



Implementing the ESRC NWSSDTP Development Needs Analysis (DNA) Guidance for Supervisors

The ESRC Requirements

ESRC provides strategic investment in the training of future social scientists through DTPs and therefore has developed comprehensive guidelines with specific training and development requirements. The NWSSDTP bespoke DNA survey will map these ESRC requirements onto development opportunities and will guide students towards achieving the researcher development goals.

The ESRC's training requirements now specify that students on each pathway must have comprehensive *understanding* of the full range of approaches to research and that they must be able to *carry out* a broad range of research methods (qualitative, quantitative and 'mixed' using appropriate software) as well as developing advanced skills relevant to their field of study.

The DNA asks students to consider a number of statements choose a proficiency level for each of these development areas. The proficiency levels are:

They will need advice from their supervisors in assessing whether they have sufficiently broad

Level 1 - Need to develop basic knowledge and/or proficiency

Level 2 - Have basic knowledge and/or proficiency and do not need further development

Level 3 - Have basic knowledge and/or proficiency but need further development

Level 4 - Have advanced knowledge and/or proficiency

understanding and capability as well as whether they should rate their skills as 'basic' or 'advanced'. This guidance document will assist you in providing this advice.

If a student selects either a proficiency **level 1 or 3** for any of the knowledge/skills/competencies in a development area, s/he should complete the free text box to identify how s/he will develop her/his proficiency during the doctoral programme. NWSSDTP students should aim to be proficient at an advanced level in some development areas.

The Process

Your student will be sent a link by email to the online DNA survey each time it is due for completion. You will also receive an email to remind you that it is time for your student to complete the survey. The survey is compulsory and completion every 6 months is a condition of receiving an ESRC funding, normally in October and April. The survey takes about 15-20 minutes to complete, longer the first time when each area has to be discussed.

The survey has been designed to be completed in consultation with the supervisory team. Feedback from students and supervisors suggests that it is more useful if the student completes it with her/his supervisor so we strongly encourage you and your student to complete the survey in a supervisory meeting. If it is not possible to have a face-to-face meeting, we suggest that you use share screen functionality in a web call application (eg Skype, WebEx, GoToMeeting, AnyMeeting, Join.me, BuddyMeeting).

At the end of the survey the system will generate a development plan based on the student's responses. This can be downloaded. You will need to agree this plan with your student and approve it before submission as it will form part of the student's record held by the DTP.

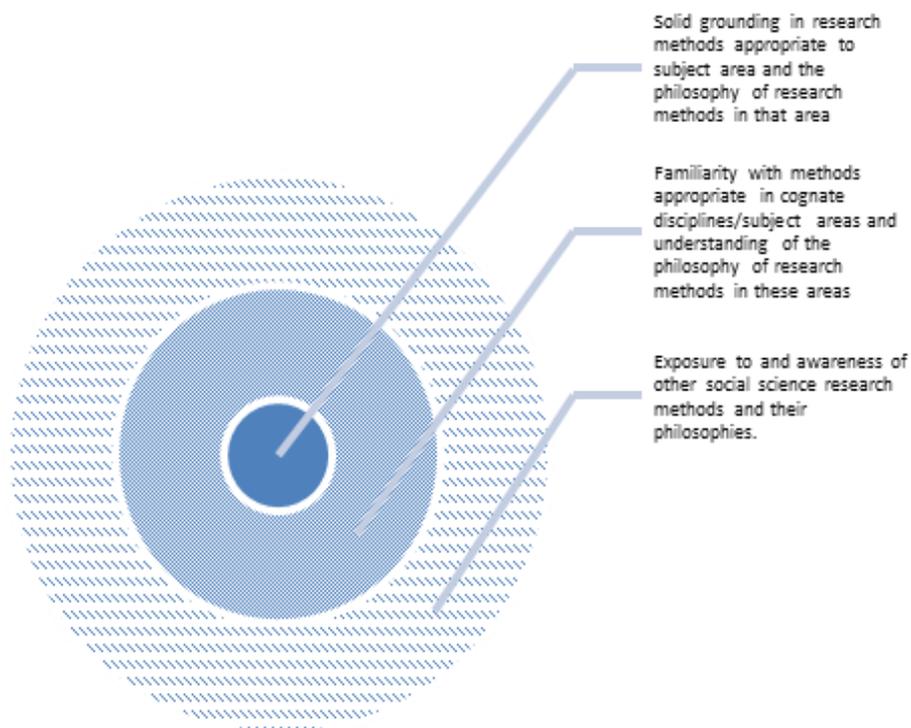
Each time you discuss your student's development plan, you should review the previous plan to ensure that sufficient progress has been made. If not, revised actions can be incorporated into the new plan but if you have any concerns about your student's development, these should be reported to the pathway representative. The pathway representative can bring any issues to the Training, Employability and Knowledge Exchange (TEKE) panel of the NWSSDTP. A random selection of development plans will be reviewed by the TEKE panel and supervisors may be asked to comment on their student's implementation of the development plan, including the ease with which s/he was able to access appropriate development opportunities.

The data collected in this survey will be used by NWSSDTP to better understand the development and training needs of our students, so we can tailor and expand our activities in line with student requirements. ESRC may also utilise the data to monitor NWSSDTP activity. It is hoped that this survey will replace or integrate with any institutional DNA requirements for NWSSDTP students.

Broad-based social science research training

The ESRC requires that doctoral training should develop researchers who have an ability to understand and use a broad range of research techniques appropriate to their subject area, and who are conversant and sympathetic to approaches used by other fields. The guidelines say that *'The level and intensity of this core training may differ from subject to subject'*. The depth of 'basic' training therefore depends on the relevance of particular methods to the subject area.

This can be visualised in the following way:



"Students must have a good understanding of both the practice and philosophies of social science research which enables them to understand the advantages and disadvantages of core research methods and apply appropriate methods to different types of research question. Students should be made aware of the basic approaches to both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, including different ontological and epistemological perspectives".(p8)

In some subject areas, the central part of the diagram will contain a wide range of research methods, in others there will be concentration on just one or two. In the latter case, a wider range of 'appropriate' methods would fall into the second circle. The aim is that 'competence in understanding and applying a broad range of research methods, (including quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods)' (p7) can be demonstrated across the three circles.

Discussions will take place at pathway level as to what appropriate training content of the three circles above should be (and thus the level of competence required in any given development area). We anticipate that students will have the greatest difficulty in selecting proficiency level 2 or 3 for skills and competencies in development areas outside the core circle for their subject area.

Given the ESRC approach to broad-based training it is inappropriate for students to identify certain skills and competencies as irrelevant or unnecessary. For those that fall in the outer circle in relation to the subject area, basic knowledge and proficiency can be 'exposure to and awareness of'. As a supervisor you may advise students to select level 2 in these areas. We hope you will help your students to make a fair judgement as to whether they have a sufficiently broad basic coverage and direct them towards appropriate basic or advanced training.

Further information

Please refer to [NWSSDTP](#) website and your institution's researcher development website (see below) for information about development and training provision. For any queries, please contact NWSSDTP at nwssdtp@liv.ac.uk.

[Vitae - Professional development of researchers](#)
[Keele University](#)
[Lancaster University](#)
[University of Liverpool](#)
[The University of Manchester](#)
[ESRC resources for PhD students](#)