

Welcome to the SWDTP DNA Log

This Development Needs Analysis (DNA) Log was developed by the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) South West Doctoral Training Partnership (SWDTP).

As per ESRC training guidelines, Development Needs Analysis (DNA) is an ongoing process as part of your PhD studies and researcher development more generally. The purpose of engaging with DNA is to ensure that you feel ownership of a bespoke development process that is aligned to your needs and aspirations. Engaging with DNA includes the following activities which this OneNote document facilitates, such as:

- Regularly reflecting on any training and development activities that you do
- Evaluating whether activities are helping you reach your identified development needs, goals and aspirations
- Setting objectives to help you reach your identified development needs, goals and aspirations

This publicly available template is adapted from tools developed to facilitate SWDTP students in engaging with Development Needs Analysis, a required component of ESRC PhD studentships.

What counts as development activities?

Activities can be loosely associated with different stages of the PhD

Stage	Description
Grounding	Have secure grounding in conceptual knowledge and general research skills expected within your discipline, together with skills and knowledge for managing and conducting ethically sound research.
Specialising	Have a depth of specialist expertise in academic debates relevant to your dissertation research, the research methods used in their dissertation research, and communication skills for practitioner, policy or public engagement pertinent to your research.
Producing and Leading	Communicate effectively with academic and non-academic audiences through written outputs, verbal presentations and other appropriate means and contribute towards building research communities.
Onwards and outwards	Can apply your skills across academic and non-academic research contexts and confidently articulate your competencies to prospective employers or through entrepreneurship activities.

Activities can be associated with four Researcher Development Domains

Development Domain	Vitae Domain Correspondence*	Description
Research Skills and Knowledge	A1, A2, C1, C2	The skills and knowledge needed to conduct robust and ethically sound research.
Academic Literacy	A, relevant to D2	The skills and knowledge expected for academic roles and leadership, and effective research communication.
Professional Development	B3, D1, D2, D3	The skills and knowledge that improve employability, career opportunities and networks in order to meet professional aspirations.
Wellbeing and Community	B1, B2, D1	The skills and knowledge that help you look after your wellbeing, find your place within communities of support, and understand your part in furthering equality, diversity and inclusion in society.

* If your institution uses the Vitae development framework, our Development Domains can be mapped onto the Vitae RDF to help you complete institutional training and development processes.

[Click here](#) to read more about the SWDTP's training and development offerings and our Researcher Development Framework

About this section

This section contains a number of tools to help you evaluate your development needs and set objectives. Click on each page to find out more.

Development Needs Evaluation Matrix

About this tool

This matrix is designed to help give an overview of your researcher development so far, including what skills you've acquired or brought with you going into your PhD, and what you might want to prioritise going forward. By mapping your experiences onto the matrix, the goal is to regularly assess whether your development journey is helping you meet your own objectives and aspirations.

How to use this tool

To populate the matrix, write down completed activities, relevant prior experiences, and activities you want to undertake in each corresponding cell. **You are not expected to fill in every cell or complete every activity, and you may already feel competent in some of these areas from previous experiences.**

Activities that are compulsory or core to your PhD are indicated accordingly, other activities are optional suggestions.

Suggestions for making the most of this tool

- Use this tool to help guide discussions about development needs and objectives with supervisors, progress reviewers, careers team etc.
- When an activity fits in more than one Development Domain, don't choose just one. Instead, write it down in all cells that apply, that way you can more accurately reflect on what skills and experiences you have gained, not just keep track of completed activities.
- If your institution uses Vitae Researcher Development Framework, [click here](#) to learn about how our Development Domains correspond to Vitae. This will better help you use this resource to support your institution required progress monitoring.

The Matrix is organised around four Development Domains and key stages. [Click here to learn more about them](#) and [how they correspond to the Vitae Framework](#), which your institution may use.

