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**London  
South Bank  
University**

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London Doctoral  
Academy

# Key Skills Development Programme

Handbook

# contents



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<b>Welcome.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Development planning.....	5
Course provision.....	5
<b>What are Key Skills?.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Development Cycle.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Training Programme.....</b>	<b>14</b>

# Welcome

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Congratulations on starting your postgraduate research journey at LSBU within the London Doctoral Academy. This will provide you with a fantastic opportunity to carry out research that we hope will have real world impact, and that will contribute to our future society – as well as give you fantastic platform from which to build your future career.

Whether you are studying for a MRes, Professional Doctorate or PhD degree in your chosen discipline, completing your research degree will require new skills and knowledge that will be subject specific improving your technical ability. However, it will also involve other transferable skills, such as personal effectiveness, organisational skills, and an ability to engage, influence and impact. These are important core skills to obtain and are essential for those destined for a future senior leadership role.

The London Doctoral Academy will provide you with a range of opportunities to develop you to be more effective in your research but will also to prepare you for a future leadership career be it in academia, business, industry, third sector or government. At the London Doctoral Academy we will provide you with the opportunity to tailor a skills programme to meet your future objectives, but also provide you with the chance to be part of a wider community.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Maidment', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Graeme

**Professor Graeme Maidment**

Head of the London Doctoral Academy

# Introduction

The London Doctoral Academy's Key Skills Development Programme (KSDP) ensures that all its postgraduate research (PGR) students are equipped to carry out their research, and are prepared for their future.

The KSDP programme draws upon the long experience of LSBU in developing its PGR students. Using Vitae's state-of-the-art Researcher Development Framework (RDF)<sup>1</sup> all research students have the opportunity to take part in a modern, fully integrated programme of lectures, workshops and seminars that are designed to enhance and complement their research experience.

## Development planning

Development planning is an integral part of every PGR degree at LSBU, and each student enrolled in the London Doctoral Academy will be expected to take part in its innovative KSDP programme. Starting with a review of skills, all research students create their own personal development plans, formulated to help deliver their aspirations.

This personal plan is updated yearly to ensure that it is fit for purpose, and that it responds to meet the changing research environment. Each course offered by the KSDP programme is linked to a research stage and the RDF domain in order to provide a clear development pathway that takes each PGR student through to their completion and beyond.

And on each step of the journey, the development activities, training and seminars are recorded in a portfolio that stands as a record of achievement.

## Course provision

The Key Skills Development Planning has at its core ten courses and workshops that all PGR students are expected to engage with during the life of their research degrees. These are complimented by an induction day to get the process running. Attendance at the London Doctoral Academy's acclaimed Summer School is also part of the programme.

In addition to these core activities, there are school-based seminars, and a wide range of optional courses, workshops, and skills development courses that can be built into the portfolio of each PGR student in order to equip them with the key skills to succeed.

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1 [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)

## What are Key Skills?

The London Doctoral Academy defines key skills as transferable skills: those attributes that can be developed and applied – transferred – to a variety of situations. Developing transferable skills is an important part of any modern postgraduate programme.

Increasingly, there is a focus on PGR students achieving competency in a wide variety of attributes that might sit outside of their normal research skills set. Today, key competencies are being identified as important by potential employers, who use them to evaluate each candidate and their suitability for employment.

Formulating these attributes – and competencies – is the essence of the Key Skills Development Programme offered by LSBU, equipping students with the skills to face the world.

In order to do this, at LSBU we ensure that our Key Skills Programme offers training, seminars and events that are in line with Vitae's nationally-recognised RDF planning wheel, illustrated below.

