

Social Research Training

Report of the Working Group into the
Training Function and Activities of the
Social Research Association (SRA)

Report of the Working Group into the Training Function and Activities of the Social Research Association (SRA)

Prepared for the SRA Executive Committee

May 2005

Membership of the Working Group

Chair: Tracey Budd, previous chair of the SRA Training Committee

Members:

Jane Ritchie, SRA member and trainer

Cathy Sullivan, current Chair of the SRA Training Committee

Robin Legard, former member of the SRA Training Committee

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	The context and coverage of the review	1
1.1.1	SRA's training provision.....	1
1.1.2	Wider developmental role	1
1.2	Building on earlier reviews	2
1.3	The organisation of training in the SRA	2
1.4	Recommendations	3
2	TRAINING PROVIDER	5
2.1	Current model of provision.....	5
2.2	A new model of provision	6
2.2.1	The key principles.....	6
2.2.2	The training programme.....	6
Table 2.1	Proposed training programme.....	7
2.2.3	Principles of integrated packages	8
2.2.4	Identifying training providers and agreeing terms.....	8
2.2.5	Fee structure for convenors/tutors	9
Table 2.2	Tutorial fee structure for core courses	9
2.2.6	Pricing structure for courses.....	9
Table 2.3	Delivery costs for 1 day course	10
2.2.7	Accreditation	11
3	THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL RESEARCH TRAINING.....	13
3.1	Training providers.....	13
3.2	Other professional associations	14
3.3	Employing organisations.....	15
3.4	The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).....	15
3.5	Accreditation	16
3.6	Information on training for members	17
3.7	The role of the SRA's Training Committee	18
4	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP	19
APPENDIX 1	CURRENT ORGANISATION OF TRAINING IN THE SRA.....	21
APPENDIX 2	CURRENT SRA PROGRAMME OF COURSES.....	22
APPENDIX 3	SRA SCOTLAND – TRAINING COURSES 2003-2005	24
APPENDIX 4	MODELS FOR INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES	26
APPENDIX 5	CHARGES OF OTHER PROVIDERS	28
APPENDIX 6	ESRC RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE SCHEME: SRA PROPOSALS APRIL 2005	29

1 INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 2004, a Working Group was established to review the SRA's training activities. The Group was asked to take a strategic look at the SRA's role in relation to social research training, both as a provider and as an organisation concerned with the quality of research education more broadly. A series of meetings was held between November 2004 and April 2005, chaired by the former Chair¹ of the SRA's main Training Committee. This report presents a summary of the findings and recommendations of the Working Group.

1.1 The context and coverage of the review

The central aim of the SRA is to 'advance the conduct, development and application of social research'. The Association has a key interest in ensuring sound standards of research practice and thus in the availability of high quality training in social research methods. It pursues this interest both by *providing training* in social research and through a *wider developmental role* in relation to social research training more generally.

1.1.1 SRA's training provision

For many years, the SRA has run training courses in social research, which between them cover a wide range of topics. The courses are aimed at practising researchers and all have been developed to fill perceived gaps in existing training provision. In the main, SRA courses are held in high regard by those attending and often have waiting lists for further places.

Despite the popularity of SRA courses, there are certain features that warranted review. These include the 'model' used for running SRA training in terms of format, organisation, pricing and frequency; the need to offer more courses at an advanced level; and the potential for new training events for more senior researchers and research managers. These issues, together with other features of current provision, formed a central core of the Working Group's discussions and are considered in Section 2 of this report.

1.1.2 Wider developmental role

The SRA's membership is wide ranging in terms of its institutional and disciplinary base but a high proportion of members are practising researchers. Although members vary in their levels of experience and seniority they share a number of concerns amongst which training and professional development feature strongly. Thus the SRA, in addition to its role as a provider, has an important part to play in training and career development at a national level.

¹ Tracey Budd was chair of the Training Committee at the time the Working Group was convened. Cathy Sullivan became chair early in 2005 and was also a member of the Working Group.

There has been a continuing concern within the SRA that the provision of high quality social research training within the UK is limited. Although research methods are taught on most undergraduate social science courses, the adequacy or type of training is often insufficient to prepare people for 'live' research and thus 'in service' training is usually needed. This applies, although to a lesser extent, to people who have followed social science Masters or Doctorate programmes. Alongside this, there are many specialist issues that require more formal tuition as researchers progress through their careers. However, there is a paucity of courses available at a more advanced level.

