagiarism Awareness course

In addition to the Professional Skills courses, the Graduate School also asks that students complete the online Plagiarism Awareness Course. This course has been designed to give students guidance and information on the College’s Plagiarism policy and on proper citation. Tests can be taken throughout the degree, however students must complete the test once prior to the 9 month mark.

Details on how to complete the test can be found on the Graduate School’s website

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/docctoral/online-courses/

Graduate Teacher Assistants (GTA) Training

All research students who wish to assist in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students at Imperial College must complete the Introduction to teaching, learning and assessment workshops run by the Graduate School: http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/docctoral/shortcourses/teaching/

These workshops will complement additional training sessions for graduate teaching assistants (GTA) to be provided by the academic leads.

Training activities delivered by the School / Departments

Much of the training required by students should be provided at the School of Public Health or Departmental level. This will include:

Core Training

This is a compulsory training element for all research students. Training will be run by the Department or School of Public Health as appropriate. Topics covered will include:

- Introduction to the doctoral degree and the processes
- Health & Safety Induction
- Developing a Proposal
- Qualitative Research Methods
- Publication and Research Paper Writing
- How to write a doctoral thesis
Applying for Research Funding

Preparing for a Viva

The core training sessions complement the research students’ Induction received at the start of the degree. Students should attend all sessions, however they can be taken throughout the degree at applicable times.

Departmental Training

Each department runs regular seminars and journal clubs which are an essential part of a student’s training. Students can attend those run in their own departments as well as external seminars held at Schools of Public Health in other academic institutions.

Annually, the School also hosts a Research Symposium which offers students the opportunity to present and review work amongst peers and academics from across the School. The 2019 Symposium date is to be confirmed and will be communicated to all students shortly. First year students will be expected to present a Poster, whilst second year students will be asked to present an oral presentation. Students in the later stages of their degree will be asked to act as discussants for the presentations.

Research Methods Training

Doctoral students can be given access to course materials for selected MSc and MPH courses in the School of Public Health. Some aspects may be useful to research students e.g. statistics and epidemiology.

Attendance at taught course classes (e.g. within the MSc programmes) is at the discretion of the course leader concerned. For 2018/19, there is extremely limited availability in terms of class space. The Masters course administrator will make PhD students aware if spaces become available and students should consult their supervisors before booking. Class attendance will be monitored to ensure the space is being used. Alternatively, PhD Students can be given access to the Masters course Blackboard site where information and various lecture recordings can be found. Students should contact sphteaching2@imperial.ac.uk to be added to the relevant Blackboard site. This does NOT include the obligation to sit examinations or undertake marked assignments.
**External training courses**

A wide variety of training is available external to the School of Public Health. This includes

- MSc’s and other courses run by other departments
- training courses offered by other universities
- short courses offered by societies, software vendors etc.
- English Language courses at Imperial’s Centre for Academic English
- attendance at academic symposia and conferences relevant to the student’s research
  - in general, all students are expected to attend such meetings at least once per year.

In all cases, students should ascertain and consider the costs of attending external courses and conferences, before registration. Where costs of attendance are to be charged to the student’s department, project budget or bursary, prior permission must be granted by the supervisor(s) (and where appropriate the Head of Department and/or the Departmental Administrator).

The School provides 100% self-funded students with a budget of £1k per annum to use towards costs such as external training course attendance. Sponsored students or those on grants, studentships or bursaries should check their award details to confirm if a budget is available.

**Supervisor-based training**

In most cases, the supervisor(s) will be a major (typically the dominant) source of training and skill development, especially in relation to the specific skills required to undertake the project. Much of this training will occur as part of the day-to-day practice of the research and will therefore not be subject to formal organisation or monitoring. However, students should endeavour to track and assess this training as it occurs, and reflect on their skills development as a result. **Students are therefore encouraged to maintain a diary or portfolio, in which evidence of such training can be compiled (e.g. in the form of notes or workbooks).**
Monitoring, Updating and Approval

The training plan is not intended to be a static document. It should be updated as circumstances change, both to record new evidence of achievement, and to identify new skill needs that emerge as the project – or student’s intentions and ambitions – changes. The student and the supervisor(s) should therefore review the training plan regularly, and have a formal review meeting at 6 monthly intervals.