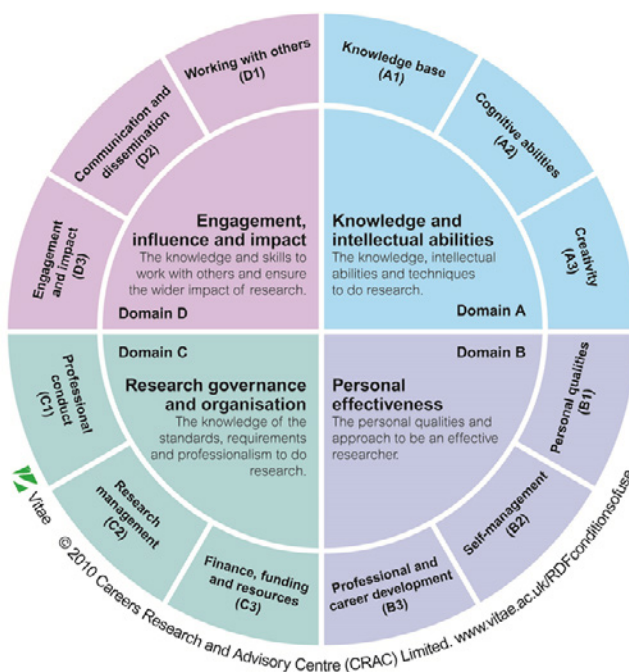


Figure 1: The Vitae RDF Planning Wheel

The Vitae planning wheel is divided into four ‘Domains’ that identify ‘...*the knowledge, behaviour and attributes of successful researchers*’. The purpose of the domains, and the planning wheel, is to help ‘*maximise potential...by developing these attributes*’.

At LSBU the four RDF domains are used to identify the skills needed by all postgraduate students, and to help provide guidance and support.

Within the domains, the following skills are identified as important here at LSBU:

#### Knowledge & intellectual skills (Domain A)

- *Research skills & techniques (skills to carry out research)*
- *Project-specific skills (any specific skills)*

#### Personal effectiveness (Domain B)

- *Personal effectiveness (to achieve research goals)*
- *Career management (professional development)*

#### Research governance & organisation (Domain C)

- *Research environment (i.e. understanding context, ethics & integrity)*
- *Research management (of the project & research)*

#### Engagement, influence & impact (Domain D)

- *Communication skills (to engage with various audiences)*
- *Networking and team-working (to understand and influence behaviours)*

Every PGR student should seek to develop areas in each domain over the life of their course of study, and the London Doctoral Academy’s Key Skills Programme provides support and training in all these aspects.

“

To develop a successful career in research in the modern era, one needs an array of skills. The ability to plan, self-manage and communicate to different audiences and across different media. An ease with public speaking. Adaptability and resilience. The Key Skills Programme provides the transferable skills training you need, whatever your professional career goals and aspirations. So sign-up for our Key Skills Programme to expand your horizon and open the doors to the world.”

Dr Karl Smith, Research Impact Manager

# The Development Cycle

The key to planning PGR development lies with LSBU’s Key Skills Development Programme, and particularly in its reflective Development Cycle, illustrated below.

