

The  
University  
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Sheffield.

Research &  
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Services.

**Issue 2 | February 2012**

The Future: Inside a Postdoctoral  
Development Centre

Student Profile

PG Forum

Careers

# Doctoral Times.

The Newsletter for Doctoral and Higher  
Research Degree Students

## Welcome

*Welcome to this edition of the Doctoral Times.*

*I hope you enjoy this issue which illustrates the vibrant community you are part of, and highlights some of the opportunities available to you as a post graduate and higher research degree student.*

*In each publication we will cover aspects of the research students' journey. This issue will cover the importance and relevance of the Literature Review, as well as a piece on one of our Doctoral Training Centres, what it is like to be a student here and how you can get involved further.*

**Carolyn Gale**  
**Doctoral Development Team**

*We have been named UK University of the Year in the 2011 Times Higher Education Awards.*

*The judges found it to be a quality, research-led university, and a community with values, confidence, flair and its sleeves rolled-up.*

*As postgraduate students you make a huge contribution to the University. Good quality research is a bed rock of 'research-led universities' like this one and therefore you can congratulate yourself for your contribution to this award.*



## HAVE YOUR SAY....

**Your chance to get involved and shape this publication.**

We'd love to have your input, and feedback

If you have something to say about your research, your career aspirations, studying here, social events that are happening or anything you think PGR students would like to hear then we would love to hear from you.

Email Carolyn Gale at [c.p.gale@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.gale@sheffield.ac.uk)

And get yourself heard!

**2011**  
**THE AWARDS**  
AWARD WINNER  
UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR

## White Rose University Consortium

As some funders change their funding streams and work towards funding cohorts designed to address research problems for the benefit of the UK economy we hear from one Doctoral Development Centre who is rising to the challenge of these changes. These centres are being developed as an alternative to the standard 'lone scholar' PhD structure and here at the University of Sheffield we are involved with 10, with several more bids in the pipeline.

The University's Centres will deliver truly world-class training in line with our aspiration to provide the best research experience for doctoral students and our strategic vision to address global challenges facing society, today and in the future.

Since 1997, the White Rose University Consortium (see [www.whiterose.ac.uk](http://www.whiterose.ac.uk)) has been designing, facilitating and enhancing mutually beneficial collaborative research activities across the universities of Leeds, Sheffield, and York.

Building from that base, the White Rose Social Sciences Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) endeavours to create a centre of international excellence with the highest quality training for social sciences doctorates, enabling them to meet the demands of future global challenges whether working within industry, academia or government. The Social Sciences DTC, launched in autumn 2011, is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) initially for a five-year period.

The Social Sciences DTC supports over 20 research pathways in the Social Sciences, offering a comprehensive catalogue of methods and other relevant training provision. Here at the University of Sheffield, the taught doctoral programme builds upon well-regarded and long-standing provision across the Faculty of Social Sciences and beyond. Active researchers work together to teach across the programme providing an interdisciplinary approach that will be invaluable to students' understanding of research, their additional studies, and future work.

We are aiming for the DTC to become an integral part of a student, researcher and academic's life in the Faculty and to use the DTC as a means to support the sharing of methodological expertise and the development of novel approaches to social scientific research questions.

Contact the DTC:  
[wrsdtdc@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:wrsdtdc@sheffield.ac.uk)

Find out more at:  
[www.shef.ac.uk/social-sciences-dtc](http://www.shef.ac.uk/social-sciences-dtc)



*“ a comprehensive catalogue of methods and other relevant training provision ”*

*“ The University's Centres will deliver truly world-class training ”*

## Student Profile



### What led you to do a PhD?

My Masters in Architecture gained at the Indian Institute of Technology in India helped me to reinvent myself and instilled in me a deep desire to pursue meaningful research. I took an Assistant Professorship in SRM University, and after 3 years decided I resign to pursue my goal. My work experience, especially after my Masters had given me a sound grounding in research, field work and analytical skills so I decided to explore research opportunities outside India.

I chose the UK for its non commercialisation of architecture in the education system, and after carefully reviewing the various universities I thought that the University of Sheffield appeared as an attractive proposition with its comprehensive Doctoral Development Programme (DDP).

