

# overVIEW

## UK GRAD Bulletin for Supervisors

### Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of **overVIEW**. It's been a long six months since the first one came to you in January. Hard to believe that the end of the academic year is now upon us. As ever, it's been a very busy six months for HEIs. Institutions have responded to the QAA Special Review on postgraduate research degrees and are awaiting their reports; RCUK have published details of what form Roberts reporting should take later this year ... and the RAE is coming ever closer...!

The end of this academic year also sees the end of the third academic year of Research Council funding for implementing Sir Gareth Roberts's recommendations on skills and career development for researchers. Inevitably, the issue of future funding is rearing its head. The Government's forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review means that 2006 is a critical

year for gathering evidence of the value of the skills agenda and how it has made a difference. Read the brief update from the Rugby Team (page 5) and then download the report they produced which deals with evaluation – food for thought indeed. We would be interested in hearing your views on the KPIs they have suggested.

In this issue, as promised, we look to Europe and how a range of initiatives are impacting on research degrees in the UK. You may be surprised to read how quickly decisions are being made which will have an effect on you as supervisors and on your students. Read the article starting on this page to see what Bologna, Prague, Berlin, Bergen and, in 2007, London have in common.

In our first editorial, we espoused the view that **overVIEW** might be used to celebrate your

work as supervisors. We are therefore delighted to highlight an innovative award for excellence in supervision, awarded by Durham University (page 7.) An article to be copied and circulated in your institution perhaps, as an example of good practice?

We also promised to keep you up to date with policy and practice which may provide you with context; may save you time; or may offer an alternative way of doing things. This issue has a number of items which meet these aims.

Finally, thank you to the contributors whose articles you can read throughout **overVIEW**. Why not follow their example, and send us an article.....we are looking forward to hearing from you.

**Anne Goodman**, Editor

### Europe ... and You



*'Every UK HEI needs to consider/develop its strategic stance towards Europe – towards Bologna – we ignore it at our peril'*

**Stephen Adam**, European Commission  
ECTS and Diploma Supplement Councillor,  
University of Westminster

In the last issue of **overVIEW** we promised you a cut-out-and-keep guide to initiatives in Europe which relate to researchers. And we have kept our promise (see page 2.) You may have been more than a little underwhelmed by the prospect, but this really is an area with which it is vital that you, and your institution, keep up to date.

The EU is playing an increasing role in European higher education issues. Key areas where the European Union seeks to develop quality education and encourage cooperation between Member States include:

- research and development and the framework programmes for research;
- mobility programmes for students and academic staff;
- recognition and transparency of qualifications;
- quality assurance;
- the establishment of a European qualifications framework.

In particular, the Bologna process on creating a European Higher Education Area is an important European initiative which exists outside the decision-making procedure of the European Union and involves more countries. In turn, it lays challenges for each country's HE system, for individual institutions and for staff.

You and your institution may want to consider some of the following:

#### Collaboration

These initiatives have the potential to create opportunities for collaboration for staff and

students. How are you and your institution placed to establish joint doctorates with European universities?

#### Mobility

With increased mobility, you may have to deal with students, staff and possibly job applicants who possess qualifications from other European countries. Similarly if you, your students, or staff wish to work in Europe, you may be required to show how qualifications match European qualifications. How au fait are you with the doctoral system in other European countries?

#### Diploma Supplements

An aim of the Bologna process is that every student graduating from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement. The DS is composed of eight sections (information identifying the holder of the qualification; information identifying the qualification; information on the level of the qualification; information on the contents and results gained; information on the function of the qualification; additional information; certification of the Supplement; information on the national higher education system.) Some universities are considering issuing a DS for their Research Students, – what is the view in your institution?

Read on for some 'must-have' information on European initiatives....

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the uk GRAD programme  
summer 2006

# The story so far..... Europe

The European Picture	The Bologna Process
1996	
1997	
1998	
1999	<p><b>JUNE</b>  <b>Bologna</b>            The Bologna Process, an intergovernmental initiative, is set up. Aims to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide. States its broad objectives as being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to remove the obstacles to student mobility across Europe</li> <li>• to enhance the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide</li> <li>• to establish a common structure of higher education systems across Europe</li> <li>• for this common structure to be based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate.</li> <li>• Establishes six Action Lines, not yet including any reference to doctoral programmes ( third cycle)</li> </ul> <p>Ministers agree to meet every two years</p> <p>The ministerial meetings are to supported by two groups: The Bologna Follow-Up Group and the Bologna Process Board, both to be organised and administered by the Bologna Secretariat, which will be run by the hosts of the next meeting  <a href="http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/990719BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.PDF">www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/990719BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.PDF</a></p>
<p>2000 <b>JANUARY</b>            the European Commission determine to establish the European Research Area (ERA), which acknowledged the need to introduce a European dimension to careers.</p> <p><b>MARCH</b>            the <b>Lisbon Strategy</b> is produced – a political strategy that goes beyond research policy. The European Council agrees that the European Union should make 'Europe the most dynamic and competitive knowledge economy in the world by 2010'. This was followed by a further statement in Barcelona 2002, that Europe must raise its investment in research to 3% of European GDP by 2010 Each of these objectives recognised the importance of the researcher and resulted in political objectives specifically related to the role of the researchers and the need to improve their conditions and career opportunities  <a href="http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm">http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm</a></p>	
<p>2001 <b>JUNE</b>            Publication of '<b>A Mobility Strategy for the ERA</b>', whose principle aim was to 'present a strategy to create a favourable environment for the mobility of researchers in the ERA, in order to develop, attract and retain human resources in research and to promote innovation'  <a href="http://europa.eu/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2001/com2001_0331en01.pdf">http://europa.eu/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2001/com2001_0331en01.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>MAY – Prague</b>            Ministers reaffirm their commitment to the Bologna Process and welcome the involvement of a number of new players: the European University Association (EUA); National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB); European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE); the European Commission. The Bologna Process is seen as playing a key role in contributing to the Lisbon Strategy. Four more Action Lines included, still no reference to doctoral degrees  <a href="http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/010519PRAGUE_COMMUNIQUE.PDF">www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/010519PRAGUE_COMMUNIQUE.PDF</a></p>
2002	
<p>2003 <b>JULY</b>  <b>'Researchers in the European Research Area': one profession, multiple careers'</b> published containing detailed propositions to ensure the recruitment and retention of researchers in the ERA, including the first outline of the '<b>European Charter and Code</b>'  <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/pdf/careercommunication_en.pdf">http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp6/mariecurie-actions/pdf/careercommunication_en.pdf</a></p>	<p><b>SEPTEMBER – Berlin</b>            Ministers consider it necessary to go beyond the focus on two main cycles of higher education to include the doctoral level as the third cycle and to build links between the European Higher Education and Research Areas. In turn, this became a new Action Line: Doctoral studies and the synergy between the EHEA and the ERA  <a href="http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/030919Berlin_Communique.PDF">http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/030919Berlin_Communique.PDF</a></p>
<p>2004 <b>MARCH</b>            Lisbon Objectives reinforced at a Council meeting, stating that 'Human resources are critical for research and development and priority must be given to training, retention and mobility of researchers' (Presidency Conclusions European Council, 25-26 March 2004)  <a href="http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/79696.pdf">http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/79696.pdf</a></p> <p><b>NOVEMBER</b>            Report entitled '<b>Facing the challenge – the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment</b>' also emphasised the need to increase the attractiveness of working conditions in research in Europe.  <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/kok_en.pdf">http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/kok_en.pdf</a></p>	
<p>2005 <b>JULY</b>            UK takes over the Presidency of the EU. Will hold it until December 2005</p>	<p><b>FEBRUARY – Salzburg</b>            EUA Bologna Seminar on "Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society" aims to reach a set of conclusions, identify key challenges and make recommendations for action to be undertaken (in the period 2005-2007).</p> <p>Ten basic principles relating to doctoral programmes (the Salzburg principles) drawn up, with recommendations that they be fed into next ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005  <a href="http://www.eua.be/eua/en/Salzburg_Seminar.jspx">www.eua.be/eua/en/Salzburg_Seminar.jspx</a></p> <p><b>JULY</b>            The UK takes over responsibility for the Secretariat to the Bologna Follow Up Group and its Board  <a href="http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna">www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna</a></p> <p><b>MAY – Bergen</b>            Ministers mandate the EUA, together with interested partners, to prepare a report on 'the basic principles for doctoral programmes to be presented to Ministers in 2007'.            Communiqué issued stating '<i>over regulation of doctoral programmes must be avoided</i>'. – welcomed by the UK  <a href="http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050520_Bergen_Communique.pdf">www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050520_Bergen_Communique.pdf</a></p>
2006	<p><b>JUNE – Vienna</b>  <b>'A researchers' labour market: Europe a pole of attraction'</b>. One of the events of the Austrian Presidency of the European Union  <a href="http://www.eracareersaustria.at/conference">www.eracareersaustria.at/conference</a></p> <p><b>JULY – Swansea</b>            Bologna Seminar on Employability  <a href="http://www.bolognaconference.swansea.ac.uk">www.bolognaconference.swansea.ac.uk</a></p> <p><b>DECEMBER – Nice</b>            EUA Bologna Seminar on Doctoral Programmes  <a href="http://www.eua.be/eua/en/eua_events.jspx">www.eua.be/eua/en/eua_events.jspx</a></p>
2007	<p><b>LONDON</b>            Next ministerial summit to take place</p>

