

Milestones and Pathways Toolkit

Professional Skills Workshops

Purpose: To support the development of skills necessary to academic or non-academic work.

Recommended Duration: 2 to 3 hours

General Description: There are myriad skills required for and acquired by graduate students pursuing academic as well as non-academic careers. A workshop focused on one skill (or set of closely-related skills) not only helps graduate students develop these necessary skills; it also clarifies what skills are expected of successful graduate students. These skills may be discipline-specific (e.g. learning to use a particular geographic information system), or they may apply across a division (e.g. delivering a conference paper in the humanities or creating an effective poster presentation for the physical sciences).

Although existing workshop programs at the University of Toronto offer general support for graduate students (such as the Graduate Professional Skills Program or the Teaching Assistants' Training Program), your department may wish to run a workshop specifically tailored to your program's needs. Alternatively, you may partner with other departments in cognate disciplines to offer a workshop that would attract and benefit students across several programs. While the content of a skills-based workshop will be specific to individual disciplines and departments, the attached toolkit provides a list of questions to consider when developing a workshop, a list of existing workshop resources and programs at the University of Toronto, a discussion of spaces on campus for holding a workshop, a sample budget and timetable for a workshop, as well as a set of mock workshop descriptions.

Recommended Facilitators: 1 to 2 university faculty and/or staff members, possibly with support from senior graduate students. If no university faculty or staff members are available or able to facilitate the needs of the workshop, we may support external facilitators.

Recommended Participants: Graduate students at any stage in their program. Departments may opt to target a specific group of graduate students (e.g. PhD candidates considering alt-ac careers).

Suggested Locations: Department Lounge or Classroom Space

For more detailed information and suggested activities, see the attached toolkit. This toolkit is based on activities currently offered through departments in the Faculty of Arts & Science. Please feel free to modify any proposed activity to suit the specific needs of your department. If you have any questions about proposing or preparing your activity, please contact Joel Rodgers (joel.rodgers@utoronto.ca) in the Faculty of Arts & Science.

A. Questions to Ask and Decisions to Make

Check for Existing Workshops. Before proposing a workshop, consult with Joel Rodgers (joel.rodgers@utoronto.ca) to see what workshops are already offered to graduate students at the University of Toronto. It may be unnecessary, for example, to run a general workshop on oral presentation skills, if students can be directed to the workshops on oral presentations already run by the Graduate Professional Skills (GPS) program (<http://bit.ly/MPproGPS>).

Schedule with the Academic Term in Mind. Consider the rhythm of the term when planning a workshop. Reading Week, for example, is a convenient teaching-free time when many classroom spaces are available, but it also tends to be a heavy marking period for graduate students. Also, remember to allow yourself and your colleagues enough time to plan and prepare the workshop (e.g. purchase supplies, book appropriate space, order catering).

Set the Goal and Outcomes of the Workshop. Consider carefully what a workshop can achieve. Setting too broad or ambiguous a goal risks wasting participants' time. What is a reasonable expectation for participants to accomplish over the course of a few hours? What will participants have the ability to do after completing the workshop? What will they have (or have started) when they walk away from the session? How will you and the participants assess whether the session was successful?

Plan How You Will Engage Participants. How will students practice or apply their skills during the session? It needn't be a convoluted or contrived activity, but we recommend that participants have the opportunity to practice and/or debate the skills under discussion. For example, will they discuss or critique a demonstration of the skill?

Determine Your Target Audience. Who will attend the event and why? If applicable, how will students apply or be selected for the group? Will participants be required to bring their own material to the workshop?

Book a Location Accessible for Students. How accessible is the location for your students? Is A/V available? Are there electrical outlets available for all students to plug in their laptops? Will an internet connection be available if needed?

Decide Whether to Offer Coffee, Snacks, and/or a Light Meal. Will you provide coffee and healthy snacks? Who purchases the snacks and coffee or tea? If you're holding the workshop over the lunch hour, will you arrange catering for a light lunch (e.g. sandwiches)? Or will participants be responsible for bringing their own lunch?