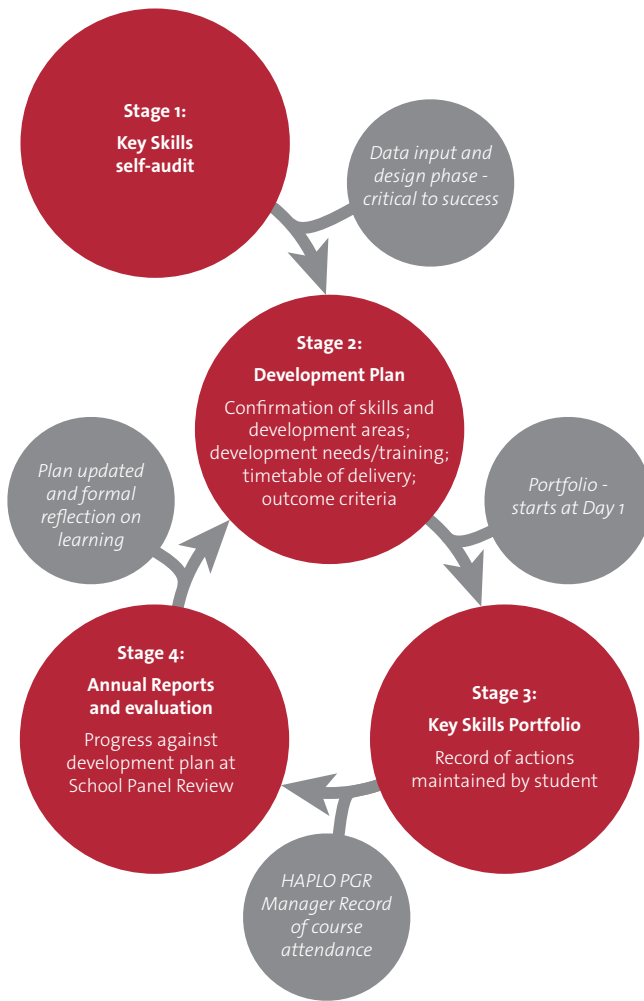


Figure 2: The Development Cycle

The Development Cycle is intended to identify the training and development needs of each student, and to provide a means for them of planning out their individual training needs. As such, every PGR student enrolled is expected to engage in the cycle as an integral part of their programme of study.



The cycle depends on its four stages, recorded in the appropriate sections of the the HAPLO PGR manager system:

**Stage 1: Self (Skills) audit.**

This process requires self-reflection and consideration of skills sets.

**Stage 2: Development Plan.**

The development plan leads on from the skills audit, identifying both training and personal development needs.

**Stage 3: Recording.**

Recording is a means of logging development and recording achievement and progression.

**Stage 4: Review.**

Annual review closes the cycle and allows new targets to be set for development.

The **Skills Audit** is a self-reflective consideration of those skills already developed, and of those that need development. In many ways the audit is a type of Training Needs Analysis (TNA), identifying skills already gained, and those that need further development. The Self Audit involves a consideration of skills gained from a wide variety of sources, including previous degree programmes, professional development training and practical experience.

The **Development Plan** leads on from the **Skills Audit**, and identifies the training and personal development needs of the individual (Table 1). The development plan is discussed, reviewed and agreed during annual meetings with the supervisor; initial meetings to agree targets form part of the Research Student's first six weeks of work. The Plan is a mutually agreed programme that might include training sessions, directed learning, practical workshops, or discussion meetings.

Identification of competencies to be developed is an important part of the development plan; from this can be identified both the development needs and the evidence base in order to identify how and if those needs have been met. This evidence is then retained in a portfolio of skills.

<b>Knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research methods (theoretical &amp; practical)</li><li>• Research behaviours (critical thinking &amp; evaluation, problem solving, creative thought)</li><li>• Project-specifics (e.g. IT, data collection, working with archives, research ethics, etc)</li></ul>	<b>Research Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project management</li><li>• Data management (storage &amp; manipulation)</li><li>• Research integrity</li><li>• Ethics awareness</li></ul>
<b>Personal effectiveness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managing your time</li><li>• Preparation &amp; responsiveness</li><li>• Writing for publication</li><li>• Thinking beyond your degree</li></ul>	<b>Engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicating with others</li><li>• Conferences and seminars</li><li>• Public &amp; stake holder engagement</li></ul>

Table 1: Typical Needs and Competencies for the Development Plan

Competency	Development needs	Evidence Base
Conference Presentations	Attendance on appropriate courses Directed feedback from supervisors and peers Practice sessions	Note from courses Feedback sheets and discussion Copies of presentations Commentary

Table 2: Competency-based approach to development needs

**Recording** is an essential component of work. PGR Students are expected to maintain a skills portfolio, which, at its simplest, is a record of the training attended within LSBU's HAPLO PGR Manager system (Table 2). Students may wish to maintain a fuller document, which both forms the basis for discussion and review of research goals, but which also provides the main body of evidence in engagement with Key Skills Development. The portfolio concept is modelled on the CPD (Continuing Professional Development) evidence-led approach used in many professions.

A diverse range of material can be used to evidence development in the Key Skills Portfolio, and should be capable of showing how each student has engaged with the development process. All of the Core Key Skills Sessions provide certificates of attendance for this purpose.