In the last issue of **overVIEW** we gave you a cut-out-and-keep guide to the Skills Agenda. This time, we've given you an **overVIEW** of initiatives relating to researchers in Europe..... and like most information coming out of Europe, there's lots of it! This is followed by a list of useful websites and further information. Bonne Chance!

#### Reports Related to Bologna

#### Researcher Careers

The higher education sector agree a concordat concerning the management of staff appointed on fixed term contracts to carry out research in UK universities and colleges  
[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/activities/RCI/downloads/rciconcordat.pdf](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/activities/RCI/downloads/rciconcordat.pdf)

The Research Careers Initiative (RCI) is set up to monitor progress towards meeting the commitments of the Concordat and identifies and encourages good practice in the career management and development of contract research staff  
[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/activities/rci.asp](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/activities/rci.asp)

#### FEBRUARY

Dublin' descriptors for Bachelors and Masters degrees drawn up by Joint Quality initiative (JQI), an informal network for quality assurance and accreditation of bachelor and master programmes in Europe [www.jointquality.org/](http://www.jointquality.org/)

RCI produces final report, noting that "there has been a steady improvement in the conditions and terms of employment of contract research staff employment" but recognises that there is more work to be done  
[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/activities/RCI/downloads/RCI\\_final.pdf](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/activities/RCI/downloads/RCI_final.pdf)

#### SEPTEMBER

'Bologna with Student Eyes' report published by the ESIB is the National Unions of Students in Europe. It contains a section on doctoral programmes  
[www.esib.org/](http://www.esib.org/)

European Researcher's Mobility Portal is launched. A joint initiative of the European Commission and the 33 countries participating in the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme for Research. Its purpose is to create a more favourable environment for career development job vacancies for researchers  
[http://www.europa.eu.int/eracareers/index\\_en.cfm?l1=4](http://www.europa.eu.int/eracareers/index_en.cfm?l1=4)

#### JANUARY

The European Universities Association (EUA) launches a Doctoral Programmes Project in to examine the development of existing doctoral courses. The project aims to identify essential conditions in the development of such programmes in Europe and to promote cooperation  
[www.eua.be:8080/eua/jsp/en/client/item\\_view.jsp](http://www.eua.be:8080/eua/jsp/en/client/item_view.jsp)

#### OCTOBER

Following Berlin Communiqué the JQI propose an extended set of shared Dublin descriptors for third cycle qualifications  
[www.jointquality.org/content/descriptors/CompletesetDublinDescriptors.doc](http://www.jointquality.org/content/descriptors/CompletesetDublinDescriptors.doc)

#### FEBRUARY

The Salzburg principles are published. They include recognition:

that the core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research; the importance of institutional policies in supporting doctoral programmes; the significance of diversity; the crucial role of supervision and assessment; the role of doctoral candidates as early stage researchers; the importance of achieving critical mass; issues about duration; the promotion of innovative structures; the need to Increase mobility and to ensure appropriate funding.

[www.bolognabergen2005.no/EN/BoI\\_sem/Seminars/050203-05Salzburg/050203-05\\_Conclusions.pdf](http://www.bolognabergen2005.no/EN/BoI_sem/Seminars/050203-05Salzburg/050203-05_Conclusions.pdf)

#### APRIL

EUA Trends IV Report an analysis of the challenges faced by European higher education institutions in implementing the Bologna reforms. The report's findings include a section on doctoral programmes

[www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/client/item\\_view.jsp?type\\_id=1&item\\_id=2404](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/client/item_view.jsp?type_id=1&item_id=2404)

#### MARCH

The EU adopts a recommendation on a 'European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers'. These documents provide a set of general principles and requirements that specify the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers, employers and funders with regard to research careers  
[http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index_en.cfm)

#### JUNE

The EU run 'Researchers in Europe' between June and November to focus media and public attention on the essential role of science and research in society

#### SEPTEMBER

As one of the events in the Programme of the UK Presidency of the European Union UK GRAD together with the OST, UK Research Councils and European Commission host a European Conference in London on the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct

#### AUGUST

'Bologna with Students' Eyes 2' launched. Aim to input to London summit in 2007

## Europe - Useful Information



*The Lisbon Strategy aims to achieve a knowledge-based society: increase the expenditure devoted to research and development (R&D) up to 3% of GDP and avoid a European brain drain*

### Europe Unit

[www.europeunit.ac.uk/home](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/home)

The Europe Unit is a sector-wide body, which aims to raise awareness of the European issues affecting UK higher education and to coordinate the UK's involvement in European initiatives and debates. The Europe Unit has produced its own 'Guide to the Bologna Process', which will be updated shortly. They also produce a very useful monthly Newsletter – 'This Month in Europe' email: [inof@europeunit.ac.uk](mailto:inof@europeunit.ac.uk) to subscribe.

### UK Bologna Process website

[www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna)

Provides information and news about developments in the Bologna Process and about how the work programme will be taken forward over the next two years prior to the next Ministerial Summit in London in May 2007. News and Events Updates will be added to the website on an ongoing basis.

### UK Research Office [www.ukro.ac.uk](http://www.ukro.ac.uk)

UKRO is the UK's leading information and advice service on European Union funding for research and higher education. It is jointly funded by the Research Councils and receives subscriptions from over 150 research organisations, principally in the UK.

### European Universities

**Association** [www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)

As the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, the EUA is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. The EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research. EUA aims to achieve this through active support and guidance to its members as autonomous institutions in enhancing the quality of their teaching, learning and research as well as their contributions to society. It has been active in looking at the issues for doctoral programmes within Europe.

