

## **PhD Skills Points System FAQs**

### **Who is the system for?**

Every PhD student is expected to take part in approximately 210 hours of development activities over the course of their studies. This is the quantity of training advised by the [UK Research Councils](#), and is roughly equal to two weeks training and development for each full-time year of study.

All PhD students are automatically registered on the [Skills Points System](#) (SPS) and they must ensure that their training record is kept up to date.

### **What are the advantages of using the Skills Points System?**

There are several advantages, both for researchers and for QMUL. For PhD students one of the main advantages is that you will have a complete record of all the training and development activities you have taken part in during your PhD, which will be useful for CVs and job applications. The record will also show that your PhD has helped you develop skills in all four domains of the [Researcher Development Framework](#) (RDF), which again will be of interest to employers, whether in or outside academia. During your PhD, your record will also be a useful way of determining in which areas you may still need to develop your skills.

For QMUL, this system gives us useful data about the training our research students are receiving, which may need to be reported to the Research Councils or other funding bodies. It also enables us to ensure that PhD students in different disciplines and status (Full-time or Part-time) have access to similar levels of appropriate training, and it tells us where there are gaps in QMUL's provision for research students which need to be filled.

### **What training and activities are recorded?**

Any activity that has helped to develop your research, skills or knowledge can be added. This includes training courses and workshops run by Researcher Development (register at [cpdbookings.qmul.ac.uk](http://cpdbookings.qmul.ac.uk)), Schools and Institutes, and external organisations.

The only exceptions are things that are integral parts of the PhD process (e.g. your research, meeting your supervisor, writing your 9-month report and thesis, mandatory Health & Safety training, etc.) and courses run by Professional Development.

### **How do activities get recorded on the system?**

PhD Researcher Development courses that are booked through the [QMUL booking system](#) are added to your record automatically. All other activities have to be added manually. You can find a list of courses that are added automatically and comprehensive guidelines on how to claim different types of activities under [Help](#) on the Skills Points System (document: "How to use the SPS").

### **How many points are activities worth?**

Many activities, including workshops and courses, are given 1 point per hour. Some, such as giving a presentation or getting an article published, are given a pre-determined number of points. A list of these can again be found under [Help](#) on the Skills Points System.

### Who decides how many points an activity is worth?

The points allocations were decided on by a committee that included representatives from each Faculty on the committee, along with the Researcher Development Adviser for PGRs and the head of the Careers Service. Schools and Institutes were also able to input into the decision process.

When you claim a new activity that isn't already on the database (Class 3 activity), the Researcher Development Adviser for PGRs ([Dr Fryni Panayidou](#)) will look at the points estimate and the reasons for the claim, and do one of the following:

- Approve the claim, in which case it will go onto your record.
- Mark the activity as "Non-applicable" if isn't included in the points scheme.
- Alter the number of points/points distribution and then approve the claim.
- Contact you to ask for further information.
- Refer the claim to the Doctoral College Management Group who oversee the points scheme, so that they can make a judgement.

### Is there a set number of points I need to get?

Yes, you must accrue **210 points** across the course of your PhD. There are also a minimum number of points required in each domain:

	<b>Minimum targets</b>
Total points by the end of your PhD	210
Domain A (Knowledge and intellectual abilities)	60
Domain B (Personal effectiveness)	20
Domain C (Research governance and organisation)	15
Domain D (Engagement, influence and impact)	30

Once you have reached the minimum in each domain the remaining points can be from whichever domains you wish.

### When will my points be added to my record?

- Courses that are booked through the [QMUL booking system](#) are added to your record automatically within 2 weeks of attendance.
- Class 1 and Class 2 activities are added to your record as soon as you claim them.
- Class 3 activities, are initially logged onto the system as pending claims. These will be looked at on a regular basis, and the Doctoral College Management Group meets once a month, so you can expect any pending claims to be processed within a month.

### Why are the points I can gain for certain activities capped?

One of the underlying aims of this scheme is to ensure that research students graduate with a wide variety of skills that will be useful to them in an academic or non-academic environment. Therefore, for certain activities that PhD students might undertake on a regular basis (e.g. attending seminars, teaching) we have put a limit on the number of points that can be gained in order to encourage researchers to do a wide range of training and development activities.

**What is the Researcher Development Framework?**

The Researcher Development Framework articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages them to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development. It has been developed by Vitae in consultation with academic and non-academic employers.

**Can I access the database from anywhere?**

Yes, it is a web-based application which can be accessed from anywhere using your central college username and password.

**Who do I contact if I have a problem?**

For any problems, queries about your training record or the way your points have been calculated, please contact the Researcher Development team at [spdsupport@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:spdsupport@qmul.ac.uk) or the Researcher Development Adviser for PGRs, [Dr Fryni Panayidou](#).