



## Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

**Title:** The Abertay Graduate School: inculcating interdisciplinary working in our next generation of researchers.

**Transition(s) the practice supports:** The transition from undergraduate to postgraduate research degree, through and out.

**Abstract:** Abertay is a compact and focussed University with a reputation for working effectively across traditional research boundaries. Abertay has launched a pan-University Graduate School, where students researching different and interdisciplinary areas, learn and work together within a single space located at the centre of the University. A flexible programme of researcher development activity enables independent postgraduate research students to achieve the skills and abilities needed to be effective researchers. Change has been informed by extensive internal and external review, and has been integrated throughout the University. This change has involved overhaul of Research Degrees Regulations and processes, research and knowledge exchange governance and organisational frameworks, and professional development planning and opportunities for students and staff.

**Description:** In line with our Strategic Plan 2015-20 and the introduction of our new research strategy R-LINCS (Research–Led Innovation Nodes for Contemporary Society), the Abertay pan-University Graduate School (GS) was launched in September 2014. Developments were informed by a root-and-branch review, survey of sector good practice, and feedback from Postgraduate Research (PGR) supervisors and students through a newly formed Graduate School Forum. All Abertay postgraduate students (both research and taught), researchers and academics are given membership of the GS and have access to our dedicated study and social spaces – a forum in which they can meet, work and learn with other researchers and postgraduates from across the University.

Abertay is a compact and focused university which naturally encourages frequent researcher interaction and collaboration between and across disciplines. Expertise from a range of subject areas is applied and often integrated to pose new questions and find creative solutions to the problems facing society. The GS aims to enhance and accelerate this collaborative and interdisciplinary ethos within all our researchers both through the design and use of physical space and through a flexible programme of researcher development opportunities. The GS encourages students to develop a deep understanding of their own discipline area(s) as well as an awareness and

appreciation of other research domains, approaches and philosophical paradigms. For example, all PGR students have available to them a pan-University postgraduate Research Methods module; and all PGR students present and participate in an extended annual Graduate School Conference where students and supervisors are encouraged to question and offer solutions from both within and outside normal subject domain thinking.

The GS has developed and coordinates a flexible programme (informed by the EUA Salzburg II Recommendations, 2010; the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and the QAA UK Quality Code Chapter B11) of activity to enable independent PGR student transition and achieve the skills and abilities needed to be effective researchers. PGR students benefit from generic skills development within their discipline context through opportunities for training, development and networking, within and outwith the University. Research Degrees are by their nature individual and by definition original. So, the PGR student path of progress is unique, in terms of research project and appropriate professional development. The University programme of activity allows customisation to suit individual needs and the research area.

The newly established Graduate School Forum (GSF) provides a voice to GS stakeholders helping guide and influence the development of the GS and postgraduate activity at the University. The GSF considers such matters as the academic learning environment, training and development opportunities for students and supervisors, and interactions with other areas of the University including research and knowledge exchange governance and organisational frameworks.

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**All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.**