## Typical Portfolio Needs

### To Contain

- Training Plan Overview (agreed developmental needs)
- Development Needs (skills to be developed) and including Evidence
- Reflective Commentary(ies)

### Evidence to be linked to Development goals

- Meeting notes
- Certificates
- Relevant Notes
- Etc

Table 3: Typical Portfolio needs. The Portfolio is maintained on HAPLO PGR Manager, and may be supplemented by other records as the student may see fit to maintain.

The screenshot displays the 'Training plan overview' page in the HAPLO PGR Manager. The page includes a sidebar with navigation links such as 'Home', 'London South Bank University', and various academic departments. The main content area features a 'Training plan overview' section with a 'Create new' button and a table of development needs.

Development need	Date identified	Date completed
<a href="#">Communication</a>	02 Jun 2017	23 Mar 2017
<a href="#">Career Development</a>	02 Jun 2017	
<a href="#">Communication: Presenting Research Work</a>	18 Jun 2017	
<a href="#">Student Supervisor Relationship</a>	18 Jun 2017	31 Mar 2017
<a href="#">Personal Effectiveness</a>	18 Jun 2017	
<a href="#">Career Development Phase 1</a>	18 Jun 2017	
<a href="#">Key Skills (now compulsory)</a>	18 Jun 2017	30 Nov 2016

Figure 3: Specimen Training Plan page from HAPLO PGR Manager.

A significant component of the recording cycle is reflective practice, which requires PGR students to consider their activities and examine the outcomes of their participation. A typical approach might be STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result), but other approaches are equally valuable.

**Situation:** How, where, when, with whom

**Task:** Description of task carried out

**Action:** What action did you take?

**Result:** What did you achieve?

[< Back](#)

## View entry

Home

London South Bank University

Applied Sciences

Arts and Creative Industries

Built Environment and Architecture

Business

Engineering

Health and Social Care

Law and Social Science

Committees

Upcoming meetings

Calendar

Guides

**Development need**

Communication

[Edit](#)

**What skills do you already have in this area?**

Various communication formats including spoken, written documentation and presentations for my work and Masters training.

**What skills do you need to develop in this area?**

Dissemination of my research to a non-specialist audience

**Development support identified (training courses, etc)**

Conference presentations

3MT training

Present at the CIBS 5MT

**Files**

[SKMBT\\_C35170602165700.pdf](#)

[Cert Conf Presentations.pdf](#)

**Expected date of completion:**

23 Mar 2017

**Date completed:**

23 Mar 2017

**Reflections on completing this development objective:**

I found the conference training really helpful. It gave some good pointers of how to talk about my research and to consider who my audience would be. How you would present to a peer group in your field is different to a non-specialist audience.

I also really thought about my presenting style and whether this would be off putting. I also recognised that my natural speaking in presentations can sometimes be seen as not enthusiastic although clear. I have been working on how to deliver my presentation in a more enthusiastic but professional style - it is a work in progress.

Figure 4: Specimen Development Needs page from HAPLO PGR Manager.

**Annual review** closes the cycle and allows new targets to be set for development for the following year. This ensures that the cycle recommences again with appropriate modification to the outcomes and goals. It requires the PGR student and the supervisory team to have regular progress meetings to discuss development.

**Feedback** is sought from all participants on the Key Skills Sessions. This takes the form of immediate reactive feedback – recording the immediate impressions of the participants at the time – through to reflective feedback requested later by the Key Skills team. These feedback mechanisms help the London Doctoral Academy respond to the development needs of PGR Students, and to improve the programme for the future.

## The Training Programme

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The Training Programme developed by the London Doctoral Academy comprises lectures, seminars, workshops and other development opportunities. The programme is delivered by the Academy together with partners across the University, and specifically the Library and Learning Resources, Digital Skills and the Centre for Research Informed Teaching – together with seminars and training session run by individual schools.

The programme consists of three components:

1. Core Sessions which are compulsory for all PGR Students;
2. School & Supervisor Provision consisting of supervisor-led sessions, meetings or other development; and
3. Optional Sessions which provide additional support for key areas.

“

I took all of the key skills workshops in my first couple of weeks at LSBU. They provided me with important insight into how to approach my research programme, manage supervisor relationships and develop my research skills. I was also able to network with students from other disciplines and learn from their experiences, which helped me to settle in to student life. As they are repeated regularly, I have been able to retake workshops as they became more relevant, for example when I presented at my first conference. Research students should consider these workshops as essential and build them into their development programme”.