In view of this, there was a need to consider how the SRA might play a wider role in helping to strengthen and extend the research training available to social researchers. This raised questions about a number of issues including consultations with the ESRC, collaboration with related associations, the need for an investigation of employers' training requirements and the possibility of a review or register of available training. All of these were matters considered by the Working Group and are discussed in Section 3 of this report.

1.2 Building on earlier reviews

It should be noted that the SRA's role in relation to training has been subject to regular review. In most cases, such reviews have been undertaken by the Training Committee when new people have come on to the Committee or taken office. They have largely focused on the SRA's training provision, how it should be organised and on subjects for future courses.

In addition, a major review of training provision was carried out by a Sub-Committee of the SRA in the early 1980's². The terms of reference were to '*assess and report on the state of social research training in Britain and make recommendations for its improvement*'. The work undertaken was extensive including consultations with a large number of employers of social researchers, an investigation amongst SRA members and a literature review. The Sub-Committee also undertook some detailed work in universities and other organisations which provided training to prepare a directory of courses available for social researchers³. Further reference to this substantial review is made later in this report.

1.3 The organisation of training in the SRA

The SRA Training Committee is responsible for the provision of SRA training courses. The Committee comprises a group of volunteers from a range of social research sectors (membership tends to fluctuate between six and ten members). The chair of the Committee is a member of the SRA Executive.

The role of the Committee is to agree and organise a programme of training courses each year. The programme has until recently comprised four to five one day courses, which included a mix of repeats of previous successful training and new courses. The number of courses has been

² The State of Training in Social Research. Social Research Association, 1985

³ Cross, M. and French, E. 1982 Training Courses in Social Research. London, Social Research Association

increasing, with nine organised in the past twelve months. An outline of the programme for the forthcoming year is agreed by the Committee in the September of the preceding year.

Once the outline programme is agreed, the role of the Committee is to then organise and convene the courses. Responsibility for each course is assigned to two members of the committee who work with the SRA administrator in organising the course. The Committee members are responsible for agreeing the programme, securing and liaising with the speakers and agreeing delegate fees and assessing the viability of running a course. The SRA's administrator is responsible for venue booking and arrangements, advertising, bookings and preparing delegate packs, registration on the day and payments/fee collection. Further details of the current organisation are given in Appendix 1.

SRA Scotland has its own training committee which also oversees the design and delivery of courses for Scotland. This committee is currently undertaking a review of the SRA's role in terms of training and debating similar issues to those being addressed by the Working Group. An outline of the current model of provision is given in section 2.1.

1.4 Recommendations

The Working Group had to work to a relatively short time scale. This was to ensure that any recommendations about the SRA's training provision could be implemented in the 2005-2006 training programme. But this also meant that recommendations about the SRA's wider role could not be pursued in any detail in the time available. There are therefore some suggestions which will require further thinking before a decision to implement them can be made. A summary of the Working Group's recommendations is given in the final section of this report.

2 TRAINING PROVIDER

2.1 Current model of provision

The SRA has had a long-standing role as a training provider. For many years it has run a variety of one day training courses, covering a range of topics. The courses focus on giving delegates practical training and tend to be targeted at those new to the topic or requiring 'refresher' training.

The current model of provision adopted in England relies on volunteers on the SRA Training Sub-Committee to decide the training courses to be run each year, to design the courses and recruit the speakers and tutors (most courses involving 4 to 6 different tutors). Most speakers and tutors contribute on a voluntary basis, though small fees are sometimes paid to independent researchers. The fee varies depending on the level of contribution required though a clear and unambiguous fee structure is not in place. These arrangements allow the SRA to provide relatively inexpensive and accessible training. They also allow the SRA to be responsive to the needs and suggestions of members.

However, the current model places certain limitations on provision. Reliance on voluntary contributors limits the frequency with which courses can be run and the control the SRA Training Sub-Committee has on ensuring that courses that are linked are systematically developed and run sequentially.

Appendix 2 details the courses run between 1998 and 2005 and the current standard pricing structure. An increased price for a recent course targeted at senior researchers was agreed on an experimental basis.

SRA Scotland

SRA Scotland also run various courses. Historically, SRA Scotland courses have been designed and run by committee members and other researchers known to the committee with expertise on particular topics whom they could persuade to give their time to SRA for free. This situation changed in late 2003 when, in response to evidence of a dearth of good training for qualitative researchers, SRA Scotland approached an independent research consultant to help develop a series of qualitative training courses. A key idea was that instead of running courses on different topics several months apart, the qualitative training days covering in-depth interviewing, focus groups, analysis and, as a later addition, reporting and presenting qualitative data, would be run in close succession. People could then attend all of these as a package that would give them a high quality introduction to qualitative research methods. The general feeling on the training committee is that the model has worked very well. The committee is now looking to see whether, and how, quantitative training courses could be run along similar lines. A list of the training courses offered by SRA Scotland for the period 2003 – 2005 is given in Appendix 3.