I think the DDP reflects an innovative approach towards student specific training and is designed to complement individual research projects.

### What is your PhD about and how long have you been studying?

This is my first year here. My research is in the domain of people and place and stems from a deep need to ask questions and find answers about implicit things which are often taken for granted and are rarely attempted to research in the field of architecture. I strongly believe that quality research is a panacea for all human problems. Architecture as a holistic discipline encompassing all facets of human existence, with its ability to coalesce with other diverse scholarly fields, can play a significant role in improving the quality of living and overall progress of mankind, which I ambitiously attempt to demonstrate through my PhD thesis. Drawing insights from current research on self-identity-place from diverse scholarly fields including Human Geography, Phenomenological Philosophy and Social Anthropology, the thesis strives to reveal the relevance of these insights for current design practice and theory, vital for design and designers in the 21st Century for improving the long term well being of people in our contemporary cities

### Could you summarise your PhD learning journey thus far?

With brain storming academic discussions, engaging seminars and conferences, a new culture (which never ceases to amaze), serene beauty of the place, frugal living, part-time job hunting the past 5 months in Sheffield has been a challenging and eventful journey. However, the sheer feeling of following my dream of doing quality research amidst so many constraints and challenges has been a great motivating factor.

### What are the challenges you have found in studying for your PhD?

Funding has always been an obstacle for many meritorious students from India to pursue research abroad especially for a three year PhD programme in United Kingdom. With my supportive parents and my personal savings I have entered my first year of research in the University of Sheffield. Failure to acquire the university scholarship demanded dependence on my retired parents and part time work.. Hailing from an economically weaker family background, at an age of 31, being single, surviving societal pressures and prejudices for being an ambitious young woman had been a test for my perseverance and pursuit of dreams. As a first person to acquire a PhD degree in my lineage, with supporting parents as my blessing and lack of financial support as a challenge I have reached a crucial stage of my life that bestows on me a tremendous social and personal responsibility.

### What are your future plans?

Taking my research further, five years from now, completing my post doctorate in people and place studies and gaining teaching experience abroad, I will render valuable and innovative contributions towards teaching and research in architectural schools in India and abroad. With a long and challenging path to tread, I strongly believe that, *challenge is always a great opportunity in disguise.*

“ *the sheer feeling of following my dream of doing quality research amidst so many constraints and challenges has been a great motivating factor* ”

## Literature Review

Doing and writing a literature review is something that all research students pretty much have to do. It serves to set the research scene by analysing previous research in the field from a variety of sources, including books, journals, conference papers etc. It should highlight the main arguments, adding comment, bringing out themes and trends and identifying any gaps that need to be addressed.

It enables an understanding of the field, adds context to the research work and gives body to the final thesis.

Undertaking a review of the literature allows you:

- To define what the field of study is, by identifying the theories, research and ideas with which the study connects
- To establish what research has been done which relates to your research questions or field of study
- To consider what theories, concepts and models have been used and applied in the field of study
- To identify and discuss methods and approaches that have been used by other researchers
- To identify the 'gaps' or further contribution that the present piece of research will make

The purposes for incorporating the related literature into your PhD thesis will include some or all of the following:

- to provide the historical background to your topic of enquiry
- to draw attention to the contemporary debates, issues and questions in your field
- to highlight the relevant theories and concepts that underpin your research
- to introduce and discuss any key terminology that you are taking from the work of others in the field and using in your own research
- to show how your research extends, challenges or addresses a gap in the previous research conducted in the field
- to provide supporting evidence for the existence of a problem or issue which you wish to address in your own research.

This information and more can be found as an online resource called The Virtual Graduate School, (see link below). This resource was developed to support postgraduate students, and is accessible to all using the university login. The advantage of this comprehensive information is that it can be accessed at any time anywhere in the world.

To find out more, and hear interviews with Professor Martin Smith, Professor Jackie Smith and others where they discuss the importance of Literature Reviews and what a good review contains, go to:

<http://vgs.group.shef.ac.uk/cms/index.php/homepage>



## PG Forum...

### *A refreshing approach to sharing research*



PG Cafe Forum provides an excellent opportunity to meet and discuss research with fellow students in an informal setting.

