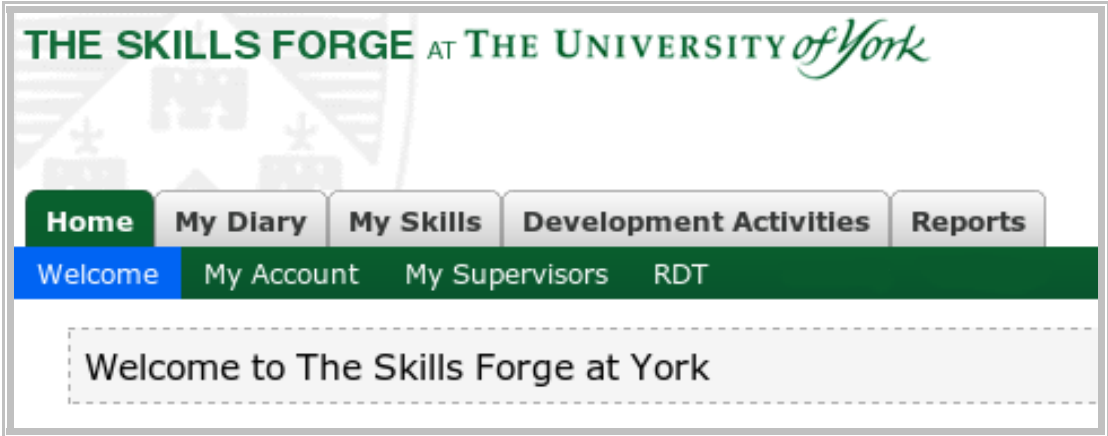




**An Introduction to
Graduate Professional Development (GPD)
Using 'The Skills Forge'**



1 Support via e-mail

Any queries about training courses or GPD in general should be directed to the Researcher Development Team (RDT):

rdt@york.ac.uk

If you have any questions or comments about The Skills Forge software:

skillsforge-support@york.ac.uk

2 Web links

The Researcher Development Team:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-development>

The Graduate Training Unit Skills Forge pages:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/researcher-development/students/gpd>

The Skills Forge:

<http://www.skillsforge.york.ac.uk/>

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Table of Contents

1 Support via e-mail.....	2
2 Web links.....	2
3 Learning objectives.....	4
4 Conventions used in this workbook.....	4
5 Introduction.....	5
5.1 What is GPD?.....	5
5.2 Why have the university developed this process?.....	5
5.3 What is 'The Skills Forge'?.....	5
5.4 Why is GPD Important?.....	5
6 Getting Started.....	6
6.1 Loading up 'The Skills Forge'.....	6
6.2 Signing In.....	6
7 Finding Your Way around 'The Skills Forge'.....	7
7.1 The Tabbed Menu.....	7
7.2 Using Tabs.....	7
The 'Home' Tab.....	7
The 'My Diary' tab.....	7
The 'My Skills' tab.....	8
The 'Development Activities' tab.....	8
The 'Reports' tab.....	8
8 Your Training Needs Analysis (TNA).....	9
8.1 Rating Your Skills.....	9
8.2 Choosing which skills to work on.....	10
8.3 Rating how Confident and Competent you are.....	11
9 Find & Book Courses.....	12
9.1 Course Details.....	13
9.2 Book a Course.....	13
10 Adding Other Development Opportunities.....	14
10.1 Recording Other Development.....	14
10.2 Your Development Transcript.....	14

3 Learning objectives

During this session you will:

1. be introduced to the process of GPD
2. gain some practical experience of using 'The Skills Forge' – including:
 - Signing in to 'The Skills Forge'
 - Finding your way around 'The Skills Forge'
 - Starting Your Training Needs Analysis
 - Finding & Booking Courses
 - Recording a personal development activity
 - Adding events to your calendar
 - Recording a supervision meeting record

4 Conventions used in this workbook



The hand sign means you should follow the numbered steps to perform a task. They assume you are using a University supported PC.

Note: The Skills Forge can be accessed from any computer at the University or elsewhere, if connected to the Internet.

5 Introduction

5.1 What is GPD?

GPD or Graduate Professional Development is the process whereby research students plan, monitor and reflect on their skills development. As part of their GPD, research students will be expected to undertake appropriate transferable skills training and to reflect on the development of their skills.

5.2 Why have the university developed this process?

The University of York believes that it is important to give students the opportunity to reflect on, monitor and develop their transferable skills. In addition, the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) require all students in Higher Education to have access to some form of personal development planning.

To meet this requirement, the University of York has developed a system of PDP (Personal Development Planning) for Undergraduates, and a process called GPD (Graduate Professional Development) using a tool called 'The Skills Forge' for research students.