2.2 A new model of provision

This section discusses a new model of provision for central SRA courses. It draws on the current experiences of the SRA, including in Scotland.

2.2.1 *The key principles*

The Working Group has concluded that the provision of SRA training should be based on the following key principles:

- The development of coherent ***integrated training packages*** for certain areas of social research which trainees can follow through progressively. This would ensure that linked courses are fully integrated and adopt consistent teaching methods and a consistent approach to the topic.
- ***High quality training provision.*** To date courses have usually relied on experienced researchers from different sectors offering their time to tutor on courses. While these arrangements have ensured that delegates hear from a range of individuals with high levels of expertise in their field, tutors will not always be experienced in training itself. We feel that to maximise the benefits of training to delegates, tutors should have well-developed training skills and be expected to give appropriate levels of development time to the training.
- ***Meeting the demand.*** SRA courses are generally highly regarded and in the main, demand has exceeded the supply of places. This has meant that even the most popular courses are only run once or, very occasionally, twice a year. We believe the SRA should develop its role as training provider and run courses more frequently to meet demand.
- The SRA has a track record in being responsive to new and emerging issues and responding to member led suggestions on training (e.g. Data Protection, Media Training). We believe this ***flexibility and responsiveness*** should be retained.
- In order to meet some of the principles outlined above, the SRA will have to move to a more professional basis paying teaching staff on an agreed and equitable basis. However the SRA should endeavour to continue to provide ***relatively inexpensive and accessible training***, and fees for teaching staff should be set accordingly, somewhat below 'market rates'.

2.2.2 *The training programme*

The Working Group has reviewed the courses run by the SRA and identified some gaps in the current programme. Training courses have been identified under two main headings. Firstly, **core courses**, which provide fundamental training in research and project management and should be run on a relatively frequent basis and, secondly, **specialist or contemporary courses**, which offer advanced professional development training or focus on contemporary areas of development. These more specialist courses will not be run as frequently as core courses.

The proposed training programme is set out below in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Proposed training programme

CORE COURSES ON RESEARCH AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

These include courses that provide fundamental training in research methods and the effective planning, management and utilisation of research. They should be run frequently to meet demand. The courses include those that could be developed into integrated packages and stand-alone courses.

Integrated packages

Qualitative Research Methods (5 days)
Survey Research Methods (5 days)

Stand-alone courses

Telephone research methods (1 day)
Self-completion questionnaires (1 day)
Data protection in research (1/2 day)
Introduction to quantitative data analysis (2 days)
Research management (2 days)
Research and policy (1 day)
Report writing skills (1 day)

SPECIALIST OR CONTEMPORARY COURSES

These courses either deal with more advanced professional development training or address emerging, contemporary issues. These courses will not run frequently. Most will be stand-alone 1-day courses, though some advanced training courses could run for 2 days.

Some of these courses due to their specialist nature may have to be commissioned from expert providers (e.g. Media Training) and fees/prices will have to be agreed on this basis. Other courses may benefit from being run in collaboration with other organisations, such as the UKES or MRS.

Professional development training

Cognitive methods for testing survey questions (1 day)
Multiple method research (1 day)
Evaluation methods (2 days)
Advanced qualitative data analysis (2 days)
Advanced quantitative data analysis (2 days)
Sampling hard to reach populations (1 day)
Explanation and interpretation in social enquiry (2 days)

Contemporary areas of development

Ethics in social research (2 days)
Cross-cultural research (1 day)
Systematic reviews (1 day)
Participatory/peer led research (1 day)
Quality in social research (2 days)
Media training (1 day)
Freedom of Information (1 day)

2.2.3 Principles of integrated packages

Participants attending an integrated course are likely to have different levels of experience: some will be relatively experienced whereas others may well be completely new to the subject. It is therefore proposed that packages have an optional foundation component so that those new to the area can acquire an initial grounding before proceeding to the other components of the programme. The principal attraction of the package is likely to be the skills training offered in the subsequent component but a familiarity with the basic principles must be a prerequisite for learning these skills.

It is intended that the components should be promoted as a training package with the expectation that participants attend all days. However, it is possible that some people will just want to attend one component or even one day of a particular component. We suggest that priority be given to those wishing to do the full programme and that any spare places be filled up from those wishing to attend individual days.

