



# Alternative Approaches to Generic and Transferable Skills Training

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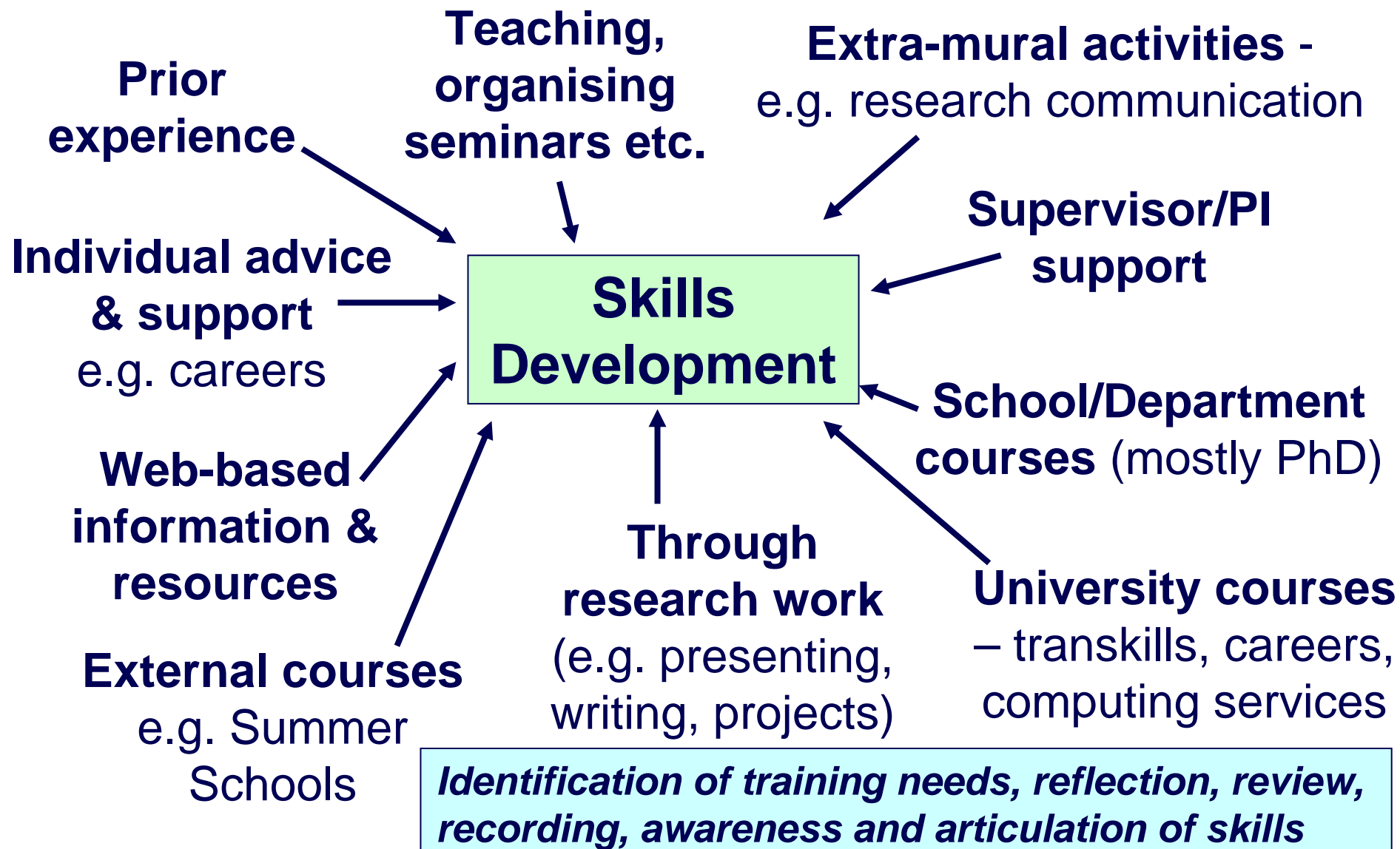
- Background
- Embedding skills training in academic programmes
- Summer Schools and stand-alone development activities
- Postgraduate researcher-led initiatives
- Collaborative approaches to postgraduate training
- Emerging themes