### EURODOC [www.eurodoc.net](http://www.eurodoc.net)

This is the European Council of doctoral candidates and young researchers. It takes the form of a federation of national associations of PhD candidates and young researchers. Its objectives are:

- to represent doctoral candidates and junior researchers at the European level in matters of education, research, and professional development of their careers
- to advance the quality of doctoral programmes and the standards of research activity in Europe
- to promote the circulation of information on issues regarding young researchers; organise events; take part in debates and assist in the elaboration of policies about Higher Education and Research in Europe
- to establish and promote co-operation between national associations representing doctoral candidates and junior researchers within Europe

### The Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers

[http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/eracareers/index_en.cfm)

Information on this can be found on the Researchers' Mobility Portal.

### The Bologna Follow-Up Group

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) consists of representatives from all 40 Bologna signatory countries. The Group is chaired by the current EU Presidency, with the host country of the next ministerial summit as Vice-Chair. The BFUG's role is to help signatory countries

to follow up on the recommendations made at the ministerial summits. The Group produces an official work programme of seminars on priority issues between ministerial summits. A list of seminars arranged by this group as well as information on related events can be found on

[www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.list](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.list)

## UK Bologna Promoters

The UK has 14 'Bologna Promoters' whose job it is to help inform UK higher education institutions about the Bologna Process reforms. The promoters comprise 14 senior academics and administrators who have been chosen because of their in-depth knowledge in quality assurance, qualifications frameworks and recognition issues in higher education.

The UK Bologna promoters are:

Dr Howard Davies - *London Metropolitan University*

Professor Wendy Davies - *University College London*

Professor Malcolm Cook - *University of Exeter*

Dr Stephen Adam - *University of Westminster*

Dr Anthony Vickers - *University of Essex*

Professor Tim Birtwistle - *Leeds Metropolitan University*

Mr John Reilly - *University of Kent*

Mrs Anne Davies - *Queens University, Belfast*.

Mr Huw Morris - *University of Wales, Swansea - liaison with Welsh institutions*

Mr Alan Davidson - *University of Dundee*

Mr James Dunphy - *University of Aberdeen*

Professor Diane Meehan - *Liverpool John Moores University*

Mr Graeme Roberts - *University of Aberdeen*

Mr Simon Sweeney - *University of York*

UK higher education institutions interested in seeking the advice of a Bologna Promoter should contact the UK Socrates-Erasmus Council on 01227 762712 or at [info@erasmus.ac.uk](mailto:info@erasmus.ac.uk).

# UK GRAD Update

## Rugby Team Reborn

In the last issue of **overVIEW** we reported on the formation of The Rugby Team\*.

As promised, the team have now produced their report. It outlines the current situation with regard to skills development for researchers, explains why evaluation of skills development is important and identifies some of the challenges in doing so. The recommendations it makes to key stakeholders are the culmination of extended debate, consultation and discussion, both within the Rugby Team itself and with the Sector. The Rugby Team also produced the specification for the Database of Practice Read the full report on [www.grad.ac.uk/nationalpolicy](http://www.grad.ac.uk/nationalpolicy).  
[www.grad.ac.uk/rugbyteam](http://www.grad.ac.uk/rugbyteam)

### Rugby Team 2006

The participants at the 2006 Roberts Policy Forum in January reaffirmed the usefulness of having a group such as the Rugby Team. It was agreed to ensure the membership represented all stakeholders and agree the terms of reference for Rugby Team 06. A meeting was held in early May to establish the terms of reference for this new group. Join the Rugby Team Virtual Correspondence Group by contacting Sarah Every [sarah.every@grad.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.every@grad.ac.uk) or join in the debate by logging on to the Bulletin Board [www.grad.ac.uk/bulletinboard](http://www.grad.ac.uk/bulletinboard).

*\*Formed after the 2005 Roberts Policy Forum (held in Rugby) and facilitated by UK GRAD, the Rugby Team was formed with a mission to propose a meaningful and workable way of evaluating the effectiveness of skills development for early careers researchers based on consultation across the sector, including universities, student organisations, QAA, Funding Councils, Research Councils and other relevant organisations.*

## Practice leads to Perfect?

As reported in the last issue of **overVIEW**, the online Database of Practice is now available. There are around 300 entries, 200 of which are on public view from a range of universities and research institutes across the country and it's well worth a quick browse over a cup of coffee - it gives a real insight into how the skills agenda had leapt forward in the past couple of years. Most of all though, it's a fantastic resource for ideas. Why not use it in your institution to enhance your provision by building on examples of successful practice?

A quick glance reveals a number of interesting entries which relate to supervisor training, or support for early career researchers (CRS/postdocs).

- Supervisor Good Practice Workshops
- Joint supervisor/student training days
- Coaching for Academic Researchers - PostDocs and Junior Academics
- Mentoring programme for research staff
- Expert Encounters: media networking event for postdoctoral research staff
- Supervisor training course with places available for senior contract research staff
- Gaining a Fellowship

You can read the brief description of the activity and then link to a page which gives further details, including a contact in the institution who is responsible for the activity - so it's easy to ask any questions you may have.

To access the Database of Practice you will need to register (a very quick process.) Once registered you can also add any of your own practice to the database as well as being able to tap in to a range of other resources from UK GRAD., Go to [www.grad.ac.uk/resources](http://www.grad.ac.uk/resources) and [www.grad.ac.uk/practice](http://www.grad.ac.uk/practice)

### THES Award



RCUK & UK GRAD are sponsoring a new THES award for 'Roberts related' provision. This award, **Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers** will be given to the individual, team or institution that has developed the most innovative scheme to enhance and develop the transferable and careers skills of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers. It is a chance to raise the profile of all the hard work that everyone is doing in this area. Details of the award can be found on: [www.thes.co.uk/Awards/2006/List\\_of\\_awards](http://www.thes.co.uk/Awards/2006/List_of_awards). The winner will receive their award at a special dinner in November.

## Supporting You and Your Researchers

UK GRAD aims to support HEIs, their staff, and their doctoral researchers in a variety of ways. We can help you by giving you access to a range of information and resources and to national and regional networks. We also offer access to a range of resources for postgraduate researchers themselves. Take a look at what's new.

## New For You

### New Online Resources Coming

UK GRAD is currently developing resources for new PhD supervisors which will be shortly available on our Resources Database. Two papers, each commissioned from an experienced practitioner, will be made available to enhance the delivery and evaluation of training interventions.

Firstly, the *UK GRAD Guide to Facilitation* will be an accessible, downloadable document in pdf format, which may be used to either refresh or research useful facilitation skills and techniques which may be employed by a PhD Supervisor during learning periods. The paper draws upon existing theory and combines it with useful hints and tips to provide an informal yet informative document. Although the paper is written primarily for PhD Supervisors new to the subject area, it will provide a useful resource for refresher training for those who wish to brush up on their skills and knowledge.

The second paper, the *UK GRAD Guide to Evaluation* follows a similar format for a similar audience. Once again, drawing upon existing theory, combined with practical hints and tips, the guide will provide an accessible resource for those PhD Supervisors who find themselves in a position of having to evaluate training events. The guide comes complete with 4 sample attachments - each fully explained in the Guide - which illustrate how evaluation sheets may be written for different types of evaluation, and how they may be used.

