

Developing and supporting the curriculum

Developing a new online curriculum in research training for LINCS PGR students

1	Your higher education institution: Heriot-Watt University
2	Name author(s), and contact details: Prof Jemina Napier and Dr Bernadette O'Rourke
3	How does your project contribute to a research-informed and professionally relevant curriculum? The delivery of a structured, tailor-made and flexible online support curriculum to meet the LINCS PhD students' research training needs, that blends delivery of online content with face-to-face critical discussion sessions, provides more 'space' for PGR students to critically think about their learning in relation to how to do research (student-centred), rather than being introduced to research from a more traditional didactic (teacher-centred) approach. Thus the project is both research-informed as it centres on the delivery of research content, and is professionally relevant as it directly contributes to the development of academic research skills for PhD students that will feed into their long-term academic career.
4	How does your project support an international and multi-disciplinary curriculum? The study of intercultural communication, translation and interpreting is an inherently international and multi-disciplinary field, including experts in linguistics, sociology, anthropology and literature. Our project supports an international and multi-disciplinary curriculum as it will feature a range of presentations from researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds, and from different countries (such as Greece, Germany, France, Ireland, Spain), presenting on various aspects of research methods. The curriculum has been specifically designed to draw on the strengths of researchers from LINCS that would appeal broadly across the body of PhD students who are pursuing different disciplinary approaches to their research projects, and who also come from a range of different countries (including, Spain, Ireland, Egypt, USA, Turkey and India).
5	How does your project support student-centred approaches that promote student engagement and leadership? Drawing on key learning and teaching principles, this project has enabled the development of a curriculum that promotes (i) a student-centered approach (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994); (ii) reflective learning for critical thinking (Baker, 1996); (iii) problem-based learning (Schwartz, Mennin & Webb, 2001); and (iv) cooperative and collaborative learning (Leigh Smith & MaGregor, 1992). This project will lead to an enhanced curriculum through: <i>scaffolded</i> learning as students will have an opportunity to build their knowledge and understanding of research methods; <i>critical thinking</i> as students will be given the opportunity to discuss their learning in relation to the development of their own research projects; <i>inverting the classroom</i> by presenting students with new information outside of the classroom (online) so that a <i>problem-based</i> approach to examining the development of their research proposals can be adopted; and combining <i>autonomous</i> and <i>collaborative</i> learning, whereby students will have the opportunity to pace their own learning when engaging with the online content, but also ask questions of their peers and established researchers.

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6	How does your project help to reshape the learning environment? Please refer (where relevant to): • Technological mediation The project helps to reshape the learning environment by drawing on technology to invert the classroom, and provide a blended curriculum. Students access research methods content through technological mediation, which they then critically discuss in face-to-face sessions. The online portal also provides opportunities for PhD students to access other resources and engage in online discussion. • The distribution of learning across global locations At this time the learning from this project is not distributed across global locations, but if the model serves to develop a blended framework for support for PhD students across Heriot-Watt University, then PhD students in the Borders, Dubai and Malaysia campuses (as well as any other distance PhD students enrolled at HWU) may also benefit from this project.
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