The events provide opportunities for postgraduates from all subject areas to develop their communication and presentation skills in a supportive environment and to find out more about research being undertaken across the University.

Last year's events included presentations covering a wide range of subjects from political philosophy to nephrology, and engineering to archaeology, and it was rounded off in May with a celebratory special event featuring new presentations from three of the year's best speakers.

The emphasis of the events is on communicating research to an audience drawn from beyond your subject area, and, although presentation tools such as PowerPoint can be used, presenters are encouraged to communicate their ideas with minimal use of text-based slides. Each event features two or three talks of up to 15 minutes, with question and answer sessions following each presentation. Further confidential feedback is provided using an interactive audience response system.

I found presenting a very rewarding experience, providing opportunity to get feedback from the audience at the event and later, informally over refreshments. Whether you already have significant experience of presenting at conferences or if, like me, you are just beginning to give presentations about your research, PG Cafe Forum provides a relaxed atmosphere in which to practise and develop your skills further. The event certainly helped to build my confidence in presenting and encouraged me to seek opportunities to present my research at other events beyond the university.

**Angharad Roberts**

### 2012 Dates:

- 28 Feb
- 27 March
- 24 April

Last Tuesday of every month, 6-8pm, Raynor Lounge\*

Log onto [www.pgcafeforum.co.uk](http://www.pgcafeforum.co.uk) for your free paperless ticket.

\*Function Room, no obligation to enter the bar

### Further benefits to getting involved include:

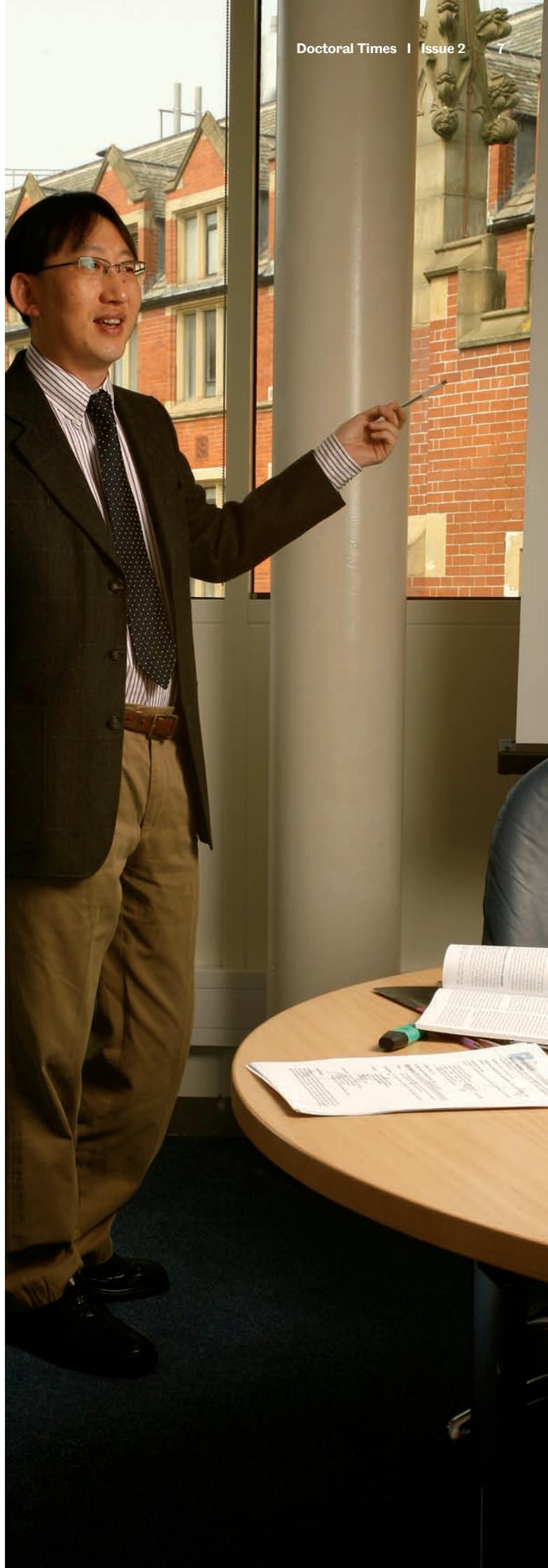
An opportunity to have your presentation recorded by the Global Educational Outreach unit, giving you the chance to practise and review your presentation before presenting at the PG Cafe Forum. You may also choose to use the recording to raise your profile, by making accessible on the GEO website ([www.geokri.org](http://www.geokri.org)), or other academic purposes.