These considerations also apply in the consideration of when to schedule the individual components. In order to provide minimum disruption to participants' other commitments, the programmes should be spread over a period about 4 months. The second component of a course should be held relatively soon after the foundation component (we suggest one month) in order for those new to the area to proceed to acquiring research skills within a relatively short timeframe.

Appendix 4 presents options for integrated courses on Qualitative Research Methods and Survey Design.

2.2.4 Identifying training providers and agreeing terms

Due consideration needs to be given to how the SRA should identify and select potential training providers/tutors and the terms under which the SRA enters into agreements with those selected.

For Integrated Courses it is suggested that the SRA identifies a suitable convenor by inviting 'Expressions of Interest' from experts or specialists in the field. Clear and unambiguous criteria should be set for the selection of a convenor. The selected convenor would be responsible for designing the content of the course and securing the involvement of other appropriate tutors. They would have to commit to running the programme a maximum number of times per year (3 or 4 is likely to be sufficient), though they would have to accept that repeat runs would be subject to demand and the success of the first run. The SRA Training Sub-Committee would be involved in discussions with the convenor to agree the programme and would have to sign off the final programme before it was run. The SRA Training Sub-Committee in collaboration with the convenor should undertake a full evaluation of the programme before it is run again to ensure that 'lessons learnt' can be implemented

for future runs. The SRA Training Sub-Committee would keep all programmes under constant review.

One day, stand-alone courses, whether within the core or specialist/contemporary set, could continue to be convened by SRA Training Sub-Committee members who take responsibility for the design of the day and securing the tutors. However, some of these courses may benefit from identifying an expert in the field to convene the day.

2.2.5 Fee structure for convenors/tutors

We recommend that courses be put on to a fee-paying basis for the convenor and all tutors. The level of fees payable should be sufficiently high to attract guaranteed tutorial support but, commensurate with the role and status of the SRA, somewhat below the full commercial rate. Table 2.2 sets out a proposed fee structure that we feel will be both simple and workable.

The course convenor would be offered a fee of £300 per course day for designing, co-ordinating and facilitating the component. We recommend that the same fee is paid for new courses and for re-runs as the convenor would be expected to review the content of the course each time to ensure learning from the previous runs are taken on board. They would also be expected to attend the course to enable them to monitor delivery.

Tutors would be offered £300 for involvement in a whole day of activities, £150 for participating in half of a day or £100 for a single session. Tutors would have the option of waiving their fee if they chose to do so. In some cases the convenor will be involved in tutoring on the day and would therefore receive a tutor fee in addition to the convenor fee.

Table 2.2 Tutorial fee structure for core courses

Nature of fee	Amount	Tasks
Course convenor fee	£300 per course day	For designing, co-ordinating and facilitating the component
Tutor fee	£300 per day	For involvement in the day's activities including some teaching. Where half a day's involvement, fee would be £150
Session fee	£100 per session	For delivering a talk or facilitating a group session but not otherwise involved with the running of the day

2.2.6 Pricing structure for courses

The SRA considers training provision as a means of generating income for the organisation to enable it to further develop its wider role, including that detailed in Section 3.

At present the SRA operates a mixed pricing policy. Most courses follow a set pricing structure, while for others the prices are somewhat higher (for example, where many speakers are being paid fees) to try and ensure that the course is financially viable and a modest profit is achieved. However, the processes for agreeing the pricing structure have developed on an ad hoc basis and there is not a clear and unambiguous policy on who is responsible for agreeing pricing and the level of income that courses should generate.

The Working Group considered both a standardised set pricing structure per course day versus a variable pricing structure whereby the price was set to try and ensure that a certain level of surplus was achieved for each course. We felt the latter option was preferable to ensure the SRA continued to generate an appropriate level of income through the provision of training.

The Training Committee would be responsible for setting course prices. The member of the committee with responsibility for the course would be expected to consult with the course convenor and SRA administrator to identify the costs and the expected number of delegates. They should allow for a modest surplus even if delegate numbers fall somewhat below the maximum allowed for the course.

To illustrate how this might work in practice an example is given below for a 1 day course involving 4 day tutors and 2 session tutors and with a maximum of 36 delegates. The cost figures given are illustrative and would need to be reviewed on a course by course basis.

Table 2.3 Delivery costs for 1 day course

Set costs (regardless of delegate numbers)	£
Venue/equipment	600
Convenor fee	300
Tutorial fees (4 in total)	1,200
Session fees (2 in total)	200
Publicity	100
	2,400
Variable costs per delegate	
Catering	15
Admin time/delegate packs/badges	15
	30

If the maximum number of delegates is 36, then the price would have to be £97 to cover costs (£67 to cover set costs + £30 for variable costs). However, courses might not always fill and so it would be prudent to consider a shortfall in delegates. Say if only 30 delegates sign up for the course then the costs per delegate would have to be £110 (£80 + £30) to cover costs.

