

Training PhD students

Session: Research development clinics

Skills and competencies

developing a research protocol

Duration and scheduling

Four 60-minute sessions

Weekly over a one-month period, or as needed

Mode of delivery

In person, virtual or blended

Outline

In research development clinics, advisors assist PhD students to develop a high-quality proposal. They provide one-on-one support to address specific problems identified in the [diagnostic session](#). Coordinators organise four clinic sessions for each student to develop their research protocol.

Objectives

- Clinic 1 – to define the research **question** and objectives
- Clinic 2 – to discuss the research **methods** to ensure they will meet the objectives
- Clinic 3 – to detail the **logistics** of the research (Is it feasible, given time and other resource constraints?)
- Clinic 4 – to develop a **data analysis plan**

Preparation

The course coordinator

Allocate the most appropriate advisor (trainer, facilitator or mentor) to each student, with reference to the notes from their [diagnostic session](#) session

The student

Be clear how you want to use the session – have questions in your mind beforehand

For clinic 1, write down your research question and a summary of the background to the question (max 500 words)

Collate any documents or files that might be useful, for example papers or data sets you might want to refer to during any clinic

Arrive promptly for your appointment, with your preparatory work

Steps

The allocated advisor meets with the PhD student for one hour per week for four weeks to discuss, in turn:

1. the research **question** and objectives
2. the research **methods** (Will they result in data that meets the study objectives?)
3. the **logistics** of the research (Is it feasible, given time and other resource constraints?)
4. a **data analysis plan**

Between clinics, the student works on their protocol and prepares questions for the next appointment with the advisor

Outcomes

After the series of clinics, the PhD student should have at least a strong draft of a research protocol, including:

1. Research question
2. Objectives
3. Methods
4. Logistics
5. Data analysis plan

Resources

References to support data analysis plans

[Tong et al. consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research \(COREQ\)](#): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*; Volume 19, Number 6: pp. 349–357

[Vandenbroucke et al. Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology \(STROBE\)](#): Explanation and Elaboration. *PlosMedicine* October 2007. Volume 4; Issue 10: e297