# Demand for skills training

- UK
  - Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement (2001)
  - **Roberts Review Funding (2003)**
  - Revised QAA Code of Practice (2004)
- Europe
  - European Research Area
  - Marie Curie Initial Training Networks
  - EUA Council for Doctoral Education (2008)

# Definitions and frameworks

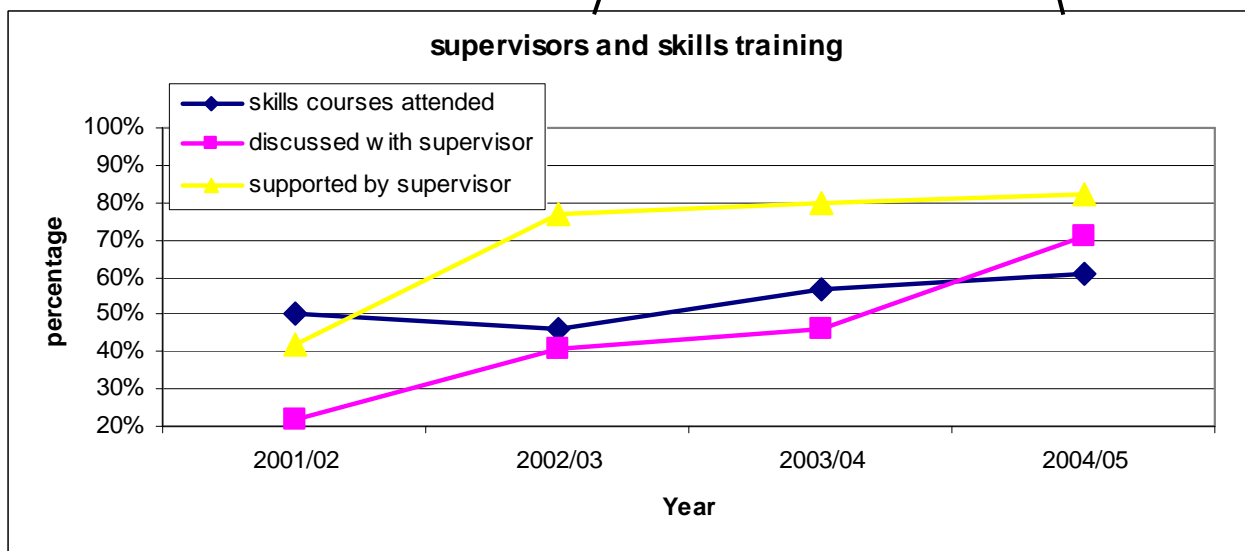
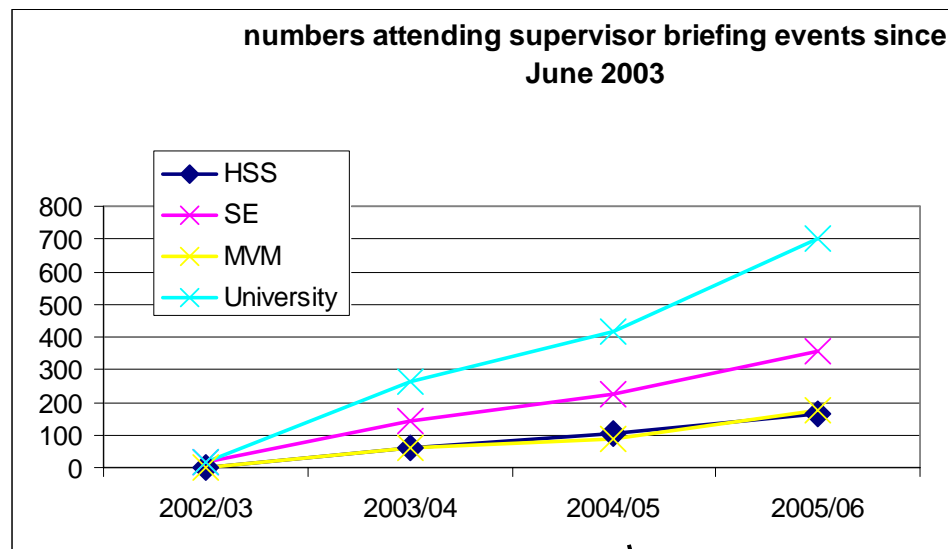
- Competency frameworks
  - e.g. UK Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement
- Development of individual
  - joining academic community
  - preparing for future career
- Opportunities for skills development
  - in PhD programmes
  - as extra activities





