

Quantitative Methods Initiative

What is the Quantitative Methods Initiative?

A key part of ESRC's research methods strategy is to combat the skills deficit in quantitative research methods across the social science research base. The ESRC has been working in collaboration with the higher education sector to develop a strategy to address the current shortages. More recently these efforts have been given added momentum through significant co-funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The strategy recognises that there is a need to enhance quantitative skills across the full breadth of the 'educational life course', from building new capacity at the undergraduate level to refreshing the quantitative skills of mid-career academics that teach undergraduates and supervise PhD students ('training the trainers').

About the Quantitative Methods Initiative

Through the Quantitative Methods Initiative, the strategy aims to:

- create a comprehensive and co-ordinated training framework in quantitative methods at each level of the educational life course;
- integrate training to create a national infrastructure which builds quantitative skills development at each stage of the educational life course;
- create a framework which is flexible enough to meet the particular skill requirements of individual researchers.

Undergraduate activities

Strategic Advisor on the Undergraduate Teaching of Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences

In January 2009, ESRC and HEFCE appointed Professor John MacInnes, University of Edinburgh to explore how best to strengthen the social science training infrastructure in quantitative methods at the undergraduate level. The recommendations of Prof MacInnes are being taken forward through the undergraduate quantitative methods initiative.

Undergraduate Quantitative Methods Initiative

The Undergraduate Quantitative Methods Initiative is a joint activity between ESRC and HEFCE to support and improve the teaching of quantitative methods in the social sciences at an undergraduate level in the UK. In the short term, this three year initiative will provide strategic oversight, increase the appeal of quantitative methods to students, and collaborate with other funders in capacity building activities. In the medium term, the initiative aims to increase the number and quality of trained quantitative methods teachers and create more curriculum space for quantitative methods teaching within a number of institutions and disciplines.



Postgraduate activities

Enhanced Stipend Scheme

Since 2006 the ESRC has provided an enhanced stipend for students whose postgraduate training is focused on the use of advanced quantitative methods. The aim of the enhanced stipend has been to support recruitment by encouraging a greater volume of good quality students to train in the use of quantitative tools and techniques and then apply them in their doctoral studies.

Mid career re-skilling

Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD)

WISERD is an interdisciplinary research centre co-funded by HEFCW to draw together and build upon the existing expertise in quantitative and qualitative research methods at Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth, Bangor and Glamorgan Universities. WISERD is undertaking an ambitious data integration, primary research and capacity building programme in Wales. www.wiserd.ac.uk

Applied Quantitative Methods Network (AQMeN) in Scotland

In July 2009, a Scottish quantitative methods network was created, co-funded by the Scottish Funding Council. The Network aims to embed the existing expertise in Scotland through a planned programme of continuing professional development to enhance the skills and build the confidence of those who are trained to an advanced level in quantitative methods. <http://aqmen.ac.uk>

Links with other research resources

National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM)

NCRM provides a focal point for research training and capacity building activities. These activities are aimed at promoting a step change in the quality and range of methodological skills and techniques used by the UK social science community, and providing support for, and dissemination of, methodological innovation and excellence within the UK. The centre has a distributed structure with a coordinating hub at the University of Southampton and seven nodes at collaborating Universities. 30% of node activity is devoted to training and capacity building. www.ncrm.ac.uk

Researcher Development Initiative (RDI)

Activities supported under the four rounds of RDI since 2005 include a range of generic and subject-specific projects focused on advanced and specialist training in quantitative methods, for example, longitudinal data analysis, multi-level modelling and micro-economic forecasting. www.rdi.ac.uk

Survey Resources Network (SRN)

The previous Survey Link Scheme and Survey Design and Measurement Initiative projects were integrated into the SRN in November 2008. SRN coordinates and develops ESRC activities related to Survey Methodology and Research. The aim of the Network is to improve the way in which survey data are collected, processed, made accessible and analysed. www.surveynet.ac.uk

Further information

For further information please visit www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/quantitativemethods