Development Domain	PhD Core	Research Skills and Knowledge (General)	Research Skills and Knowledge (Conceptual)	Research Skills and Knowledge (Specialised)	Academic Literacy	Professional Development	Community & Wellbeing
Stage							
Onwards and outwards	<p>May include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Placement Communicating dissertation research <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bid writing Sitting on ethics committees <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Academic editing Convening Peer reviewing Interdisciplinary collaborations <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research methods training to broaden research skills <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting yourself through social media and academic/professional websites (e.g. scopes etc.) <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Careers activity Engaging non-academic audiences with social science research <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> SWDTP Summer School Volunteering outside of academia <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here]
Producing and leading	<p>Dissertation stage</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Data Collection and analysis write up <p>May include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing from research Presenting research <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Training on IPR, open access <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing from research Presenting research <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing from research Presenting research <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Convening/chairing conferences <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating your research to non-academic audiences Establishing a professional online presence <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Writing retreats Training for sustaining healthy writing habits Doctoral rep role within a national research association/network Wider network convening/chairing <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here]
Project building	<p>Proposal stage</p> <p>Compulsory</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Secure ethics permissions <p>May include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Publishing from PhD lit review or proposal Presenting research <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Further project management, governance workshops <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Further conference activity (or similar) Attend a conference Attend a seminar series Participate in a reading group <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Specialised research methods workshop Research methods summer school etc. <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in academic peer review practices (e.g. peer reviewing for a journal, informal reviews) Reviewing conference abstracts Writing a book review Publication <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Assistant, Research Associate, Research Centre roles (or similar) Communication & engagement training (e.g. SWDTP Year 2 Summer School) Conference presentation <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prep for fieldwork (e.g. risk analysis, vicarious trauma training) Year 2 Summer School FOR Rep or similar leadership role Finding a national research community/network <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here]
Grounding	<p>MRes training (if applicable)</p> <p>Academic writing, assignments</p> <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<p>Compulsory (if applicable)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Self-directed learning in required areas not covered in MRes Methodology unit: Quant and/or Qual Methodology unit: Digital methods & data skills <p>Optional</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Doctoral College workshops <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<p>Compulsory (if applicable)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Methodology unit: Intro to Social Science Research Self-directed Learning in required areas not covered in MRes <p>Optional</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reading groups Seminars <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Further Methodology units Data Analysis Software training <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support from institution's academic language & literacy centre/team (including library) Training for presentations or other forms of academic communication Study skills workshops <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Doctoral College workshops Careers service SWDTP Year 1 Summer School <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> SWDTP Welcome Event Finding a local research community SWDTP Summer School <p>Activities I've done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here] <p>Activities I want to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Type here]

Impact and Collaboration

Keep a record of other training, development or impact activities that you undertake.

Self Directed Learning

Record any learning opportunities undertaken beyond required modules, units and programmes. This could include, but is not limited to, attending seminar series, participating in workshops, auditing lectures or additional reading.

Activity	Dates	Summary

Impact and collaboration activities

Record impact driving, knowledge exchange or collaborative activities that you have led or contributed to. These activities demonstrate the impact/potential impact of social science PhD researchers and their research, or promote positive working relationships across disciplines or even with non-academic partners.

Activity	Dates	Summary

Objective Setting: "Sixty Second Scribble"

About this tool

This tool encourages you to regularly take a little bit of time out to sense check how you are feeling about your training and development needs. Rather than spending a lot of time crafting fully developed reflections entries, the prompts help you generate an ongoing log of short statements so you can keep track of your strengths, weaknesses, achievements and goals.

How to use this tool

Review your development needs matrix and the experiences you have gained so far. Fill out the following progress card on a regular basis to log your upcoming development goals.

Suggestions for making the most of this tool

1. Set yourself a frequency for how often you'd like to create a new Scribble
2. Use this tool in conversation with your supervisor to set objectives and plan ahead

Duplicate the following every time you complete a new Scribble

Scribble 1 - [Insert Date]

I feel most confident about these skills

[Type here]

I feel least confident about these skills

[Type here]

The experiences I most want to gain are.....because.....

[Type here]

About this section

You are encouraged to keep a reflection entry for each development activity that you undertake. [Click here to learn more about what we mean by development activities.](#)

The [Development Needs Evaluation Matrix](#) shows you a variety of example activities that you can choose to undertake based on your own development objectives and aspirations, but your activities can also be other opportunities that you come across, or have already completed previously.

Keeping an ongoing log will help you to:

1. More efficiently complete your progress monitoring/review process at your institution, which takes place once or twice a year (depending on your institution)
2. Better reflect on your development objectives and evaluate how well you are meeting them
3. Evaluate what experiences you should gain to help meet career aspirations and acquire new skills
4. Prepare more impactful CVs to highlight your skillsets and experiences

We have compiled some [useful reflection prompts and structures](#) for you to make the most of your reflection.