It is DDP recognised and RTP accredited.

*“I found presenting a very rewarding experience, providing opportunity to get feedback from the audience at the event and later, informally over refreshments”*

## Sheffield Teaching Assistant

Postgraduate research students, postdoctoral researchers and research assistants make a significant contribution to teaching on undergraduate and taught master's programmes. Their enthusiasm for their discipline and proximity to contemporary research provides The University of Sheffield's students with a unique learning experience. To help them develop and improve their teaching skills the Learning and Teaching Services (LeTS) are providing a programme of professional development workshops called The Sheffield Teaching Assistant, designed to meet their specific needs. Starting in September 2011 workshops addressing the topics of Large Group Teaching, Small Group Teaching (including Laboratory Demonstrating and Seminar/Tutorial Facilitation), Research Project Supervision and Assessment and Feedback are being offered. They aim to provide practical advice on preparation for teaching and the development of effective teaching skills. The initial sessions, advertised in July, were fully booked within hours. Further sessions have been scheduled and are continuing to prove popular. LeTS intend to run a rolling programme of workshops throughout the year allowing participants to attend the sessions as the need arises. For more information on The Sheffield Teaching Assistant please go to [www.shef.ac.uk/lets/sta](http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/sta)





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Learning &  
Teaching  
Services.

### Are you a postgrad or researcher who teaches?

The Sheffield Teaching Assistant: A series of professional development workshops in teaching for postgrads and researchers who teach.

These half day workshops cover four themes

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><u>Teaching large groups:</u> engaging your audience, designing lectures, strategies for classroom management.</p>              | <p><u>Supervising research projects:</u> responsibilities of research supervisors, successful project planning and management, developing relationships.</p> |
| <p><u>Teaching small groups:</u> opt for facilitating small group learning activities (seminars) or laboratory demonstrations.</p> | <p><u>Assessment and Feedback:</u> understanding your role in assessment, effective practice in assessment, providing useful feedback.</p>                   |

- No previous teaching experience required .
- For post-grads the sessions are fully integrated with the Doctoral Development Programme.
- Completing all sessions leads to a University of Sheffield certificate.
- For further information go to <http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/sta>

## Interview with a Doctoral Graduate



(Part of an occasional series of interviews, carried out by the Doctoral Development Team, with past Doctoral Graduates about their experiences after completing their Doctoral studies at Sheffield University.)

**CG: When did you complete your Doctorate?**

**DG:** 1997.

**CG: What did you do when you finished your PhD?**

**DG:** Actually I went to the other side of the world for a year. Not as a holiday but in order to retrieve my girlfriend who had given up on me ever finishing and gone travelling a few months earlier.

**CG: I meant, what job did you go into? Did your postgraduate research lead you into a research post either in academia or industry?**

**DG:** Not really, no. However the general skills I had developed over that period helped me immensely when starting my first business and that involved a good deal of research.

**CG: Why did you decide to start your own business?**

**DG:** Ever tried getting a non-academic job with a PhD in Philosophy? Seriously though I had an interest in IT and software development and spotted an opportunity. I hooked up with a couple of programmers and started a limited company from scratch.

**CG: Was the company successful?**

**DG:** For a first attempt yes, although we eventually went our separate ways. Since then I have started a number of other businesses and even become a business adviser and helped others to start businesses.

*“ It seems a shame not to turn that passion and all that hard work into a career ”*

**CG: What are you doing now and is it making use of the skills and knowledge you developed while here as a Post Graduate?**

**DG:** Alongside my work as a trainer and business adviser I am currently working a fixed-term contract for the University as Doctoral Development Manager. I'm hopeful that I can help develop the Doctoral Development Programme (DDP) so that it will be useful for the current crop of Post Graduate Researchers. Not just in terms of their employability inside and outside academia but also their ability to start their own businesses. We are looking at the introduction of workshops and events that will help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to explore this possibility.