# Embedding Skills Training in Academic Programmes

# Role of supervisors



*from annual survey of postgraduate research students*

# Postgraduate Transferable Skills Unit

- University level workshops
- College skills development programmes
- Wide range of topics & timing
- Bespoke courses (Masters programmes & Schools)
- Promotes and complements other internal and external training



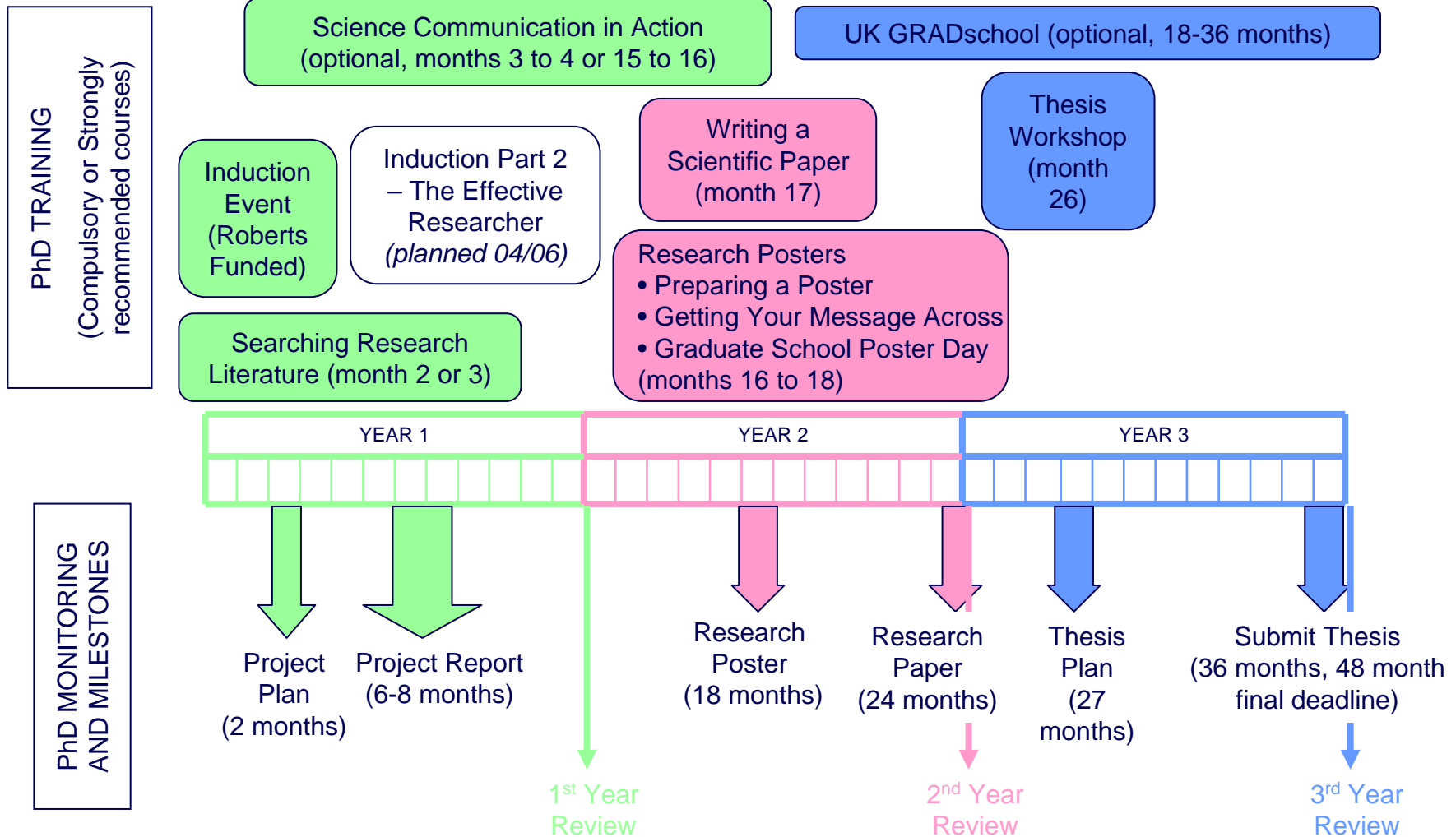


# Linking skills training to PhD milestones

- Why?
  - Engagement with students, Schools, supervisors
  - Impact
    - Increased (and explicit) awareness of skills development through PhD
    - Skills development improving PhD effectiveness
    - Positive reinforcement between the two
- How?
  - Early stages of PhD
  - Key points during PhD
  - Discussed at annual review

# Graduate School of Engineering and Electronics

## PhD monitoring, milestones and training



Training Needs Assessment during induction and annual review points students towards appropriate elective courses including:

Effective Presentations (1), Effective Writing (any), Communicating Science to Non-Specialists (1 or 2), Scientific Computing Tools (usually 1), Computing Toolbox (any), Web Page Production (any), Research Grant Applications (3), Developing a Successful Career (3), Interviewing Skills (3), Entrepreneurship (any), IPR (any), Tutoring & Demonstrating (1)



# Want to get your PhD off to a flying start?

## Managing Your PhD in Social & Political Studies

- 27 October, 10.45 – 14.00 (lunch included)
- Get to know the rest of the SPS postgraduate community
- Consider the challenges you'll face during the first year of your PhD
- Learn from the experience of and hear from 2<sup>nd</sup> year PhDs and supervisors