5.3 What is 'The Skills Forge'?

The Skills Forge is an interactive web-based system and it is the tool you should use to help you through the GPD process. The Skills Forge will help you develop your professional skills and approach to research.

Having considered a range of paper and web-based options it was decided that this web-based package was the best and most efficient option for the University of York. Here are a few of the system's key benefits:

Using the system you can:

- analyse where you currently are with each skill area;
- identify courses to help you develop these skill areas;
- search for, book and manage training courses;
- record and reflect on other development opportunities;
- use the calendar function to help you plan your time;
- record and sign off meetings you have with your supervisor

5.4 Why is GPD Important?

Undertaking the GPD process will help you to identify the transferable skills that you need to develop to help you to become an effective researcher. The GPD process also gives you the opportunity to reflect on your skills development throughout the course of your PhD.

Skills training is an integral part of your PhD programme, so engaging with the GPD process using the Skills Forge will help you to get the best out of the skills training opportunities available.

6 Getting Started

6.1 Loading up 'The Skills Forge'



1. Log in to any PC with an Internet connection.
2. Double-click on the Internet Explorer icon (alternatively you can use a different web browser such as Firefox, if preferred).
3. In the Address bar type <http://www.skillsforge.york.ac.uk/> and press Enter.

6.2 Signing In



1. Select The University of York from the drop down list of organisations.
2. Enter your computing service username, e.g. abc123.
3. Enter your computing service password. If you change your password via the Computing Service Electronic Infodesk, your password also changes on Skills Forge.
4. Click the Sign In button that is located immediately below the password.

Once logged in you will see this welcome page:

THE SKILLS FORGE AT THE UNIVERSITY of York

Mr Test Student | [Print](#) | [Sign Out](#)

Home | My Diary | My Skills | Development Activities | Reports

Welcome | My Account | My Supervisors | RDT | Chemistry | Biology

Welcome to The Skills Forge at York

My Diary

- [View my PhD to-do list](#)
- [View my activities for this month](#)
- [Set an action point](#)
- [Record a supervision meeting](#)

My Skills

- [Assess my training needs](#)

Development Activities

- [Book a place on a course or event](#)
- [Record my own development activity](#)

Reports

- [View my development summary](#)

Announcements

Have your say!

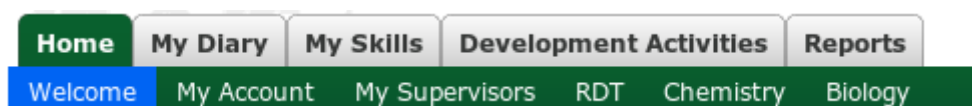
4 Mar 2011
Don't forget to complete the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). See the [PRES webpage](#) for details.

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7 Finding Your Way around 'The Skills Forge'

7.1 The Tabbed Menu

The 'main menu' on The Skills Forge is represented by a row of tabs. The rounded tabs on the top (Home, My Diary, etc.) divide the website up into its main sections. These main tabs will always be visible no matter which screen you are in.



Within each main tab are sub-tabs that further divide the section into individual screens. These sub-tabs are on the green bar and will change depending on which of the main sections you are in.

7.2 Using Tabs



To get used to the tabs, just take a moment to click on the main tabs and their corresponding sub-tabs. When you are finished, click back on the Home tab.

To get used to the tabs, just take a moment to click on the main tabs and their corresponding sub-tabs. When you are finished, click back on the Home tab.

Below is a quick summary of what you can find in each tab:

The 'Home' Tab

The Home tab gives you access to the following screens:

Welcome – gives 1 click access to the most commonly accessed parts of the system and also includes an Announcements box on the right hand side

My Account – details about your own Skills Forge account

My Supervisors – lists the academics who have access to your Skills Forge account

RDT – this links through to the RDT website

The 'My Diary' tab

My Calendar – You can add action points, meetings and notes/memos into your calendar. Any courses you book through Skills Forge will also appear in your diary, as will any development opportunities you add. We'll come back to the calendar later.

PhD Timeline (To-do List) – This timeline is designed to guide you through the GPD process. Use this timeline as a guide to the sorts of things you should be

thinking about at various stages throughout your PhD. Please be aware that there may be additional activities and obligations within your department that are not included on this list.

The PhD Timeline has been broken down into things you might want to think about when you start your PhD, during your First year, Second year, Third year onwards and things that should be ongoing every year.

Action Points – Here you should set yourself dated milestones and record any actions set by your supervisor.

Meetings – It's important to record and sign off your supervision meetings. These form a permanent record which can be retrieved later if needed. Make sure that you have read all of the contents in the form before signing it.

The 'My Skills' tab

Overview – This page includes an introduction to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

Research Degree Skills – Here you can review your current research skills against the four RDF domains.