The two papers support the delivery and evaluation of the existing database resources, and will also inform and supplement the daily learning activities of PhD supervisors and researchers that occur outside of 'formal' learning periods. The papers are currently being evaluated by members of the PhD Supervisor community, prior to posting on the UK GRAD Resources Database by the end of June.  
[www.grad.ac.uk/resources](http://www.grad.ac.uk/resources)

### Supervisor Planner for New Supervisors

UK GRAD has produced '*Supervising a Doctorate*' to work in conjunction with the successful '*Planning a Doctorate: a Schedule for Success*' for new researchers ([www.grad.ac.uk/planner](http://www.grad.ac.uk/planner)). Supervising a Doctorate is now available at [www.grad.ac.uk/supervisorplanner](http://www.grad.ac.uk/supervisorplanner). We recommend you use this as a resource if you are new to the role of supervisor or if you wish to re-visit your roles and responsibilities when supervising doctoral students.

## UK GRAD Fifth Annual Conference: Profiting from Postgraduate Talent Supporting researchers – our investment for the future

7 September, Guoman Tower, London E1

Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive ESRC, and member of the Research Funders' Forum has stated that Developing researcher careers is: "an agenda that the nation cannot afford to fail on"

UK GRAD's Annual Conference 2006 will therefore address the strategic and practical issues around supporting our researchers by:

- sharing experiences of the opportunities and challenges of developing researchers to support the future of the UK academic research base
- exploring how employers increasingly are recognising the contribution of researchers to the wider knowledge economy
- reflecting on how effectively the Roberts' agenda, QAA Code of Practice, and other initiatives are supporting researchers to realise their potential

Go to

[www.grad.ac.uk/annualconference2006](http://www.grad.ac.uk/annualconference2006) for details of booking arrangements.

(Ed: there is a special 'early bird' discount – so make sure you get this date in your diary, and book early to benefit! Look forward to meeting some of you there)

## New For Your Researchers

There are some great new events and resources for you to tell your researchers about. Encourage them to take part in **Ask the Experts** month – they will really benefit from taking part in this series of events. The **Careers in Focus** event covering Academia may open their eyes to the range of roles you, as a supervisor, have to undertake. And get them to sign up to **PGR Tips** - a free monthly email bulletin. More details below.....

### July 2006 - Ask the Experts Month

A great opportunity for your researchers to take part in a series of online chats and panel Q&A sessions on a variety of topics relating to postgraduate research and beyond. Researchers are able to set the agenda with any questions they wish to pose to the panel. Go to [www.grad.ac.uk/asktheexperts](http://www.grad.ac.uk/asktheexperts) for further details.

## Careers in Focus - FREE courses for your postgraduate researchers

UK GRAD's Careers in Focus programme was developed in response to requests from postgraduate researchers. It consists of free one-day events that focus on careers for PhD researchers in various sectors. They aim to combine:

- information about careers in specific sectors
- a chance to explore the skills and competencies required to succeed in roles within that sector
- opportunities to network employees from that sector, find out what it's really like, and how to make a successful application

Careers in Focus events are free to all postgraduate researchers. They are followed by an online chat for those participating, and those who could not make it on the day.

In 2006, events have been held covering:

- Professional Services
- Investment Banking
- Management Consultancy
- Academia

There are three more Careers in Focus: Academia scheduled for:

London: July 3

Cardiff: October 2

Glasgow: November 13

The day will give researchers an insight into some of the areas that make up a career in academia. They will have the opportunity to:

- meet with current academics from a range of disciplines and hear about their experiences; ask the questions they've always wanted to, but weren't sure who to ask
- explore how to market themselves for a career in academia, both within their department, and at interview
- look at how to write and win grant applications,
- work with fellow researchers and share experiences with other participants

Any researchers interested in attending one of these days should apply by going to:

[www.grad.ac.uk/cif](http://www.grad.ac.uk/cif).

### PGR Tips

This monthly email bulletin aims to provide information to help postgraduate researchers during their PhDs and when planning their careers. It will cover topics such as evaluating skills, writing up, support and funding, launching an academic career. They can register for this bulletin at: [www.grad.ac.uk/PGRtips](http://www.grad.ac.uk/PGRtips).

## Recent Publications

### UK GRAD Programme Activities Report 2003-2005

includes details about UK GRAD's past events, publications, courses, Hubs, and website.

[www.grad.ac.uk/downloads/documents/Reports/activities%20report.pdf](http://www.grad.ac.uk/downloads/documents/Reports/activities%20report.pdf)

### Roberts Policy Forum 2006

This report contains the proceedings from this meeting - an annual strategic review of the implementation of the Roberts' recommendation on training requirements, held in Birmingham on 11-12 January 2006.

[www.grad.ac.uk/downloads/documents/Forums/Policy%20Forum%202006/Roberts%20Policy%20Forum%20Report%202006.pdf](http://www.grad.ac.uk/downloads/documents/Forums/Policy%20Forum%202006/Roberts%20Policy%20Forum%20Report%202006.pdf)

### The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their Recruitment

On the 8th and 9th of September 2005, more than 250 people from 35 countries across the EU Member and Associated States attended the UK GRAD conference on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, entitled 'Turning policy into practice: building the pool of talented researchers to achieve Europe's goals and future innovation'. This report summarises the topics, conclusions and recommendations from this conference.

[www.grad.ac.uk/downloads/documents/Euro%20Conference/Conference%20Report.%20Euro%20conference.doc.pdf](http://www.grad.ac.uk/downloads/documents/Euro%20Conference/Conference%20Report.%20Euro%20conference.doc.pdf)

### Guide to GRADschools

A short introduction to what happens on a GRADschool – useful for your Researchers and for supervisors who would like to know more.

### Employability and doctoral research postgraduates

is the title of a new ESECT/HEA publication written by Dr Janet Metcalfe, Director of the UK GRAD programme and Dr Alexandra Gray. The publication forms part of Series 2 of the Learning and Employability series, a series primarily intended for staff in HEIs who are considering the enhancement of student employability. Available shortly from [www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full\\_record&section=generic&id=593](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record&section=generic&id=593)

If you would printed like copies of any of these reports, please contact your local Hub see page 12 for details.

# Rewarding Excellence in Supervision



Many universities in the UK have awards for excellence in teaching, but until recently, there has been no comparable award for excellence in research supervision. Durham University has changed all that.

In September 2004, the Vice Chancellor of Durham University announced at the UK GRAD annual conference that Durham was to become the first university in the UK – and possibly in Europe – to institute awards for excellence in research supervision. Such awards are common in research intensive universities in the US and Australia, where they have been highly successful in raising the profile of research supervision as an area of academic practice and in identifying and disseminating good practice.

Applicants had to write a statement detailing how they met criteria set down by the judges along with a brief current CV, a list of past and present doctoral students, and supporting statements from present or former students. These were then reviewed by judges, and three awards were made and presented by the Vice Chancellor at the annual Society of Fellows dinner in 2005. Each award was worth £500, and was to be used to develop doctoral supervision and support doctoral students.

Winners of the first awards were Dr Andrew Russell, Anthropology, Professor Brian Straughan, Mathematical Sciences and Professor Jane Taylor, Modern Languages and Cultures.

## 2006 Awards

The 2006 award process is now underway. Awards this year will be £1000 to support academic development in the field of doctoral supervision. Details of the Awards including criteria for entry can be found at [www.dur.ac.uk/academicstaffdevelopment/vcaward](http://www.dur.ac.uk/academicstaffdevelopment/vcaward).

# What Makes A Good Supervisor?

Extracts from Dr Russell's winning statement are printed below. The topics he covers serve as a useful starter for a debate on What Makes a Good Supervisor?

## So what do you think?

Do you agree with Dr Russell's views? Send your comments to [overview@grad.ac.uk](mailto:overview@grad.ac.uk).