- How to make the most of your PhD
- Interactive, informal and practical

e.g. SPS, Informatics, PPLS, History & Classics



# Summer Schools and Stand-Alone Development Activities

# Local and National GRADschools

- National Research Council funded programme
- 4-day residential
- Aimed at 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> years
- Taking stock of skills
- Looking at career options
- Time out from PhD to regain momentum



# Coimbra Group Summer Schools for Future Research Leaders - Bergen July 2007 Climate Change and Extreme Weather



# Approach

- Interdisciplinary topic
- Multidisciplinary and multinational group of participants
- Academic and professional skills
- Focus on collaboration, communication, networking and entrepreneurship
- Lectures, visits and



# Research Communication in Action

- Sandwich style approach to skills development
- Run with individual Graduate Schools
- Training in communication, working with children and a specific workshop
- Teams of PhD students and/or research staff take workshops to local schools
- Review day
- Variation with focus on policy development for social science





# Postgraduate Researcher-Led Initiatives



# Alternative Careers Seminars

- Organised and run by PhD researchers for PhD researchers
- Funding from Roberts for speaker expenses and post seminar networking
- 20-50 participants each time
- Teaching, medical publishing, patent lawyer, science communicator, industry etc
- Succession plan, back-up support (e.g. web)

# E-journals and conferences

- Communities of postgraduate researchers
- Experience of academic publication and communication
- Linked to formal and informal training
- Workshops and seminars
- Networking and social events