If the SRA decided that each course should make a modest profit of say 10 per cent and take into account a small shortfall in attendees then the price would be set at around £120. At this price, with 36 delegates the course would make a profit of £840; with 30 delegates it would make a profit of £300.

A price of £120 for a 1 day course is competitive. It is in line with courses offered by the University of Surrey and somewhat below those offered by National Centre for Social Research, CASS and MRS (see Appendix 4 for details).

The Training Committee with the SRA Executive would need to give further consideration to the pricing policy and, in particular, the appropriate level of surplus income courses should generate. However, it is the view of the Working Group that the SRA should continue to be run relatively inexpensive and accessible training.

We have debated whether any groups should be considered for reductions. Our view is that students are a group for whom reductions are not necessary. The SRA courses are intended for practitioners rather than students. If universities, with all their resources, do not provide students with the tuition they need, why should the SRA subsidise them? However, unemployed people are a group for whom we think the SRA might consider making some reduction in charges.

2.2.7 Accreditation

We feel that offering participants a certificate of course attendance is the limit of what the SRA can offer at the present time. The SRA has no track record of accreditation and it would be too big an undertaking for it to get into the business of assessment and accreditation, at least at this stage. The issue of accreditation and the options available for the longer term are discussed in Section 3.

3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL RESEARCH TRAINING

It was noted in the Introduction that a major review of social research training was undertaken in the early 1980's by a sub committee of the SRA. Although the sub-committee's report was produced twenty years ago, many of its conclusions and recommendations would hold currency today. For example, it was noted that undergraduate courses do not in the main provide adequate training in research skills; that once in employment researchers have to be taught basic skills such as how to use statistics and research methods or how to write up research in a concise and usable way; and that further formalised training is usually needed.

Among its conclusions the report noted that while social science undergraduate courses should include some preparation for careers in social research, training in social research '*should be concentrated at the postgraduate level ...; and that training during employment should ultimately be concerned with extending the repertoire of established and newly developed techniques and approaches available to practitioners, and with research management*' (SRA, 1985:75). Among the main recommendations, the SRA was encouraged to have dialogue with the ESRC and to convene a meeting of the major providers and employers with an interest in social research training.

Since that report was written, there have been some important advances in social research training. Perhaps most notably, there has been a growth in Masters' programmes which offer coverage of social research methods and in the range of short courses provided by specialist research and statistics Centres at universities (such as Lancaster, Manchester, Reading, Southampton and Surrey). Nevertheless a significant proportion of training in social research methods is provided outside of academic institutions – and by a variety of agencies and organisations.

The terms and scope of the present review were considerably less extensive than the 1980's review but the issues of central concern are similar. The Working Group has therefore considered some of the links and liaisons that the SRA might pursue in advancing social research training for practising researchers. We also consider the information that members might require about training provision and how this could be made available.

3.1 Training providers

Within the UK, there are a number of players involved in the design and delivery of social research training for practising researchers – professional associations, research organisations, central government, independent trainers and some universities through their research units or Masters programmes. The SRA has already worked with a number of other training providers, either by engaging them to run SRA courses or through running joint events (such as Research Ethics: principles into practice, run jointly between the SRA and the National Centre for Social Research). We are certainly of the view that this practice should continue but could also be extended. This will help to ensure that professional training is

delivered by the industry's main specialists and experts, a feature that is highly welcomed by participants.

The SRA's proposals for the RDI, discussed in section 3.4, are for advanced courses built on a principle of partnership with experts in the areas concerned. It is anticipated that these will include the full range of training providers described above. If the ESRC does not grant funding for these courses, we would recommend that the SRA continues to develop the training suggested with the appropriate organisations.

On a wider level, we believe that there could be a role for the SRA to promote training for professional researchers on a more systematic basis. Currently, there is no one organisation that holds responsibility for the quality and availability of training for the social research profession. Given the diverse nature of the social research industry and the number of players involved this is perhaps not surprising. But we believe that some kind of centralised activity would be beneficial to develop and support a framework within which training is provided. We are therefore suggesting that the SRA might play a central role in this by leading a coalition of organisations with an interest in social research training.