..... Tara Singh Ghatauray, PhD Student, School of Engineering

The balance of provision differs according to RDF Domain (see above). For example, the provision of specialist training and support for **RDF Domain A – Knowledge and Intellectual Ability** is more properly the responsibility of the host Academic School, rather than the London Doctoral Academy, while that for **RDF Domain D – Engagement, Influence & Impact**, which delivers generic skills, is the reverse.

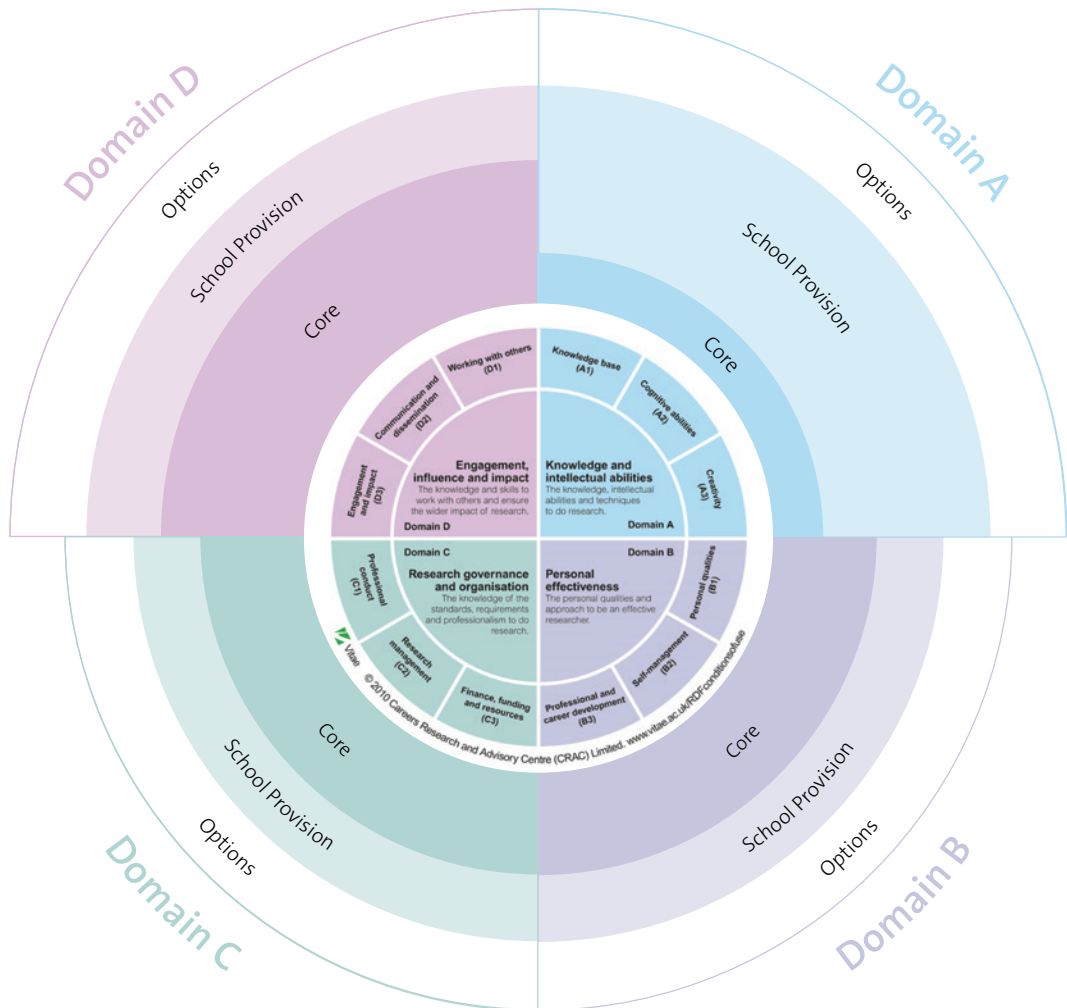


Figure 5: Balance of Provision of Training Courses according to RDF Domain. Typical Training Courses involve a combination of Core mandatory training, together with School-based seminars and a range of training options delivered by expert providers.