B. Resources for Professional Skills Workshops

Graduate Workshop Programs at the University of Toronto

Before planning a workshop, contact Joel Rodgers (joel.rodgers@utoronto.ca) at the Faculty of Arts & Science for possible recommendations and information about other existing resources or workshops already available at the University of Toronto. You may also survey the workshops offered to graduate students through following programs:

English Language & Writing Support (ELWS) (<http://bit.ly/MPwgELWS>)

Graduate Professional Skills (GPS) Program (<http://bit.ly/MPproGPS>)

Teaching Assistants Training Program (TATP) (<http://tatp.utoronto.ca>)

In addition to surveying their offerings, you may wish to consult the facilitators of these programs for suggestions on how to run a complementary workshop in your department (possibly with support from the Faculty of Arts & Science).

Possible Topics for a Discipline-Specific Workshop

Your department may consider running a professional skills workshop on (but not limited to) one of the following topics:

- Designing effective research or poster presentations.
- Translating discipline-specific skills to a professional / alt-academic context.
- Modeling a particular method or approach to research in the field.
- Training in a specific software or hardware relevant to research or work in the discipline.

For more specific examples, see the mock descriptions provided below in Section E.

C. Meeting Spaces for Workshop

Book a space that suits your workshop's purpose. For example, if students will be learning how to use a particular software program, you may book a computer lab for the workshop. Alternatively, if students will practice delivering a conference paper, it may be better to book a lecture-style classroom space. In general, we recommend using department space for hosting skills workshops. If there is no appropriate space available in the department, you may be able to reserve other space on campus.

Booking a Room

Rooms can be booked through ACE (osm.utoronto.ca). Pictures and descriptions are also available on the ACE website. There is no rental fee for University of Toronto departments to use these classrooms, but there may be a fee to use the built-in A/V. Any A/V requirements should be noted on the booking request.

D. Budget and Money Questions

The essential budget items for a workshop are likely going to be the costs associated with

- 1) providing drinks, healthy snacks, and/or a light lunch,
- 2) covering a modest fee for guest facilitators (if none are available at U of T),
- 3) purchasing other supplies or materials, and
- 4) A/V requirements.

Designate in advance who is responsible for purchases and collecting receipts. Keeping track of spending can be hectic. Designate one person who will be responsible for collecting receipts before and after the sessions. Consult with your department's business officer when preparing a budget for the workshop. (It may be unfair to ask one graduate student to cover all costs in advance. Consider distributing these costs among organizers.) Consult with your department's business officer when preparing a budget for the workshop. The University of Toronto has set guidelines covering reimbursement rates for meals (see <http://bit.ly/MPperdiem>).

Sample Budget for a Discipline-Specific Poster Presentation Workshop

Location: Department Lounge

Participants: 10 doctoral students and 2 facilitators

<i>Refreshments</i>	\$50	Snacks and coffee
<i>Materials</i>	\$200	Materials to construct a sample poster presentation during the workshop
TOTAL	\$250	

E. Sample Workshop Descriptions

Designing Effective Poster Presentations in the Digital Humanities

Centre for Medieval Studies

Most humanities conferences involve reading a paper aloud to an audience, but work in the digital humanities has increasingly used poster presentations instead. This two-hour workshop will introduce participants to three models of poster presentations currently used at digital humanities conferences, as well as two software programs for developing posters. Participants will also be asked to assemble and critique a poster presentation of someone else's research during the session in order to practice their presentation skills.

Thinking About Your Fieldwork as Project Management

Anthropology

Anthropologists spend a considerable amount of time working in the field, collecting data, and distilling this research into an academic argument. These skills are directly relevant to project management. In this workshop for upper-year graduate students who have completed their fieldwork, we will discuss how to talk about your research skills (e.g. your ability to organize and manage data using information management systems) as professional skills marketable beyond the academy.