Skills Forge
A step-by-step guide for research students at Portsmouth University Graduate School
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Introduction
Skills Forge is an interactive web-based system that you will use to:

✓ Book your place on Graduate School Workshops
✓ Manage your Professional Research and Excellence Skills (PRaXiS) development
✓ Maintain a record of your progress with your doctoral degree

Getting started

Accessing the Skills Forge
1. Log in to any computer with an Internet connection
2. Double-click on your web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer, Firefox)
3. Go to the Skills Forge web address which is: www.port.ac.uk/skillsforge

Signing in for the first time

There is a link on the sign in page for 'New Users & Password Reset' that pops up a window. Enter your myport email address here (eg icj12345@myport.ac.uk), copy the code shown and an email will be sent to that email account containing a link. This link sends you to a page where you can choose your own password.

Signing in on subsequent visits
1. Log in with your original email address (eg ABC12345@myport.ac.uk or UP123456@myport.ac.uk).
2. Enter your chosen memorable password.

😊 If you forget your password click on 'I cannot access my account' on the signing in page and follow the on-screen instructions
😊 For security reasons the Skills Forge system will always require your student email address and will also send automatic email confirmations to your student email address (ending with @myport.ac.uk). If you wish to receive these messages in your staff account then you will need to set up an automatic forwarding system. Guidance about how to forward your Googlemail student accounts to your staff email address can be found at: http://www.is.port.ac.uk/staff/email/googlemail.
Navigating your way around Skills Forge

The tabbed menu
The main menu for the Skills Forge is represented by a row of tabs. The ‘top level’ tabs represent the main menu and the tabs in the second row provide access to the main sections of the software. These tables will always be visible no matter what screen you are in.

The Skills Forge Tabs

The ‘Home’ Tab

Welcome
You can use this to get ‘1-click’ access to the most commonly used parts of the system. There is also a box for ‘Announcements’ where occasional changes to dates or locations of workshops will be published.

My account
The clue is in the title! This is where you will find details about your personal Skills Forge account. This is also the page from which you can reset your password should the need arise.

My supervisors
Your first supervisor has access to your Skills Forge account and this page lists any other academics with permitted access.

The ‘My diary’ tab
This has four main features

My calendar
You can add action points, meetings with your supervisor and notes /memos into your calendar. Any workshops you book through Skills Forge will also appear in your calendar, as will any other development activities that you add.

PhD timeline
This is like a ‘to do’ list. The timeline is designed to guide you through the process of developing your skills and research capability. You can use this as a guide to the things you may need to think about at the various stages of your PhD process. The timeline includes things to consider when your start your programme; during the First year, Second year etc as well as things that should be on-going every year.
**Action points**
This is where you can set yourselves dated milestones and also record any actions and ‘due by’ dates that you have agreed with your supervisor.

**Meetings**
It is very important that you keep a record of what you discussed in meetings with members of your supervisory team and, in particular, that you record and ‘sign off’ any actions that were agreed (for both you and for members of the supervisory team). You can use this function within Skills Forge to keep a permanent record which can be retrieved later if needed. There is provision for you and also for your first supervisor to ‘sign off’ any notes from your meetings. Make sure you read all the contents of your meetings record before you sign it!

**Notes and memos**
Things that you enter on this page are for your own records - no one else can see them. They will appear in your calendar.

**The ‘My Skills’ Tab**
The pages within this area of the software enable you to review your current research skills and plan your development. This is a very important feature of the Graduate School Professional Research and Excellence Skills (PRaXSiS) planning process. This part of the software enables you to keep a record of priority skills requirements as well as achievements. Skills Forge is also linked to the RCUK endorsed Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and you can see how you are progressing against each of the four RDF domains.

**Overview**
This page provides some general information about the ‘Researcher Development Framework’ (RDF) which provides an excellent benchmark for you to use to review the skills you develop as you make progress with your PhD process and plan how to meet any training or development areas that you have identified.

**Research Degree Skills**
This is an important page on the system – this enables you to make a note about your current skill achievements and the areas you need to develop to ensure you are successful in your research and to support your longer-term career development.