## My Philosophy

My philosophy (of doctoral supervision) has the following key elements; energy and enthusiasm; the development of effective working relationships (with both students and colleagues); the encouragement and nurturance of PhD students' independence and intellectual freedom throughout the research process; and the need for engagement with, and development of, the wider research culture both within one's own institution and beyond.

## Energy and enthusiasm

We are paid to supervise our PhD students (as well as our Masters' and undergraduate students), to do our own research, and to engage in the myriad administrative duties necessary to perform these tasks and to keep our institution 'on track' as a centre of excellence in the UK and worldwide. One needs energy to keep these three roles going simultaneously...research supervision is not only about knowledge; it is also about performance of a role. However, for effective supervisory performance, style alone is not enough...one has to have a passion for one's subject and to be able to impart this enthusiasm in one's work with students....

## Effective working relationships

...in first meeting a doctoral student I feel it is important to come to an understanding of them as people in a social context as much as students in an academic one, i.e. to set about providing supervision that is 'student-centred' in all senses of the term. This means appreciating where they are coming from both intellectually and in their personal life...I've learned a lot from the joint supervision of PhD students in terms of styles and approaches which I have then attempted to apply to my own supervision work. Three of my co-supervisions have been with supervisors outside my own department. I find such cross-disciplinary supervision particularly stimulating given my own background in multi-disciplinary research, and the source of many interesting and fruitful discussions...as a general rule I always copy a co-supervisor into any message I send to a supervisee and expect my co-supervisor to do the same for me....

## Encouragement and nurturance of independence and intellectual freedom

I feel that a lot of what a PhD supervisor's work entails is giving confidence to the student that they can do it, that they can fly on their own (but with guidance)....

One small thing I picked up from my own DPhil supervisor that I feel is very important and...highly symbolic and respectful of the student's independence is the habit of making all annotations to PhD proposals and drafts in pencil. Away with the shouting red pen and in with the humble grey pencil! Pencil can always be rubbed out if the

student does not agree with one's comments or if one subsequently wishes to change one's mind as supervisor....

## Engagement with and development of the wider research culture

It is not enough to plough one's own furrow as a PhD supervisor or co-supervisor. One needs to know what is going on at postgraduate level elsewhere in the country and the world. I do this through my work as external examiner....Knowing what standards are like elsewhere helps to ensure that one's students are successful in their endeavours....Another reason to keep in touch is the frequent need to direct PhD students to others in one's field or tangential disciplines who may be able to help them in their research. For this one needs to be engaged with what is going on elsewhere, regionally, nationally and internationally....Engagement with the wider world is also important as a means of ensuring the continuing recruitment of PhD students into the department.

One way of doing this is through short courses...that will give interested people a taste for what anthropology has to offer...I am also interested in the recruitment of potential doctoral students from India, where research links I have established have recently borne fruit.

*(Ed: You may like to look out for Regional Hub events where you have the opportunity to meet supervisors from other HEIs and disciplines.)*

## From Doubter to Devotee – a student's view of skills training



*'As the day progressed we learned the basics of body language...!'*

The issue of skills training for PhD students can divide – for all those wild enthusiasts, there are equal numbers of cynics. Here is a view from a PhD student from Cardiff University who has been converted.....but in which direction?

When I first began my postgraduate studies and heard of UK GRAD, I felt a little uneasy, but wasn't sure why. After a lot of thought (praise be to the ESRC) I realised that there was something about the term 'grad' itself that made me uncomfortable. The abbreviation 'postgrad' was barely acceptable, but the move to 'grad' was, for me, a syllable loss too far. 'Grad', I thought, belongs with 'prof' and 'frat' in the truncated lexicon of 'sophomores' and 'freshmans' studying 'liberal arts' by day and 'doing shots' by night. I remembered how our beloved 'term' had been colonised by 'semester' and, like our meek red squirrel, driven from its native homeland by the rapacious American grey. I then realised that it was not just linguistic but a cultural prejudice: we don't do 'grad' or 'grad schools' in the UK, with all its freewheeling interdisciplinarity; we in the UK are 'postgraduates', safe in our established disciplines, secure in our departmental offices, cocooned by our idiosyncratic knowledge.

These were my first reactions, a couple of years ago now, to invitations and e-mails from the University's Graduate Centre inviting, cajoling and imploring me to come and join in the 'graduate community'. For me, at that time, 'postgraduate' and 'community' seemed a bit like an oxymoron; a postgraduate didn't belong to a community, s/he was an individual researcher toiling on a personal project. However, as the emails increased so too did the lure of human contact and I found myself venturing out of my office, even clearing my department and risking a sortie to the Graduate Centre on the top floor of the university's student's union. My first visit was late one November night where I found earnest postgrads beavering away, their PC's rocking to the incessant beat of the sound system at the undergraduate disco below. It was here, segregated from the undergraduate midweek party, that my postgrad identity was formed and I realised that I was part of a 'community'- even if it was a community

of the excluded. On one of these late nights I met a departmental colleague, with whom I got into a long discussion about postgraduate life and combating the isolation that seems to be part and parcel of the experience. She, however, disagreed totally and claimed that, if you looked for it, there were plenty of opportunities for postgrads, both personally and professionally within the university. As we were both due to present our work to the department within the next week she suggested then that I join her on a training day on presentation skills that she had signed up to. Although I knew I needed some help in that area I was a little scarred by previous government imposed education initiatives that promoted personal skills development, which were both ill thought and badly delivered. However, when an e-mail came through to me on the Monday informing me of places still available and the spectre of a departmental presentation emerging from the shadows, I signed myself up to my first Graduate Skills Course 'Presenting Research Orally'.

When I arrived at the workshop the first thing I noticed was that my colleague was absent. Was she some kind of Graduate Centre plant, a skills training Mata-Hari luring me into this dangerous new world? (I never did find out as she dropped out shortly afterwards – I think she lacked the cynicism needed to finish a PhD!). My fragile disposition was further cracked when I was given the course handout for the day; I knew this was a serious affair by the quality metal paper clip – a Supacclip 40 – that held this considerable document together. This was given to me by a dapper gent in his late thirties, whose voice resonated like Richard Burton and who removed his glasses for effect in a very Jeremy Paxman manner. I was wondering if he was actually trained to do that, or if it is a genetic thing that successful people do, when he asked us to introduce ourselves and 'explain why we wanted to take this workshop'. I think my bumbling, rambling responses made it clearly evident why I was there. As the day proceeded and we learned the basics of voice projection, body language and all the other tricks of successful presenting, I came to realise how even the most arid academic research, if presented properly, could be interesting. Added to this I became enthralled by modernist Japanese architecture and the floodplains of South Wales as students from a variety of departments honed their presentation skills. By the end of the day I too had the resonance of Burton and the authority of Paxman- though I haven't quite mastered the glasses removal trick yet.

They say nobody proselytises quite like a convert so here I am, now a veteran of six graduate training days, if not quite singing then whistling its praises. Training in writing for my academic discipline, handling references, combating the 'thesis blues', have helped build the kinds of soft skills that a supervisor hasn't got the time to deal with. From my experience I think that lots of students and perhaps supervisors would share my initial scepticism of skills based training- and perhaps rightly so if their previous experiences match with my own. However, although I entered into skills training from a highly suspicious position I have to admit that I've found it rewarding both professionally and personally. But, I still come over a little strange when I read the word 'grad'.....