3.2 Other professional associations

There are a number of professional bodies and associations which share common interests and concerns about training with the SRA. Of particular relevance are the Royal Statistical Society (RSS), the Market Research Society (MRS), the UK Evaluation Society (UKES), the Social Policy Association (SPA) and discipline-based organisations like the British Sociological Association (BSA). Partnerships will not be appropriate in all circumstances but in this context it is relevant to mention that the SRA has already run joint conferences and events with some of these organisations and there may be scope to extend this to joint training courses.

Within this context, it is relevant to mention a recent initiative of the MRS. A significant proportion of social research is carried out by market research agencies and the MRS and SRA share many common interests as well as members. In November 2004, the MRS launched a new Diploma in Market and Social Research. It is accredited at Masters level within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and offers 'full professional status for experienced practitioners' through a 5 unit course. The MRS is currently seeking organisations to run the units wanting a range of employers, colleges, universities and other partnerships.

The new Diploma includes 'social research' in its title and four of the five units aim to cover practices and methods relevant to both market and social research. However, the first unit, which acts as a platform on which other units are based (and is run jointly with the Chartered Institute of Marketing) focuses solely on market research. The MRS is keen to develop a comparable unit on social research and has asked if the SRA would be interested in collaborating. The Working Group felt that it would be inadvisable to do so⁴ primarily because the SRA - unlike the MRS (and the Chartered Institute of Management) - is not an awarding body within the NQF. Any

⁴ A note detailing reasons for this has been sent to the Chair of the Executive Committee.

involvement with the Diploma would therefore bring a new status for the SRA and one which has much wider implications. Although this needs further discussion, we are of the view that the SRA should not become an awarding body – and certainly not at the present time (see Section 3.6).

3.3 Employing organisations

The SRA's most recent Membership Directory provides an analysis of the 952 people who were members in March 2004⁵. This shows that over 90% were employed or in self employment. In terms of employment base, around a third work in the public sector (central/local government, health service or government agencies), a quarter in market research, 15% in higher or further education and the rest in the voluntary sector (11%), independent institutes (7%) or self employment.

There are some 400 organisations that employ SRA members most of whom will require some training provision for their staff. The Working Group feels there may be value in carrying out some form of consultation with these employers to investigate contemporary training needs. This might usefully be carried out in collaboration with the Association of Research Centres in the Social Sciences (ARCISS), which has parallel interests.

We would also suggest that the SRA examines employers' views on making some contribution to funding 'in service' training. The courses run by the SRA – and those proposed for the future – hold considerable value to social research employers in the professional development of their staff. This is particularly so for training in specialist or contemporary issues where the employing organisation may not have the expertise in house to deliver the training itself. We think there may be scope for the SRA to recoup some development costs for new courses from employing organisations through an agreed training levy - or something of that kind. However, we recognise that this is not a simple arrangement to introduce and will require much more thought before discussions with employers can be held.

There has been some change in the SRA's membership over time with a decline in the proportion employed by further and higher education establishments and a rise in the membership from market research companies. The former is of some concern to the SRA since '*social researchers based in the universities are a very important group, both as practitioners and teachers of social research*' (SRA Members Directory 2004). The Working Group shares this concern since it may reflect a deeper lack of cohesion between the academic community and the wider community of practising applied researchers. As already noted this is of particular concern in the context of training for social research, both at undergraduate and post graduate levels.

3.4 The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

In April 2004, the ESRC introduced a new approach to strategic planning, referred to as its 'strategic framework'. A key part of the new planning process was to hold regular consultations with stakeholders in the social science community. As part of

⁵ Membership of the SRA as at March 2005 stands at around 1100

this, a consultative seminar was held in September 2004 between the ESRC, the SRA and the Academy of Social Sciences. This provided a useful opportunity for the SRA and the Academy to convey some of their key priorities to the ESRC, including issues surrounding training for practising researchers. It was emphasised that there is not enough investment in training social science/social research practitioners to be effective in their jobs and specific recommendations were made for good quality training for junior researchers and for 'mid-career training and development'. It was also recommended that the ESRC should develop partnerships with research organisations and professional bodies to provide such training, a view which has been central to the thinking of this Working Group.

The ESRC's Training and Development Board has set up the Research Development Initiative which aims '*to support training and development of researchers across the social sciences at all stages of their careers*'. The ESRC has called for proposals framed within three strands of activity, one of which is highly relevant to the SRA's interests. This concerns activities designed to support the training and development of researchers '*across the life course*' and which '*contribute to a training structure at either the regional or national level*'.

The Working Group believes that the SRA could make a significant contribution to such activities and has prepared an application, submitted in April 2005. The application seeks funding for a programme of advanced training for practising researchers at senior or researcher management levels (see Appendix 6). Even if this proposal is not successful, we would recommend that some follow up discussion takes place with the Training and Development Board to emphasise the gaps that exist in current training provision and the need for advanced courses of this kind.