**CG: But most Post Graduate Researchers want to go on to a post in Higher Education don't they?**

**DG:** Yes, but it helps to have a plan B! A recent national survey showed that 3.5 years after graduation less than 1 in 5 Doctoral Graduates actually had a position carrying out research in a Higher Education Institution. The same survey showed that the overwhelmingly predominant motivating factor for undertaking Post-graduate Research in the first place is interest in the subject; so it seems a shame not to turn that passion and all that hard work into a career. I think helping our Postgraduate Researchers develop the skills to start their own businesses is important for them, for the University and for the UK.

**CG: Gavin Boyce, thank you very much.**

*“ Seriously though I had an interest in IT and software development and spotted an opportunity ”*

## Careers and Employability Skills Sessions

Planning your career is an important part of the research student path. It is no longer sufficient to tell employers that you possess a PhD, especially if you are looking for work in a field unrelated to your subject or study. You will need to highlight the range of transferable skills that you have developed through study, work experience and additional responsibilities and then relate these to the requirements of the post that you are applying for. The Careers service runs a variety of seminars that will help you to decide what kind of career you would like and how to develop your skills to gain employment opportunities.

The Careers Service and Research and Innovation Services have formed a unique partnership of staff and resources to enhance the support we offer. Our aim is to present a well designed and comprehensive range of career management tools and personal support to help you with a successful transition from your PhD to the next stage of your career. Part of this is to offer a wide range of skills sessions throughout the year.

*“ Planning your career is an important part of the research student path ”*

There are still some sessions you can attend:

**Networking and collaborating for career success**

06/03/12, 2.00 – 4.00 NCGRC

**Successful application forms**

15/03/12, 11.00 – 12.00 NCGRC

**Job-search skills and strategies**

15/03/12, 11.00 – 12.00 NCGRC

**Performing well at interviews**

17/04/12, 1.00 – 2.00 NCGRC

**Presenting yourself confidently to employers**

25/04/12, 2.00 – 3.30 NCGRC

**Producing an effective CV**

30/04/12, 1.00 – 2.00 NCGRC

**Successful application forms**

24/05/12, 11.00 – 12.00 NCGRC

**Interviews and assertiveness**

29/05/12, 2.00 – 4.00 NCGRC

**Producing an effective CV**

07/06/12, 11.00 – 12.00 NCGRC

**MBTI personality type workshop**

12/06/12, 10.00 – 1.00 NCGRC

**Performing well at interviews**

20/06/12, 11.00 – 12.00 NCGRC

**Successful application forms**

03/07/12, 11.00 – 12.00 NCGRC

These sessions take place at the North Campus Graduate Research Centre, 64 Garden Street, S1 4BJ. To book a place, go to the DDP Portal at [www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgdr/ddportal/home.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgdr/ddportal/home.html)



## Postgraduate Opportunities

### Sheffield University Graduate School (SUGS)

GRAD schools are aimed mainly at Research Council funded PGRs and competition for places has increased in recent years. They give participants the opportunity to reflect on their career plans and to enhance their communication, team-working, leadership and critical thinking skills through a range of experiential learning activities.

### SUGS Success again!

In May 2011, 81 postgraduate researchers (PGRs) from departments across the University took part in the third GRADschool – SUGS. The event was opened by our new Pro Vice Chancellor, for International Affairs, Professor Rebecca Hughes and organised by the University's Careers Service working in partnership with Research and Innovation Services. Having been launched as a pilot programme last year with two events run, this time it was the extended version.

The course was held at Halifax Hall and the Edge, and the course content was delivered by tutors from the Careers Service, LeTS/ Faculty of Engineering/Medicine, Dentistry and Health, and MBB as well as two tutors from outside the University. From a total of eighty one PGRs well over half of these were international researchers reflecting the strong emphasis on diversity. By embedding the course within the University and using mainly internal staff, the cost of the event was significantly reduced. At the same time, participant feedback was extremely positive, proving SUGS a critical and financial success. Quotes such as 'this must rate as one of the highlights of my PhD' to 'I never wanted this course to finish' were recorded. Impact and evaluation post GRADschool will take place and participants will be encouraged to make continued use of Careers Service facilities.