We will not monitor any activity within the "Reflection Journal" section, nor intentionally access any content stored within this section without seeking prior approval from you.

We acknowledge that reflection entries can contain confidential or sensitive information. You are welcome, but not required, to store reflection entries within this section. You may also wish to store reflection entries elsewhere.

Making the most of your reflections

An insightful reflection does not simply summarise an activity, but helps you understand how an activity has (or has not) helped you in developing the skills and experiences needed to reach your goals and aspirations. Here are a number of prompts and approaches to help you make the most of your reflections.

The CARR reflection technique

This technique is commonly used to structure responses in job interviews, but it can also be applied to reflecting on the motivations and outcomes for completing a development activity.

Context - When and what was the situation, issue, project or challenge?

Action - What was your aim, what did you do and what worked?

Result - What was the result? Can you evidence or quantify the result?

Reflection - What did you learn about yourself during the experience?

Narrative CVs

Increasingly research bodies and organisations are promoting narrative CVs as a format to write about a person's contributions and achievements to reflect a broad range of skills and experiences, more than what can be presented in a traditional academic CV ([UKRI](#)). The UKRI's [Résumé for Research and Innovation \(R4RI\)](#) template features the following four modules:

1. Contributions to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies or knowledge
2. The development of others and maintenance of effective working relationships
3. Contributions to the wider research and innovation community
4. Contributions to broader research/innovation-users and audiences and towards wider societal benefit

While your reflection for an individual activity may not cover all four modules, think about how the activity has developed skills and experience that add to your credentials to contribute in the areas above.

Read more about Narrative CVs from the [UKRI](#) and [The Royal Society](#)

Reviewing personal development

1. How does your progress in skills development compare to the plan you set yourself?
2. Have you developed any new skills or attributes?

3. Have you further developed an existing or recent skill?
4. Have you encountered any problems you've had to overcome?
5. What is still to be achieved?
6. What do you need to do to achieve these goals?
7. What help might you need?
8. What upcoming opportunities can you take advantage of?
9. What specifically do you need to do and by when?
10. What insights have you gained into the wider organisation and the career opportunities in this sector?
11. Could this influence your career goals in any way?

Adapted from [this resource](#) from The University of Edinburgh

Questions to help spot your strengths

1. What tasks do you like doing?
2. What activities make you feel fulfilled?
3. When do you experience the feeling of being in the 'zone'?
4. When are the times you feel fully engaged as opposed to merely pretending or being partially engaged?
5. What skills would you like to challenge yourself by learning more and developing further?
6. What are you willing to sustain some discomfort doing for the contribution you want to make?

7. When are you self-disciplined?
8. When do you feel like you are doing what you are supposed to be doing in life?
9. What are you looking forward to in the future?

Adapted from [this resource](#) from University of Liverpool's 'Prosper' platform

Emergency Help

In a life-threatening emergency, call 999 or go to your nearest hospital. You can also go to A&E for Mental Health help.

- For [NHS health advice](#), call 111
- To talk to the [Samaritans](#), whatever you're going through, and at any time, call 116 123
- For [24-hour text support](#), text 85258
- For [Citizens Advice \(England\)](#), call 0800 144 8848
- For [Citizens Advice \(Wales\)](#), call 0800 702 2020

If you are not currently in the UK and need urgent help, contact your local emergency services.

- [The Therapy Route](#) provides a useful list of crisis lines from around the world.

From <<https://www.swdtp.ac.uk/information-for-current-students/student-health-and-wellbeing/>>

Researching emotionally challenging topics

Researchers can be at risk of experiencing distress, trauma or secondary trauma from undertaking research on emotionally challenging topics. A group of researchers from the GW4 alliance developed a series of resources to support researchers in developing wellbeing plans, as well as guidance on what to do if you or a fellow researcher becomes distressed.

<https://gw4.ac.uk/community/gw4-r-well-researcher-wellbeing-evidence-and-learning-lab/>

About this section

This section is a blank space for you to use in any way you like. Jot down thoughts, ideas and questions that you want to come back to, or bring up with your supervisors.