3.5 Accreditation

One direction that could be taken in developing current training is some form of accreditation of courses. The advantage for the SRA could potentially be clearer recognition, status and credibility of training. For individual recipients the benefit would be formal certification of knowledge and skills acquired to support career development. 'Accreditation' could be informal assurance, or a more formal option.

An informal option typically might involve issuing certificates of attendance as evidence of participation. The disadvantage of attendance certificates is that they do not signify learning outcome, raising a question about their value. Indirectly this might have adverse effects on the status of SRA training. An informal negotiated 'stamp of approval' from an individual Higher Education (HE) partner might be a possibility without attracting formal Award bearing status. This would involve some cost such as an annual fee. Arguably there would be no clear benefit from this option for the SRA or training participants.

Formal accreditation would involve a series of decisions about who would accredit/validate courses, what level they should be, the amount of formal credit acquired for individual or packages of courses, and who would run them. Resources would be needed for initial accreditation, 'qualification' design, delivery, assessment and ongoing quality assurance.

One option would be to identify a suitable HE partner to validate and give formal Award bearing status to training. The level, scope and certification within the HE Qualification Framework would then be clarified during validation / credit assessment. A key advantage would be the support and infrastructure provided by the academic partner for initial validation, quality assurance arrangements and course assessment activities. A range of possibilities could be agreed for the delivery of training under this option. HE institutions are increasingly geared to negotiating partnership accreditation of professional training. Initial and ongoing costs would be incurred dependent upon the specific award and arrangements. A key issue arising here would be selection of an individual HE partner and the possible implications.

Another option would be for the SRA to accredit its own training. The pursuit of this option would involve a number of core developments - seeking recognised status for the organisation as an Awarding Body from the national regulator, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA); and designing and developing a qualification(s) for similar approval. Demonstration of criteria such as organisational 'stability', 'track record' and 'robust arrangements' for developing and quality assuring qualifications would be needed.

Variants of this option are also possible. For example, a new '5 day accreditation' procedure has been introduced by the QCA as of March 2005 designed to offer 'more responsive' regulation for providers. Given policy trends in vocational education and training, however, an SRA qualification might benefit from being located within the new revised National Vocational Qualification Framework, in terms of both level and credits. One logical and related extension of the NVQ route, would be to link training directly to the National Occupational Standards framework. These statements of competence, knowledge and skill are developed for defined occupational activities and roles, based on consultation and consensus amongst experts within the relevant 'occupation' .

All of these possibilities, however desirable, would need major commitment of time, resources and infrastructure for development and delivery over a sustained period. For example, assessors would be needed on a continuous basis, as would suitable quality assurance monitoring including external verification. The option of accrediting through an HE provider would also risk compromising the established independence and neutrality of the SRA as a professional organisation reflecting all sectors.

For these reasons Accreditation is not recommended as a viable option for the SRA in the short or medium term.

3.6 Information on training for members

The Working Group considered suggesting that a directory of professional training for social researchers is compiled. We rejected this because of the considerable time and resource that its development and updating would require.

The SRA already provides members with details about courses (its own and others) in its newsletter and email information bulletins. We suggest that this might be

extended through a dedicated training page on the SRA's website on which institutions and training providers are invited to post details of their courses. This could usefully include links to other sites that give details of social research training, particularly those available through the ESRC (eg Guide to research methods training in the social sciences).

3.7 The role of the SRA's Training Committee

In the light of the recommendations of this report and the changed administrative arrangements for the SRA centrally, the role of the SRA's Training Committee will need to refocus. As described in Section 1, a major part of the Committee's work to date has been designing and organising the annual programme of training. With more administrative help centrally and fee paid trainers, we envisage that these functions may reduce in the resources they require but new functions will be added. These include:

- commissioning trainers to design and run core integrated courses
- identifying new specialist and contemporary courses and agreeing how these should be developed in line with the key principles outlined above and giving due consideration to the need to commission experts or form partnerships with other organisations
- reviewing and evaluating the provision of all courses to assess whether they meet the key principles required.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP

As noted in the Introduction, the Working Group reviewed the SRA's training activities in two contexts: as a provider of training courses and as an organisation concerned with the quality of social research training more broadly. The main recommendations within each are as follows