<http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/esharp/>

<http://forum.llc.ed.ac.uk/index.html>

<http://www.law.ed.ac.uk/ahrc/script-ed/index.asp>



# Collaborative Approaches to Postgraduate Training

# Impact of research pooling and other examples of disciplinary collaboration

- EaST Chem
  - Scientific Paper Production (St Andrews)
  - PhD Thesis Workshop (Edinburgh)
- SUPA
  - Entrepreneurship event
- Mathematics
  - ICMS Generic skills training for postgraduate mathematicians in Scotland
- Social science networks

# All change in 2008

## Goodbye UK GRAD, hello....Vitae

- ✔ national activities
- ✔ regional hub newsletters, events and activities
- ✔ latest news and policy updates
- ✔ research projects
- ✔ innovative pilot projects
- ✔ careers and development resources
- ✔ communities of practice
- ✔ a network of colleagues to share thoughts, ideas and practice

# Scotland & Northern Ireland Hub

- ✔ Community of practice
  - Sharing ideas, experience, advice on resources, approaches and trainers
  - Events and workshops
- ✔ Hub contributions to institutional events (e.g. student conferences, induction)
- ✔ Collaborative projects

# Emerging themes

## .... Reflections on the UK experience

- Importance of time .... changes in cultures
- Need for clear and consistent messages .... funding bodies, Quality Assurance Agency etc
- Importance of funding .... Roberts
- Opportunities to discuss issues and share practice .... UK GRAD, UKCGE etc
- Need to engage all players ... academics, Graduate Schools, support services, PhD students, funding bodies, professional bodies, employers



# Emerging themes .... looking to the future

- Moving the location/ownership of skills training closer to the main academic experience
- PhD student-led initiatives
- Collaborative working (cross culture, cross discipline, use of technology)
- Institutional collaboration
- Links to employers (including placement programmes)
- Use of E-learning
- Personal Development Planning/E-Portfolios





# Interactive Induction Sessions

- Run with individual Graduate Schools, often **one month or so into the semester**
- Icebreakers to help introduce and build postgraduate community
- Introduction to PhD programme (from academic staff and existing students)
- **Interactive** activities looking at PhD challenges, training and development needs
- Introduction to available training and support
- E.g. GeoSciences, Engineering & Electronics, Education, Chemistry, Divinity



# Good Practice in PhD Research

- Project planning & experimental design
- Keeping lab notebooks & managing your research results
- Role & responsibilities
- Progress monitoring & assessment
- Research ethics & ethical practice
- Making the most of your PhD: training, support & opportunities

**5 sessions at different sites with senior academics**

Throughout the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine

# Other bespoke courses

- **Poster Presentations (e.g. GeoSciences)**
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> year assessment milestones
  - Linked to poster design, written and verbal presentation courses
- **Academic Paper Writing**
  - Tailored to different academic disciplines
  - Led by senior academics
- **PhD Thesis Workshops**
  - Timetabled for students about to start 3<sup>rd</sup> year
  - Mix of discipline specific and general sessions
  - Core materials tailored to local requirements and led by academics

# Lessons learnt

- High impact on participants, positive feedback, follow-up contact
- Great benefits of mixing specialist content and professional skills
- Diversity of participants had a positive impact on learning
- Format provided opportunities to revisit topics and skills
- Benefits of tailored activities and training materials
- Team of academic and professional skills co-leaders with visiting experts
  
- Challenges:
  - Funding
  - Capacity (leaders and hosts)
  - Promotion and advertising

# UK GRAD Programme

- National Policy and Practice
  - Information and discussion
  - Annual conference, Roberts Policy Forum
- Resources for PhD students and staff
  - PhD planner, Just for Postgrads website
  - What do PhDs Do?
  - Resources database, database of practice

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# All change in 2008

## Goodbye UK GRAD, hello....?

- Creation of a new 'researcher development' initiative
  - Remit extended to include research staff and PhD students
  - sector-led, developed with current Hubs and UKHERD
- New national networks
  - Researchers, supervisors, employers
- New support for training workshops and resources
  - Trainer support unit, Incubator unit
- Enhanced website
  - Stronger focus on career pathways
- New programme and new name will be launched on 25 June 2008