

Digitally Ready for the Future

Application for small project funding

- Funding for small projects is available to staff and students under the following themes: Work placements; Employability; Enhancing T & L through the use of technology; Digital skills and literacies; Staff/student partnerships
- All successful applicants will be expected to
 - actively disseminate project outputs (e.g. by contributing to relevant T & L events and submissions to the Digitally Ready and/or Enhancing Teaching and Learning blogs)
 - participate in a celebration event in the Spring Term involving all successful applicants
 - complete a short project report and case study proforma by 31 May 2012
- Project funds will be available until 30 April and all project work should be completed by then.
- An electronic copy of the completed application form must be submitted to **Nadja Guggi** (n.guggi@reading.ac.uk) by **Monday 3 December 2012**.

Applicant details

Name Dr Emma Minns (Associate director of postgraduate research studies)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member of staff <input type="checkbox"/> Student
Department Graduate School
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Telephone 7609

Project team (Please give details of any other team members)

Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Member of staff <input type="checkbox"/> Student
Department
Email
Telephone

Project type

- Research placement
- Project placement
- Staff/student partnership (staff-led)
- Staff/student partnership (student-led)
- Teaching & Learning/Research project
- APP project

Project theme/s (Please tick all that apply)

- Work placements
- Employability
- Enhancing T & L through the use of technology
- Digital skills and literacies
- Staff/student partnerships

Project Title

Extending the provision of skills training for the University's doctoral researchers

Project Summary

Describe the proposed project (up to 500 words). Your summary should demonstrate how your project relates to the use of digital technologies and/or the development of digital literacies of staff and/or students, and should include the following:

- Background
- Aims and objectives
- Scope
- Outcomes and deliverables
- Sustainability
- Project schedule

Background

One of the principle roles of the Graduate School is to provide appropriate generic skills training to the University's doctoral researchers across all years and faculties through the Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP). In 2011-12 the RRDP offered three thousand training places across eighty different face-to-face sessions.

However, a number of our doctoral researchers find accessing the RRDP problematic:

- Those who spend periods of time 'working away'. With the further internationalization of the University, this number will undoubtedly increase.
- Part-time doctoral researchers who, due to work/personal commitments, find it difficult to attend training within normal working hours. (P/T researchers account for 25% of our doctoral cohort.)

Currently, the Graduate School provides 15 online training modules via the Epigeum courses placed on Blackboard. However, we recognize that these need to be further extended and exploited in order to meet the skills training needs and professional development of our doctoral researcher community, and contribute to our meeting our increased recruitment targets.

Aims and objectives:

- To develop a long-term strategy for the Graduate School's online training provision.
- To identify ways to improve the Graduate School's online training provision:
 - for doctoral researchers unable to attend face-to-face sessions;
 - as a means to enhance the learning experience of researchers who can attend sessions.

- To investigate how we can modify our current online training so that it imparts to users a sense of belonging to Reading and creates a virtual research community,

Scope /outcome and deliverables

- Working with the Digitally Ready Team/ITS to develop a long-term strategy for the Graduate School's online training provision.
- Using two to three current Epigeum modules:
 - 1) Analysis of how we can improve and modify them.
 - 2) Using these ideas, experiment with them practically. For example, filming a relevant RRDP session and editing and embedding them in the Epigeum sessions.
 - 3) Trial the modified sessions on a cross section of doctoral researchers.

Sustainability

Online training provision is an area that the Graduate School recognizes needs to be continually assessed and modified. Therefore, one of the key elements of this project is the long-term strategy on online training and digital resources.

In addition, with the further internalization of the University, and the diversification of the doctoral research community, we will need to provide training that researchers can access off campus, but that still provides them with a sense of belonging to the University's doctoral research community. The project will not only enhance the learning experience of our doctoral researchers but also enhance our appeal to prospective students.

Project schedule

January 2013

- Assess the current online training available via the Epigeum modules on blackboard and their relationship to the RRDP.
- Analyse how our current online training provision compares with that of other HEIs.
- Meet with Epigeum staff to discuss the possibilities available to us to modify modules (embed short films for example).
- Identify 2-3 training areas to pilot improvements.

February

- Survey current students on their views to online training.
- Identify students who would be willing to provide feedback on online training.
- Begin to put into practice improvements – e.g. filming RRDP sessions, devising questionnaires, online discussion boards. (Will continue into March.)

March/April

- Gather feedback from doctoral researchers on improved online modules.
- Evaluate work on project date.
- Write and submit report.