*(Ed: What are your views on the Skills Training? We'd like to hear them – for and against. Contact us on: [overview@grad.ac.uk](mailto:overview@grad.ac.uk))*

## 'More fun than a holiday\*' What an academic supervisor gets from being a UK GRAD tutor

In the last issue of overVIEW, we highlighted the benefits to students of attending a GRADschool. (More information available on [www.grad.ac.uk/GRADschools](http://www.grad.ac.uk/GRADschools).) This time, we look at the experience from the tutor's point of view. Read the following very personal, views from two of them.

Trevor Jackson, Senior Lecturer, School of Clinical and Laboratory Sciences, University of Newcastle upon Tyne writes:

'Well it's two days since I got back from tutoring on my second national GRADschool and sadly since then I've been a typical supervisor again caught up in almost continuous meetings; locked away trying to catch up with overdue writing; and occasionally taking whole minutes out to talk about how things are going with my long-suffering graduate students. Still despite this there is the trace of a smile on my face. Why is that? Because acting as a tutor on a GRADschool is a fabulous experience! It gives you a chance to be a part of a team with a common goal to assist a group of 80 of the brightest, sometimes jaded, sometimes frankly despairing graduate students to help them look at what motivates them and in the process to help them reconnect with why they want to do research. The course also helps them gain a better understanding and practical experience of using the skills needed to succeed in PhD research and in the exciting careers that lie beyond (whether in industry, public and voluntary sectors or academia!) The great thing is that while working as a course tutor this ethos rubs off on you too and I come back better connected with my own students and with my own research.

As a tutor I work with 8 or 9 PhD students drawn from different disciplines and from many differing backgrounds, but all are there to achieve an objective – for example, to learn communication skills, how to negotiate with difficult peers or supervisors, how to present themselves at an interview or to decide what to do after the viva. As I try and help facilitate them in finding their own route to achieve these objectives I gain new skills in observing, in questioning, in managing meetings, handling negotiations and in presenting my own research. I learn my own lessons about teamwork, time management and giving more frequent constructive feedback that I can bring back with me to apply to dealing with students, post-docs and other PIs. I've become more aware of the vast range of valuable jobs a PhD prepares you for and how necessary the skills we should be striving to give our students are, both for their own futures and for the public perception of academia. There is nothing like the environment of a UK GRADschool to allow creative and perceptive PhD students to ask you questions you may have forgotten to ask yourself and to give you feedback that can change the way you deal with your own research students.

Best of all being part of the tutor team is a fantastic experience. As the students form new friendships and find new understandings of what research is about, so do I. I get to work with some of the best people from industry, charities, the civil service, media, private consultancy and even the odd academic too. These interactions have helped me to understand how much value these other communities place on the skill set that a PhD should equip you with. I have in the process expanded my own network of colleagues and made real new friends who share my values and desire to enable our brightest students to realise their true potential. There is a fabulous reward in being part of the catalyst that can help students gain awareness to transform themselves and their PhD experience. It's also great fun!

It may be great fun but can the few days of a GRAD course really have a lasting effect? My experience and that of other tutors and of students and their supervisors is yes. Months after attending a local GRAD Equivalent Course one of our students gave an oral presentation at a national conference after which her supervisor said: 'She couldn't have done that without attending that course'. At Windermere a student presented on stage in front of more than 80 people: 'something I would never have done before'

I have seen people stretch themselves to achieve things they never thought they could: whether climbing and jumping into space from the top of a telegraph pole helped to overcome their own fear of heights by the support of a team of people who were strangers twenty four hours before: or a reserved student finding a new role as communicator and negotiator for an entire group, who promptly returned home to sign up for 'a researchers in residence course' to help communicate enthusiasm for research into schools!

Perhaps as a representative from academic research one of the most satisfying transformations to see has been amongst the students who came on a course looking for a career alternative to research but returning with the realisation that for them the opportunity to continue striving to make it in academia was challenging, exciting and a privilege they wouldn't give up!

So what is the catch? Well you may feel guilty about what a raw deal your own students get during the months when you are scrabbling in your office to try and keep up with teaching, administration and the search for funding. You may discover how poor your own grasp of the skills our students need to gain from their PhD are. You may find you have to discard prejudices about transferable skills. You may find yourself every bit as challenged and stretched by the experience as the students themselves are and often well outside your comfort zone. You will have little time to breathe let alone rest between the early morning tutor meeting and the late evening

close of your group review. You may as an academic find yourself inundated with questions about how to manage a career in this difficult area of employment – a subject few of us seem to have ever taken time to explain to our own students. You may even find yourself appalled and infuriated by the lack of support some of the students you meet receive from their supervisors and graduate schools. However all these things can help you connect more with your own students and help you better understand and carry out your responsibility to them as a supervisor. As more than one student has said to me: 'I wish my supervisor could come on one of these courses.'

By becoming a tutor representing those of us working in research you can do just that!

\*Quote from a GRADschool participant from University of Cambridge.

### My route to becoming a UK GRAD tutor:

- 1 Sara Shinton author of 'What PhDs do?' ([http://www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Resources/What\\_Do\\_PhDs\\_Do\\_/pleXec.cLa](http://www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Resources/What_Do_PhDs_Do_/pleXec.cLa)) gives a talk about UK GRAD and graduate student training to new lecturers at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. In conversation afterwards she suggests I contact UK GRAD about becoming a tutor.
- 2 Around a year later I actually get around to looking at the UK GRAD site ([http://www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Supervisors/pl.edcbbb](http://www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Supervisors/pl.edcbbb)) and then registering my details.
- 3 A few weeks later I am asked to visit for a day on a UK GRAD course at Otterburn where I sit in on tutor meetings and shadow an experienced tutor through the day. By the end of this I'm hooked!
- 4 Months later I actually find time over a weekend to attend a two day workshop on how to be a UK GRAD tutor.
- 5 Then I wait for an invite to tutor. My first opportunity comes six months later when invited to join the team of Windermere 1. I am petrified on day 1 but find it one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I return physically tired but mentally energized, empowered and ready to bore family, friends and students alike with tales of how amazing the course has been.
- 6 Since then I have tutored on the excellent White Rose Interpersonal Skills local GRADschool run between the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York.
- 7 I have just returned from tutoring on the fantastic Windermere 3 course directed by Sara Shinton giving me my opportunity to say a proper thank you to her for introducing me to the privilege that being a tutor for UK GRAD provides.

**Acknowledgements:** I must say a huge thanks to the course directors, tutors, mentors, UK GRAD staff and the PhD students themselves who have contributed to making each course I have been on challenging, memorable and FUN experiences. I also thank my own PhD students Ben, Rosie and Shaun for tolerating my absences and Ruth Graham for making improvements to this piece.

## Refreshed and More Focused

*Dr Chris Russell is a Research Fellow at the Medical Laser Institute, where he hopes to develop OCT applications and combine optical techniques for the early detection of cancers and Alzheimer's disease.*

'I am lucky enough to have seen the GRADschool experience from both sides of the fence and also, as most supervisors have, the PhD experience from both sides too. I find I learn as much from supervising as I did through my PhD. The tutoring opened my eyes to a different perspective, and I believe my work has benefited greatly.

I first heard about GRAD in the second year of my PhD when an email popped into my inbox. It offered me the chance to escape for a week, an unheralded blessing at that stage of proceedings. I couldn't see how it would be relevant to me but I knew the time away would be good for me. The week itself was a huge eye opener, making this taciturn, self effacing northerner who had spent 2 years by himself in a dark room suddenly say to himself, 'actually, this is brilliant, I can use all this stuff'. I went back to the lab feeling hugely more confident and raring to go.