**The ‘Development Activities’ tab**

**Find and book courses**
This is the pathway to booking your place on the Graduate School workshops.

**My own activities**
Two types of activities can be recorded here:

a) Sometimes you will undertake activities that, whilst not directly focused on your research, enable you to develop important and relevant skills e.g. voluntary or paid work, mentoring, being a student representative etc. You can record these achievements on this page.
b) You will also undertake subject specific development organised by your Faculty, department or research grouping (e.g. seminar, training course or conference attendance). You can record your attendance or achievements on this page.

My development summary
This page pulls together all the training and development bookings you have made and activities you have recorded within the ‘Development Activities’ tabbed area of the system. This provides a summary report which your supervisor will require from time to time (at least once each year).

Reviewing you skills and planning your development
The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is a nationally recognised benchmark of the skills and abilities that are needed by effective researchers. The RDF sets out the skills needed for research into four ‘domains’:

- Domain A – Knowledge and intellectual capabilities
- Domain B – Personal effectiveness
- Domain C – Research, governance and organisation
- Domain D – Engagement, influence and impact

Reviewing your skills
1. Select the ‘My skills’ tab
2. Choose any one of the four domains that are displayed on this screen and select the ‘Review skills’ link
3. Scroll down the page and scan-read the explanations of this part of the Researcher Development Framework.
Choose which skills to review
Within each of the four RDF domains there are three sub-domains to review and each of these includes a list of skills and, for each of them, you can describe your level of confidence and competence:

- This isn’t a skill I need to work on at the moment
- This is ‘work in progress’ for me
- I am happy I have this ability

😊 ‘Confidence’ means that you feel ‘self-assured’ in this area (for example – I feel confident about team working)
😊 ‘Competence’ means that you are sufficiently skilled or qualified (for example – I am a competent typist)

Your responses to the questions with regard to the skills will enable you to ‘colour’ segments of the pie chart and provide a visual picture of how you see your skills right now.

If you wish to you can also make a note in the text area at the bottom of this page about any particular development needs of issues or anything you feel you should discuss with your supervisor.

😊 Don’t forget to click ‘Save’
😊 You can print each skill review summary sheet if you need to
😊 This process is designed to be helpful – the benefit of it comes from you thinking about these skills rather than the actual ratings that you choose.
😊 Your ratings are visible to your supervisor and so they can be a useful place to start when you discuss your professional development as a researcher

Finding and booking workshops
Once you and your supervisor have some clarity about your priority development areas you can use Skills Forge to book your place on relevant Graduate School workshops.

😊 You can book a place on all Graduate School Workshops using Skills Forge although places on G-Prof events must be booked directly with the G-Prof team (www.port.ac.uk/g-prof)
1. Go to the Development Activities Tab
2. Go to the Find and Book Courses Tab
3. Use the search facility if you know the date or title of a particular workshop OR chose one of the four RDF domain tabs on the left of the screen and scroll down all the relevant events listed in the box to choose which one you wish to attend

4. When your search results appear, click the Details link towards the right to view full details of the workshop.

Course details
The workshop details will appear on this screen. You will receive a reminder email but please keep a careful note of the date of the session that you are booking. It is important that you attend any event you have booked.

Book your place
1. Find the workshop you wish to attend.
2. Click the Details link
3. Check that you are available to attend
4. Click ‘Book a place on this event’ towards the bottom of the screen
Recording your attendance

After you have attended each workshop the Skills Forge system will record your attendance. Please note that it may take a few weeks for session attendance to be processed. At least once each year you will be required to provide a list of development activities that you have undertaken. You will find this list in the Reports tab. The Reports tab contains a Development Transcript which lists all the activities you have booked and attended as well as any other development activities that you have recorded on the system.

When you are required to submit a record of your training and development achievements you can print the list from the Development Transcript screen.

Cancelling a workshop booking

Places on many of the Graduate School workshops are in high demand. Once you have booked a place on a workshop it is important that you keep the date free so that you can attend. Where an event is oversubscribed Skills Forge maintains a waiting list of workshop places. If a cancellation is made then the first person of the waiting list will be offered a place.

If you realise that your attendance is going to be impossible you can cancel your booking through the Skills Forge system. To cancel a booking (which is possible up to 48 hours before the event is due to take place):

1. Go to the Reports tab
2. View your Development Transcript which lists events you have booked as well as those you have already undertaken
3. Click the relevant details link on this screen
4. Click the cancel link at the bottom of the page