## Development Stages

Each session, seminar and workshop is identified with reference to RDF Domain – to indicate the area or competency that it is seeking to develop – together with the recommended development stage.

Development stages are indicated as **PGR1** (i.e. Early Stage), **PGR 2** (Mid Stage) and **PGR 3** (Late Stage). These act as a guide to those intending to come on the courses, providing an indication of the best time to take part in the development activity during the life of the PGR programme. For example, with those indicated as **PGR1** are especially suitable for the opening part of the programme; while **PGR2** and **PGR3** relate to the later stages.

“

The Key Skills programme at LSBU gives researchers a chance to compare and discuss strategies for their own development. It reinforces and provides the tools needed to become well rounded researchers. Whether it's how to get the most out of your supervisor relationship, networking, or preparing for your Viva. They are all equally important in your journey through a research degree”.

..... Zoe De Grussa, PhD Student, School of Engineering

## Core Sessions

The London Doctoral Academy delivers the following Core Key Skills Development Sessions, which must be attended by all PGR students over the life of their programme.

**PGR Induction** - Induction sessions are held on a regular basis, delivered by the London Doctoral Academy. These welcome PGR students and help them find their feet, introducing them to the workings of LSBU, and to some of their roles and responsibilities. Attendance on an induction session is intended to set the ball rolling on each postgraduate programme. Induction sessions are normally held at quarterly intervals from October.

Following on from the Induction Session, the Core Training workshops and training sessions are delivered in weekly blocks. The online Skills Programme Calendar provides details of delivery dates.



**Block 1** (delivered in the autumn and spring, see below) covers Key Skills in the Research Environment; The Student Supervisor Relationship; Insights into Personal Effectiveness; Developing Research Skills & Research Ethics.

- **Key Skills in the Research Environment** describes the development process and starts students on the path to development
- **The Student Supervisor Relationship** examines the roles and responsibilities of the students and supervisor
- **Insights into Personal Effectiveness** looks at key areas of personal effectiveness
- **Developing Research Skills** introduces students to project planning and stages of research development
- **Research Ethics** ensures that all students are aware of the ethical considerations of their research.

Stage/Block	PGR1	PGR2	PGR3	A	B	C	D
PGR Induction				●	●	●	●
Block 1	Key Skills in the Research Environment			●	●	●	●
	Student-Supervisor Relationship				●	●	●
	Insight into Personal Effectiveness				●	●	●
	Developing Research Skills			●		●	
	Research Ethics					●	

Figure 6: Block 1, Core Sessions relative to RDF Domain and Development Stage

**Block 2** (delivered in the autumn and spring, see below) covers Researcher Integrity, Conference Presentations, Writing for Publication, The Viva and Beyond, and Career Development. (Note that Conference Presentations and Writing for Publication have follow-up sessions).

- **Researcher Integrity** examines through a workshop roles and responsibilities of researchers, and of honesty, rigour, transparency and duty of care.
- **Conference Presentations** is a two-part workshop that examines good practice in the development and delivery of good conference presentations.
- **Writing for Publication** is a two-part workshop that considers the purpose and process of academic publication, and provides practical advice for authors.
- **The Viva and Beyond** is for final stage PGR students, and considers the process of the viva examination, and provides advice and support.
- **Career Development** - with fewer than 50% of PGR students staying in Academia, this session examines the possibilities.

**PGR Summer School** - In addition to the Induction and two training blocks, PGR students are expected to participate in LSBU's week-long summer school every year of their study at LSBU. This consists of training sessions, presentations and academic competitions.