Tutoring on my first GRADschool came with the benefit of a little experience, the serendipitous appearance of some familiar faces, and a professional approach borne out of nearly forty years of previous courses. The residential set-up and the intensity of the course remained from my student experience. In fact a lot was familiar; except this time I got to watch the students do all the work. I felt very at home as part of the tutor team and as part of the group of participants with whom I spent the week, sharing the experience of learning through the case studies, workshops, games and group reviews.

At the end of the week, despite my worries that I didn't always know what I was doing, I was blown away when one of my tutor group told me how important the week had been to him. He explained that GRADschool had not only helped him with his studies, but had been of enormous benefit to him personally. It was a gratifying moment and made me realise how rewarding it is to make a difference.

Returning to work, I felt much as I did after attending the GRADschool as a student, inspired and ready to implement what I had learnt to improve how I did my job. Having initially gone into tutoring with the desire to give something back, largely due to the affinity I had felt as a student, I am still surprised how much of a benefit it is to my work.

Becoming a tutor also represented a new challenge, something that would take me out of my cosy, cloistered research group where I'd been happily progressing for 5 years. I found it hardest to step back, to realise the role was more about facilitation than instruction, and to face my own fears and scepticism in enthusing the ideals of the course to the participants. Ultimately, the biggest challenge for me, running a workshop on creativity, proved to be one of the many highlights of the course.

Being with a set tutor group for the whole week gave real insight into the process of group dynamics. I found it impressive how the group grew, and the members became increasingly aware of one another's learning styles, motivations and needs. Observing the whole participant group throughout the week, I remember seeing lots of little light bulbs illuminating as people learnt something good about themselves.

I think the general ethos of the GRADschool experience, when being pitched to students, is that it will emphasise personal and professional development and that the skills they acquire will improve the effectiveness of their research. This ethos is also sold to supervisors to try to persuade them why they should give up one of their most valuable resources for a week, but not so far, in persuading them to take a week out of their busy schedules to come and spend more time with hobbledehoyish students who need to self-improve.

Writing this article has probably come at a good time; I'm only a week away from tutoring on another GRADschool and I will embark on the course with mixed feelings. I know the course will prove to be enormously beneficial for my work, a fact I was only recently at pains to point out during my annual staff appraisal. I also know how busy I am at this critical stage of development in my lab, and a week away feels like I'm stalling good progress. That said, the students, mentors, fellow tutors and other course staff will provide a wealth of experience, advice, and motivation that will send me back to my research and supervision refreshed and more focused.

### Would you like to tutor?

If you think you would like to tutor on a GRADschool, free training is provided for new tutors. Contact Kirsteen Newton [Kirsteen.Newton@grad.ac.uk](mailto:Kirsteen.Newton@grad.ac.uk)

### Mentoring programme

Early stage Researchers/Contract research staff from Universities can also gain access to the UK GRAD programme through the mentor programme

The **Researchers in Residence scheme** is organised by UK Research Councils and the Wellcome Trust placing research students in schools to work with teachers and pupils  
<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/rinr/site>

## Keeping up to date with.....

*This is the first in an occasional series of pieces looking at some of the issues facing researchers and those involved in training supervisory teams. If you would like to contribute to this series, please contact [overview@grad.ac.uk](mailto:overview@grad.ac.uk)*

### Research with People under 18

Ever since the high court judgement in the *Gillick* case in 1986 on whether young people could seek contraceptive advice without their parents knowing, there has been controversy about the ethics of conducting research involving people under 18. Does such research always require parental consent or, as the judge eventually ruled in *Gillick*, are most young people competent to consent to medical advice and treatment from quite an early age, and should they therefore be able to give consent to take part in research?

While medical trials clearly need safeguards, there are many other kinds of research which involve young people. Practitioners and academics researching in fields such as education, youth work, social work and criminology have argued that it is possible to conduct ethical and methodologically sound research with young people without seeking parental consent. Indeed, in these fields it may be better not to involve the parents. If a researcher wants to find out about controversial issues such as adolescent crime, sexual behaviour or drug misuse, the young people concerned are probably less likely to come forward – and less likely to tell the truth - if parental consent is needed before they can take part in the research.

The issue has not been tested in court since the 1986 case, and research ethics committees have been unclear about where to seek guidance. However, the Economic and Social Research Council has funded a literature review on informed consent in social research generally, and when the issue came up at the ethics committee of the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at De Montfort University, two members were asked to produce a brief paper on the subject. We approached the question in two ways; what did the most recent social science literature say about the issue, and what experience was there within the faculty of ethical issues arising from research with young people?

A small number of case studies collected from colleagues illuminated the subject, and so did a brief review of some of the relevant literature. There was near unanimity on the issue: young people were capable of consenting to take part in research, although the younger (or less 'competent' for other reasons) they were,

the more likely it was that parental consent would be sought. In some borderline cases, parents were informed that the research rather than being asked explicitly for their consent.

Increasingly, child advocacy organisations such as Barnardo's see young people as experts on their own lives, and encourage researchers to take a similar view. Lawyers broadly agree that this is appropriate (although there are very few legal academics specialising in this area.) Indeed, they argue that parents cannot give consent on behalf of a competent child, because children have legal rights of their own. The ESRC study helpfully outlined the case for and against parental consent. Researchers themselves have sought to go further than this: some have argued that, as long as meaningful consent is obtained from the young people themselves and the limits of confidentiality are made clear, young people should be encouraged to share their own perspectives on social issues without parental involvement. Indeed, social action research methods involve young people in designing and conducting research involving other young people.

Opinions and professional requirements on these issues have changed enormously in quite a short period. Research supervisors (including the writer) who have been inclined to err on the side of caution, need to bring ourselves up to date on the changing law and the changed social environment in which research with young people takes place. Our case studies showed that

research supervisors do not necessarily know the relevant law or the extent to which informed opinion has shifted, and this may be something which those involved in the training of PhD supervision teams need to consider.

Professor Brian Williams  
Community and Criminal Justice  
Research Centre  
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences  
De Montfort University  
BWilliams@dmu.ac.uk

#### References

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Williams, B. (2006) Meaningful consent to participate in social research on the part of people under the age of eighteen. *Research Ethics Review* 2(1) 19-24

*(Ed: The ESRC has a new Research Ethic Framework. The framework is an important device that builds on existing good practice in many academic institutions, and is designed to address the evolving needs and challenges facing social science research, not least the growth of interdisciplinary research in new areas. The dignity, rights and welfare of research participants are core criteria of the framework. Compliance with the framework has been mandatory for all grant applications to ESRC from January 1st this year.)*

600) AGR members – including many of the UK's largest graduate recruiters in both public and private sectors. 11% of AGR members say that they will pay a premium for holders of higher degrees, compared to 6% who said so last year. Whilst graduate level vacancies are predicted to increase by almost 15% this year, nearly half of recruiters expect to face difficulties in fulfilling recruitment objectives, with the largest factor being a lack of applicants with the right skills. Carl Gilleard, Chief Executive of the AGR says, 'Employers are likely to be looking to graduates who can demonstrate softer skills such as teamworking, cultural awareness, leadership and communication skills, as well as academic achievement.' The survey was conducted on behalf of the AGR by Hobsons. For more information from The Association of Graduate Recruiters please go to [www.agr.org.uk](http://www.agr.org.uk)

#### Book Review

*Effective Postgraduate Supervision: improving the student/supervisor relationship: Eley and Jennings*

This is a practical guide that gives excellent advice on how to optimise the student supervisor relationship. The book is based around workshops on postgraduate supervision and details the most frequently encountered difficulties in the student / supervisor relationship.