The 'Development Activities' tab

Find & Book courses – book on RDF courses (and some departmental courses) here.

My own activities – here you can record other activities, for example volunteering or paid employment, where you are developing your skills

Other training opportunities – such as departmental courses if not in Skills Forge, Grad schools, Computing Service courses etc.

My Development Summary – View a summary of all of your training and development to include training courses you have booked on and attended as well as other development opportunities you have recorded

The 'Reports' tab

Transcript – this pulls together all of your completed courses and development activities and sums up the total points that have been awarded.

8 Your Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is a national initiative developed by Vitae (www.vitae.ac.uk) in consultation with the research councils and the HE sector.

The RDF statement sets out the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers appropriate for a wide range of careers. It is endorsed by all major research universities in the UK including the research councils (RCUK), Universities UK (UUK) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

As such it is now recognised as the tool for supporting researcher development; it builds on and replaces the Joint Skills Statement that was developed by the research councils some years ago. There are four main domains:

- A. Knowledge and Intellectual Capabilities
- B. Personal Effectiveness
- C. Research Governance and Organisation
- D. Engagement, Influence and Impact

The RDF provides a language by which researchers can talk about their work and is also a tool to aid continuing professional development.

8.1 Rating Your Skills



1. Select the **My Skills** tab
2. Select the **Research Degree Skills** sub-tab
3. Choose one of the four domains that sounds most interesting to you
4. Select the associated **Review Skills** link
5. Scroll down the page and you will see explanations of the three sections contained within the domain, plus a text box to type up a domain summary

THE SKILLS FORGE AT THE UNIVERSITY of York

Mr Test Student | [Print](#) | [Sign Out](#)

Home | My Diary | **My Skills** | Development Activities | Reports

Overview | **Research Degree Skills**

Researcher Development Framework

The four quadrants below make up [The Researcher Development Framework \(RDF\)](#). This replaces [the Joint Skills Statement that was previously used on Skills Forge](#).

Engagement, influence and impact The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research. Review Skills Print	D1 Working with others D2 Communication and dissemination D3 Engagement and impact	A1 Knowledge base A2 Cognitive abilities A3 Creativity	Knowledge and intellectual abilities The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research. Review Skills Print
Research governance and organisation The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research. Review Skills Print	C1 Professional conduct C2 Research management C3 Finance, funding and resources	B1 Personal qualities B2 Self-management B3 Professional and career development	Personal effectiveness The personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher. Review Skills Print

Researcher Development Framework courtesy of Vitae®, © 2010 Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited. Used by request from The University of York.

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8.2 Choosing which skills to work on


Within each of the four RDF domains there are three sub-domains to review. Each of these includes a further list of skills along with three options to describe how you feel:


D1) Working with others

Including:

1. Collegiality
2. Team working
3. People management
4. Supervision
5. Mentoring
6. Influence and leadership
7. Collaborations
8. Equality and diversity

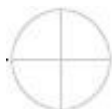
How do you feel about this skill?

----- Confidence -----  -----

----- Competence -----  -----

- This isn't a skill I want to work on at the moment
- Yes, it's work in progress
- I'm happy I have this ability

Verdict: This isn't a skill you want to work on at the moment.



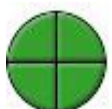
'This isn't a skill I want to work on at the moment' -

If you want to concentrate on other skills for the time being then you are free to leave the option 'This isn't a skill I want to work on at the moment'. This leaves the 'pie' blank.



'Yes, it's work in progress' -

If you need to work on one of the listed skills then select this option – this activates the 'pie' so you can reflect on where you are, we'll explain this in a moment.



'I'm happy I have this ability' -

If you already feel completely confident and competent in the listed skills, select this option. This makes the 4 segments of the 'pie' green.



You are free to re-visit and update these ratings at any time, so have a look through the skills and choose some that are interesting or relevant to you now, marking them as 'work in progress'.

8.3 Rating how Confident and Competent you are

For each skills area you wish to work on, we want you to reflect on how confident and how competent you feel. The benefit is in the reflective process of choosing the rating, rather than the rating itself. Your ratings are visible to your supervisor to help inform discussions about your professional development.

	You're happy that you have this ability
	You feel partially confident
	You feel partially competent
	You feel very confident
	You feel very competent
	This isn't a skill you're working on at the moment

com-pe-tent *adj.*

Properly or sufficiently qualified; capable: a competent typist

con-fi-dence *n.*

A feeling of assurance, especially of self-assurance



1. Take a few minutes to reflect on your competence and confidence with each of the listed skills.
2. Click on the segments of the pie to record your overall rating.
3. You should also make a note in the text area at the bottom of the form, including your thoughts, actions, development needs or points for discussion with your supervisor.
4. Don't forget to click 'Save'

9 Find & Book Courses

Now you have identified some skill areas you would like to develop, Skills Forge can help you to search for courses which will help you to develop this skill.