It is the responsibility of the primary supervisor to ensure that:

- a satisfactory research plan is developed
- prior experience of the student is properly taken into account
- training has been completed satisfactorily

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that:

- a draft training plan is developed and agreed with the supervisor
- agreed training plans, and updates, are transmitted within the stated timelines as necessary
- the training is undertaken
- new training needs are identified
- appropriate evidence of satisfactory achievement has been provided to the supervisor

Evidence of satisfactory achievement will be required by the Director of Postgraduate Studies:

- at confirmation of registration (i.e. 3 months after initial enrolment)
- as part of the bi-annual review of student progress
- at the Early Stage Assessment
- at the Late Stage Review

In addition, this evidence is likely to be important supporting information as part of grant and job applications or interviews. For these reasons, students are encouraged to keep a portfolio of their training outcomes including attendance sheets/certificates, copies of workshop materials and completed assignments.
APPENDIX 1: The Graduate School
Welcome from Professor Sue Gibson, Director of the Graduate School

Academic Departments, the Graduate School and the Graduate Students’ Union work closely together to ensure opportunity is provided for an excellent and internationally renowned research experience.

As part of this offer, the Graduate School has developed a programme of professional skills courses, covering a broad range of themes, for example, personal

Graduate School courses are free of charge to Imperial research students and I would encourage you to take as many as you can to supplement your academic training. The Graduate School works closely with the Graduate Students’ Union (GSU) and is keen to respond to student needs so if there is an area of skills training, or an activity that you would like us to offer, but which is not currently provided, please do get in touch (graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk). You should regularly check the Graduate School’s website and e-Newsletters to keep up to date with all the events and training courses available to you. The current programme can be viewed at: http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/

The Graduate School also runs a number of exciting social events throughout the year which are an opportunity to broaden your knowledge as well as to meet other students and have fun. Particular highlights include the Ig Nobel Awards Tour Show, the Chemistry Show, the 3 minute thesis competition as well as the Research Symposium. I would encourage you to take part in these activities – there are times when it can feel lonely as a research student and these events are an opportunity to be part of the wider research student community. In addition, many of the advances in science, engineering, medicine and business occur at the boundaries between disciplines and meeting students from other Departments and Faculties offers opportunity to enrich your research.

Finally, I hope that you enjoy your studies here at Imperial, and I wish you well.

Sue Gibson
Graduate School Summer Research Symposium

The Graduate School annual summer research symposium is one of the highlights of the GSPDP calendar and will take place in July 2019. Research students’ present posters at this event, and there are prizes for the best poster presentations. Further details of the event and the poster selection process will be available on the Graduate School’s website in the spring term.

Contact Us

Registry, Level 3, Sherfield Building, South Kensington

Email: graduate.school@imperial.ac.uk

Website: http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/professionalskillsresearch
## Appendix 2: Research training plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student</th>
<th>Supervisor 1</th>
<th>Supervisor 2</th>
<th>Division</th>
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<td>Date:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills required</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Timetable</td>
<td>Progress/completion</td>
<td>Evidence of achievement</td>
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Comments:

<table>
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<th>Date:</th>
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| Supervisor’s signature | Date: |
### APPENDIX 3: AN EXAMPLE OF A (PARTIALLY COMPLETED) RESEARCH TRAINING PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of student</th>
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<th>Supervisor 2</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Date of registration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alicia Cervatina</td>
<td>Dr. Susan Stobold</td>
<td>Dr. Jan de Witt</td>
<td>EBS</td>
<td>October 2015</td>
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**Project title:** East meets west – explaining the health effects of German reunification

**Date:** 15/12/15

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<th>Skills required</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Timetable</th>
<th>Progress/completion</th>
<th>Evidence of achievement</th>
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<td>November 15(^{th}) 2015</td>
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<td>Throughout PhD</td>
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<td>Attendance and application to own teaching practice</td>
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