## Forthcoming events

Key:  
White = events for PhD researchers  
Orange = events for staff

#### Ask the Experts month

- 3: Careers in Academia - London
- 3: Midlands Hub Poster Competition Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre
- 3-7: National GRADschool, Windermere
- 6-8: UKCGE European Conference: New Dimensions for Doctoral Programmes in Europe: Training, Employability and the European Knowledge Agenda, Italy
- 12: 3rd Annual Postgraduate Researchers in Science and Medicine (PRISM) Conference, St Martins College, Lancaster
- 13-14: Bologna Process Official Seminar on Employability- Swansea University
- 18-19: White Rose Interpersonal Skills School, Part 2, Sheffield
- 28-2 August: National GRADschool Exeter

#### August 2006

- 3-6: National Postgraduate Committee Annual Conference, Aston University, Birmingham
- 14: Scottish Hub Good Practice event - venue to be confirmed

#### September 2006

- 4-8: National GRADschool, Cambridge
- 4-8: Local GRADschool, Bangor
- 6: UKHERD Annual Conference London
- 28: 12th Annual European meeting of PhD students in Evolutionary Biology, University of St Andrews
- 7: UK GRAD Annual Conference, London
- 11-12: European Educational Research Association (EERA) Postgraduate and New Researchers' Pre-Conference, University of Geneva, Switzerland
- 13-16: European Educational Research Association (EERA) Conference: Transforming Knowledge University of Geneva, Switzerland
- 18-20: Local GRADschool, Oxford
- 18-21: National GRADschool, Newcastle

Date tba

- Midlands Hub: Good Practice in Delivering E-Learning Event
- SE Hub: Regional Good Practice workshop on Personal Development Planning

#### October 2006

- 2: Careers in Academia, Cardiff
- 2: SWW Hub Careers Advisors event
- 10-14: National GRADschool, Brighton

#### November 2006

- 6-10: National GRADschool, Windermere
- 13: Careers in Academia, Glasgow

## Miscellany

### Leadership Development for PIs

Dr David Faraday has been commissioned by the LFHE to put together a Leadership Development Programme for Research Leaders. In principal, the programme will be designed to provide leadership training and development for research academics at all levels: from newly appointed academics starting up their research area, through to the leaders of major research groups/centres. He will design the programme and run a pilot course. At the moment, the pilot course is planned for July and will probably be aimed at newly appointed Principal Investigators who will be leading a small team (2-3 research staff, plus research students, admin, technical support); other courses and pilots would follow this. For more details contact [d.faraday@evolve-leadteam.co.uk](mailto:d.faraday@evolve-leadteam.co.uk)

### Salary premium for holders of higher degrees

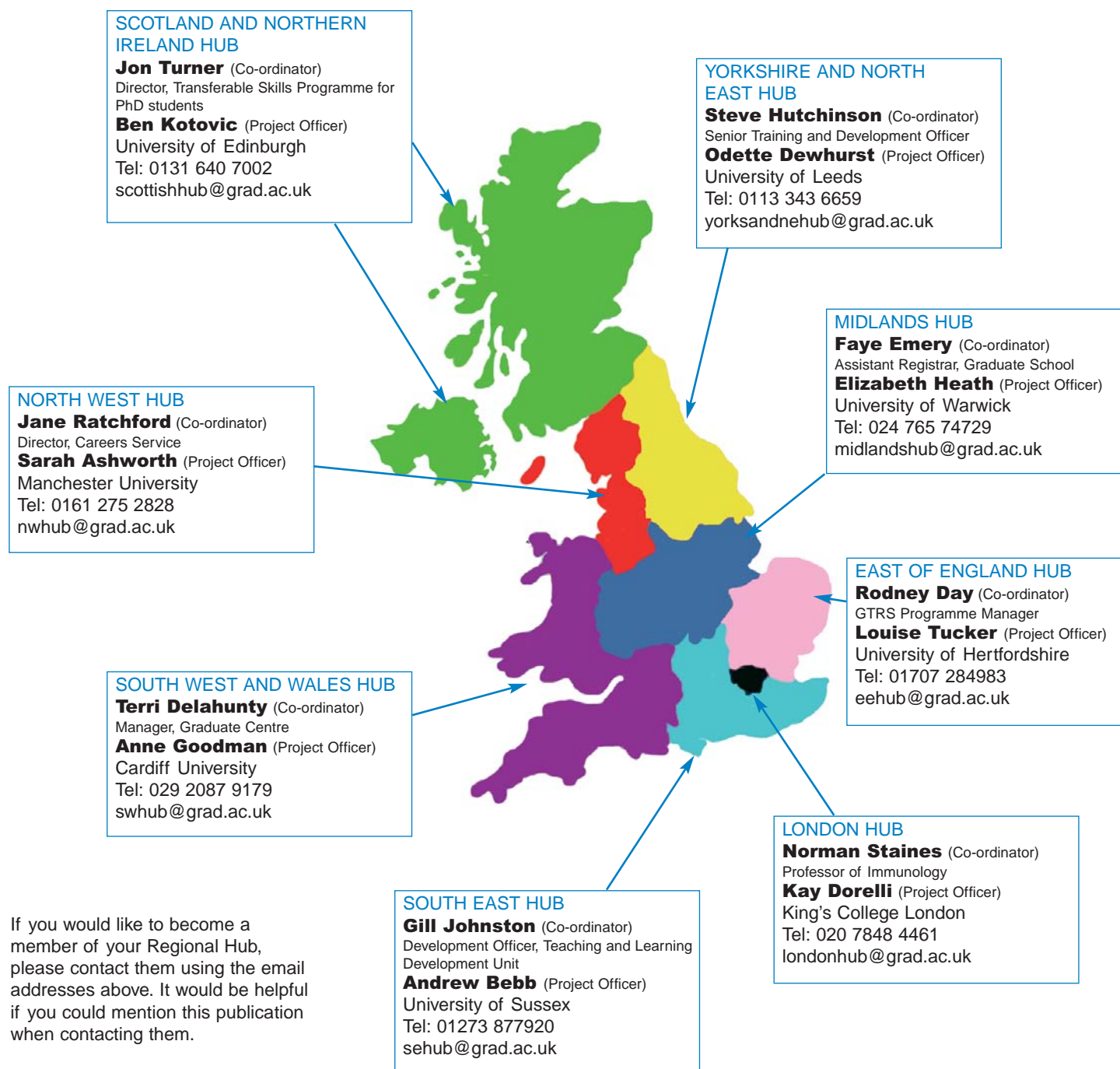
The Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) has published results of their Winter Review, which aims to make predictions for the forthcoming year as part of their bi-annual Graduate Recruitment Survey. The review is based on the responses of 222 (from around

Every case study raises important discussion points and presents solutions and preventative suggestions. Additionally a section on how the case studies can be used as teaching aids in a workshop setting is also included. We are very impressed with the book and regularly use it as part of our 'Good Supervisors' workshops for new research supervisors!

Dr Chris Wood  
Skills Development & Student Liaison Officer  
University of Plymouth

# The Regional Hub Network

UK GRAD has a network of 8 Regional Hubs. Each Hub has a Hub Co-ordinator and a Project Officer, and is hosted by a university in the Region. If you would like to be on the mailing list of your local Hub, to receive Regional Newsletters, email alerts and details of local events, contact your local Hub:



If you would like to become a member of your Regional Hub, please contact them using the email addresses above. It would be helpful if you could mention this publication when contacting them.

## Contact Details

OverVIEW, Centre for Excellence, UK GRAD Programme, c/o CRAC, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 0AX. Tel: 01223 448543 overview@grad.ac.uk