There are plans to hold another one this summer and already it is over subscribed which is a testament to the value of this enterprise. We will let you know if there are any further planned.

If you would like to know more about SUGS or get involved in tutoring roles please contact Jane Simm, Course manager ([j.m.simm@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.simm@sheffield.ac.uk)) at the Careers Service.

### Engineering YES

Turning your skills and research ideas into a commercial venture with the Engineering Young Entrepreneurs Scheme (YES). This three day event, comprising of training, mentoring and a business planning competition, offers students the chance to develop a business idea, improve their skills and win up to £2,000 cash.

This year, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) is funding the places of ten post-graduate and post-doctoral researchers to attend this unique scheme.

This is a fantastic opportunity for them to develop their understanding of business and commerce and gain experience of operating in a high pressure environment. They will learn how to structure a business plan, scope financial projections and effectively pitch an idea. They will have one-to-one access to expert business mentors as well as an opportunity to network with venture capitalists and senior representatives from engineering companies, development agencies, prominent local firms and professional organisations.

Over the three days, working in small teams they will go on to develop a business plan for a fictitious company. On the final day, the teams will present this idea to a panel of judges for the chance to win up to £2,000.

In preparation for the competition, the University of Sheffield Enterprise (USE) has set out a timetable of workshops and learning sessions with the specific aim of helping and supporting these students in the run-up to the main event.

The Engineering YES three day training and competition event takes place between 29th April and 2nd May and we will apprise you of the outcome in our next issue of Doctoral Times.

For further details you can visit the link below.

Please visit the following link to apply:  
<http://enterprise.shef.ac.uk/YES>

## Evidence Synthesis of Qualitative Research in Europe (ESQUIRE) [now incorporating InCQUIRES]

**2.5 day\* course: 4th to 6th September 2012**  
**Halifax Conference Centre, Sheffield**

The course will follow the systematic review process as it applies, and is adapted to, qualitative evidence syntheses. The Programme Faculty will take participants through the stages of defining and exploring scope conducting the literature searches quality assessing studies for inclusion synthesising data and writing up and presenting the product of the synthesis. Participants will be provided with practical experience of key stages in the review process. The course will conclude on the 6th September with **Issues and Challenges for Qualitative Research in Evidence Synthesis (InCQuiRES)** a one-day methodological update providing an excellent overview of current developments in qualitative evidence synthesis.

No formal experience is required, working knowledge of standard systematic review methods or a background in qualitative research methods will be an advantage but not essential.

- Qualitative Researchers who want to learn how to synthesise qualitative research
- Systematic Reviewers who want to learn how to translate synthesis methods to qualitative data
- PhD Students in topic areas that require substantive review of qualitative research
- New researchers who want to develop evidence synthesis/systematic review
- Qualitative systematic reviewers who want to update and extend their skills and knowledge

If you have any queries, please contact Jacquie Bennett

Scharr-scu@sheffield.ac.uk or telephone +44 (0)114 222 2968.

[www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/shortcourseunit/courses\\_new/esquiresept2012.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/shortcourseunit/courses_new/esquiresept2012.html)

\*From 4th (noon)  
to 6th (3.30pm)

## Social News

### INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EVENING 2012 – CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

**SATURDAY 5 MAY, 7.30pm**

**Octagon Centre, Western Bank, S10 2TQ**

This event is the culmination of the Students' Union's cultural events and one of the highlights of the academic year. First organised in 1972, International Cultural Evening has become a popular annual event, rejoicing every kind of traditional music and dance brought to you by our national societies. This is a night of sounds, colour, exuberance and professionalism. The International Students' Committee invites you to experience this magical journey around the world – an event for any age.



Tickets available from the University of Sheffield Students' Union Box Office (Mon–Fri 11.00am–3.00pm), Western Bank, S10 2TG or online at: [www.shef.ac.uk/union/events](http://www.shef.ac.uk/union/events)



### PROGRESS is a social society run by postgraduates for postgraduates

Every month we host a variety of events including after work drinks, pub quiz, meals out and some special events.

Look out for our monthly emails listing events throughout the year.

<http://progress.union.shef.ac.uk>

Search for PROGRESS SHEFFIELD on Facebook

[progress@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:progress@sheffield.ac.uk)





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