You can do a search for courses that relate to any of the four RDF domains plus special courses for Postgraduates Who Teach (PGWT), or by key word.

The screenshot shows the Skills Forge website interface. At the top, it says "THE SKILLS FORGE AT THE UNIVERSITY of York" and "Mr Test Student | Print | Sign Out". Below this is a navigation bar with tabs: Home, My Diary, My Skills, Development Activities, and Reports. Underneath is a sub-navigation bar with: Overview, Find & Book Courses (highlighted), My Own Activities, Other training opportunities, and My Development Summary.

The main content area is titled "How to find & book on courses" and includes instructions: "Please use the buttons below to search for courses and bookings." There are four search options listed in a vertical list:

- Custom search
- A) Knowledge and intellectual abilities
- B) Personal effectiveness
- C) Research governance and organisation
- D) Engagement, influence and impact

Below these is a button for "Postgraduates Who Teach (PGWT)".

The "Search Events" section contains the following text: "Please filter the list of courses using the search options below. The simple search only returns future events where places are still available. For other options please use the advanced search."

The search options are:

- Simple search** | [Advanced search](#)
- By Keyword or Event Code: [Text input field]
- By Department *: [Dropdown menu with options: Researcher Development Team, Biology, Chemistry, Electronics, History of Art]
- Sort by: Start date Event code Event title

A note below the search options states: "* Ctrl+Click to select multiple departments, terms or categories. You are allowed to attend courses from other departments if they appear in your search results."

A "Search Events" button is located at the bottom of the search options.

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with: "Skills Forge © 2010 | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [University Disclaimer](#) | [System Status](#) | [Contact Us](#)"

When your search results appear, click the **Details** link to view full details of the course and to book your place.

9.1 Course Details

The course details screen contains:

1. A summary of the course, often including aims and outcomes plus any prerequisites to attending the course.
2. Details of each of the sessions that you should attend. You'll get a reminder by email, but please keep a note of these dates as if you're unable to attend then your place can be given to someone else.
3. Your current booking status, including a link to reserve your place.
4. Attendance records, which appear after the course once the signing in sheet has been processed.

RDT2075: Endnote
Taught Course

[Back to previous search results](#) | [Start new search](#)

This event is being organised by Researcher Development Team. For any enquiries please contact [Researcher Development Team](#).

Summary

Who is it for:
PhD Students (ideally in the first year of registration)

Level:
1-2

Aims and Outcomes:
By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Create a bibliographic database
- Insert citations and a bibliography into a word document
- Import References
- Search Online databases
- Retrieve references from journals, databases and the library catalogue
- Use EndNote with Word for thesis writing

Course Content:
Learn how to create a bibliographic database, insert citations and a bibliography into Word, import references, search online databases, retrieve references from journals, databases and the Library catalogue, use EndNote with Word for thesis writing.

Pre-requisites:
Computing Service username and password, working knowledge of Word and file management.

Session details for RDT2075

This event has 1 session(s):

	Date/times	Venue	Facilitator	Notes
Session 1	28/Oct/2011 13:15 to 28/Oct/2011 15:15	D114	IT Services	

Booking status: Not booked

[Click here to book a place on this event](#)

Attendance records:

Attendance records will be processed after this event has finished.
Please note that it can take a couple of weeks for us to process session attendance. If you feel the records shown above are incomplete or incorrect please contact the event organiser at the email address shown above.

9.2 Book a Course



1. Find the course you wish to book using the search tools described above.
2. Click the '**Details**' link.
3. Check you can attend all of the sessions.
4. Click '**Book a place on this event**' at the bottom of the screen.

10 Adding Other Development Opportunities

As well as courses you might take with the Researcher Development Team, many other opportunities can count towards your professional development. For example, taking part in a conference or attending courses run by IT Services. Academic departments also run subject-specific training.

This can all be recorded in Skills Forge, to build a transcript of your training and development for use during University progression monitoring meetings and after your PhD when you apply for a job.

10.1 Recording Other Development



1. Select the **My Own Activities** or **Other Training Opportunities** sub-tab with the **Development Activities** tab.
2. Some suggestions for other activities are listed.
3. Click 'Add another development record to your profile'.
4. Complete the form as directed, including selection of a suitable RDF domain for the activity.
5. Click 'Save'. The record will appear in your Development Summary and your Transcript.

10.2 Your Development Transcript

The **Reports** tab contains a Development Transcript. This lists all of the development activities that you have undertaken, including a points total which is used by some departments.

Most students will be required to submit a record of training and development as part of their PhD. This screen can be printed for this purpose.