Stage/Block	PGR1	PGR2	PGR3	A	B	C	D
Block 2		Researcher Integrity			●	●	
		Conference Presentations					●
		Writing for Publication					●
			The Viva & Beyond		●		
			Career Development		●		
PGR Summer School				●	●	●	●

Figure 7: Block 2, Core Sessions relative to RDF Domain and Development Stage

## School Sessions

The importance of the student-supervisor relationship in delivering skills training, knowledge exchange and coaching cannot be over-emphasised, and students should ensure that they have adequate meetings and supervisory sessions. In addition, LSBU's schools deliver a range of training seminars and workshops that complement the core skills training (see Table 4 below). Full details of these sessions are provided by the Schools.

School	Nature of provision	A	B	C	D
ACI	School seminars	●			●
APS	School Seminars, training sessions and workshops	●			●
BEA	School Seminars, training sessions and workshops	●	●	●	●
BUS	School Seminars, training sessions and workshops	●			●
ENG	School Seminars	●			●
HSC	School Seminars, training sessions and workshops	●	●	●	●
LSS	School Seminars, training sessions and workshops	●			●

*Table 4: School based training sessions*

## Optional Courses

The London Doctoral Academy delivers a range of options in partnership with Research, Enterprise and Innovation (REI), Library and Learning Resources (LLR), Digital Skills, and the Centre for Research Informed Teaching (CRIT) including the Skills for Learning team. Optional courses are delivered throughout the year to provide training and access to competencies in a wide variety of skills.

Training by the **London Doctoral Academy** includes courses in communication skills – including participation in the internationally acclaimed 3Mt Thesis Competition – such as preparing academic posters and speaking to non-specialist audiences.

“

I knew little about the three minute thesis before attending the key skills development sessions. The facilitators delivered four workshops, to prepare doctoral students to present their research topic and highlight its significance in just three minutes. With only one slide, no notes, and the clock ticking down it was exciting and scary. The facilitators and fellow students provided constructive feedback which helped shape the final presentation and build confidence. It really helped me to think about the key points in my research and how I could get my message across in a user friendly and interesting way. I would recommend it to everyone”.

..... Sandie Woods, Professional Doctorate in Education, School of Law and Social Sciences

Grant writing is an important skill, and features strongly in the programme

Being resilient and capable of responding to feedback is an important attribute of researcher development, and both are supported by training sessions by leaders in their field. SPSS training, required by so many postgraduates, is delivered by award-winning academic Dr Matthew Bond (School of Law & Social Sciences), with dedicated one-to-one support.

Cultivating creativity and innovation is a healthy attribute and with LSBU being Entrepreneurial University of the Year 2016, the day-long workshop delivered by **Research, Enterprise and Innovation** is especially important.

Training in teaching for postgraduates is delivered by the expert **Centre for Research Informed Teaching**.

PGR1	PGR2	PGR3	A	B	C	D
SPSS Training			●			
Strategies for Success			●	●		
Creativity for Success			●	●		
	3Mt Thesis					●
	Poster Presentations					●
	Communicating to non-specialists					●
	Networks & resilience			●		
	Building self-esteem			●		
		ABC of Grant Writing			●	
Teaching for PGR Students					●	

Table 5: Optional courses provided by the London Doctoral Academy, Research Enterprise and Innovation and the Centre for Research Informed Teaching.

“

The London Doctoral Academy's training programme has really helped me develop my research skills and has provided practical advice and support at all steps on my journey. I would recommend it to anyone planning to do a PGR programme at LSBU”.

Nadia Imtiaz, PhD Student, School of Law and Social Sciences

The Library and Learning Resources and Digital Skills teams are best placed to support PGR students with a range of specific skills designed to support research and to formulate an effective thesis. Supported by a range of subject specialists and experts, the LLR team courses vary from specific and focussed training sessions to longer development workshops.

PGR1	PGR2	PGR3	A	B	C	D
Information for New Researchers			●		●	
Literature Searching			●		●	
Refworks			●			
Finding Dissertations					●	
IP & Copyright			●		●	
Referencing			●		●	
Systematic Reviews			●			
Writing a Data Management Plan			●			
Managing your Research Data			●		●	
Using Google Scholar & Academic web engines			●			
Social Media				●		●
SPSS			●			
NVivo			●			
Excel: Formulas & Functions			●			

Table 6: Optional courses provided by Library and Learning Resources and the Digital Skills team.





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