

# The ESRC NWSSDTP Development Needs Analysis (DNA) Form: Guidance for Supervisors

North West  
Social Science  
Doctoral Training  
Partnership



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council

## 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:

**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**

Students will need advice from their supervisors in assessing whether they have sufficiently broad 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. The survey is compulsory and completion every year is a condition of receiving ESRC funding. The survey is usually launched in January with a March deadline. The survey should take around 15-20 minutes to complete.

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, face to face or online.

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 appropriate colleagues within your department.

The data collected in this survey will be **also** used by the 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. All development plans will be reviewed by DTP Coordinator and the training needs identified by individual students will be collated and presented to the biannual *Training, Employability and Knowledge Exchange panel*. This will be the forum for discussing how to rectify any gaps in training provision identified by the DNA process.

ESRC also utilise the data to monitor NWSSDTP activity. The ESRC request a report each year on the outcomes of DNA process and also request a random selection of DNA forms to review.

It is intended that this survey will replace or integrate with any institutional DNA requirements for NWSSDTP students.

**Please contact [nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nwssdtp@liverpool.ac.uk) with any queries.**