SRA's training provision

1. Training programmes are identified under two main headings:
 - **core courses** which provide fundamental training in research methods
 - **specialist or contemporary courses** which deal with emerging or cross cutting issues or specific methodological subjectsBoth have been run by the SRA in previous programmes and both should continue
2. Certain key features of SRA's training provision should continue. These include
 - accessibility through the delivery of relatively inexpensive courses
 - responsiveness to members' suggestions for training and newly emerging professional or methodological topics
3. The model for providing SRA training should be revised in order to increase the frequency with which courses can be run and to provide more systematic linkage in the training offered. To achieve this, the following changes are recommended:
 - the development of integrated packages for core areas of research practice which trainees can follow through progressively
 - the move to a fee paid basis for teaching staff on an agreed and equitable basis
4. Core courses should be run on a relatively frequent basis in order to meet demand. Some can be developed into integrated packages and an example is provided for such a package on qualitative research methods. Others will best be delivered as stand alone courses. Suggestions for new provision are made.
5. Specialist or contemporary courses may benefit from being run in partnership with other organisations which have specific expertise in the area concerned. Specific suggestions for topics that might be included are given.
6. There is a particular need for more courses at an advanced level aimed at senior researchers and those with research management responsibilities. The Working Group has developed a proposal for such courses, submitted to the ESRC Research Development Initiative. Should the ESRC application not be successful these courses should be considered for delivery in some other way.
7. All core courses should be put on to a fee-paying basis for tutors. The level of fees should be sufficiently high to attract high quality training but set below full commercial levels to allow affordable provision for members. Some specialist courses will also be commissioned on a fee paid basis but others

- might be run on a non fee basis in partnership with other organisations. A suggested fee structure is given in section 2.2.6.
8. Thought will need to be given to how the SRA might identify and select training providers. Suggestions for this are made
 9. The pricing structure for all SRA courses needs to ensure that costs are covered and some contribution is made to SRA funds for its other activities. A suggested pricing structure is given
 10. The Training Committee of the SRA should continue to have a key role in designing and orchestrating the SRA's training programme.

SRA's wider role

11. There is a need for some kind of centralised activity to develop and support a framework within which training for the social research profession is provided. The SRA could play a key role in this by leading a coalition of organisations with an interest in social research training.
12. There is a need to develop advanced training for senior researchers and research managers as stated in recommendation 6 . Opportunities to develop such provision in partnership with industry specialists, other training providers and professional associations should therefore be encouraged.
13. Employers of social researchers have a keen interest in training and further consultation with them about their needs would be of value. It is also suggested that the SRA might explore employers' views on making some contribution to funding the development costs of new training provision on specialist or contemporary issues.
14. Further dialogue with the ESRC's Research and Training Board would be of value to encourage greater response to the needs of the social science practitioner constituency.
15. The need for more advanced courses run in partnership with social research specialists is central to the SRA's recent application under the ESRC's Research Development Initiative. It is suggested that, should this be unsuccessful, some follow up with the ESRC would be beneficial to emphasise the need for training of this kind.
16. The possibility of the SRA seeking accreditation for its courses, either alone or in partnership with a suitable HE institution is considered. It is suggested that this is not a viable option at the present time mainly because of the major time commitment and resources it will require.
17. Information for members about available social research training could be extended through a dedicated page on training on the SRA's website.
18. In the light of recommendations in this report and changed administrative arrangements for the SRA centrally, the role of the SRA's Training Committee will change. It is expected that some reduction in organisational tasks will occur but new functions will be added. These new arrangements and functions will need to be clarified and agreed as an outcome of the training review.

APPENDIX 1 CURRENT ORGANISATION OF TRAINING IN THE SRA

The Training Committee organisers are responsible for:

- developing a draft programme for the day, taking into account any feedback from previous courses
- checking that the venue and equipment booked is appropriate and liaising with administrator on any changes required
- securing appropriate speakers, informing them what is required with a view to optimising a match with the brief
- ensuring that speakers deliver slides/biographies to time and that these are forwarded to the administrator for inclusion in the delegate packs
- reviewing the costs to ensure that the standard delegate fees are appropriate
- deciding whether or not the course should proceed should bookings fall short of the number required to 'break even'
- designing feedback form for inclusion in delegate pack
- attending the entire day with responsibility for introducing the day, being a point of contact for delegates, ensuring venue fulfils requirements, taking in feedback forms and delegate badges as the end of the day. Organiser often also chairs the day, introducing each speaker, facilitating questions etc.
- analysing feedback forms and producing a brief report for committee and to go to the administrator

The administrator is responsible for:

- booking venues, including equipment, once the year's programme has been agreed
- confirming the venue arrangements once course outline agreed
- advertising the course through email notifications, website, SRA Bulletin
- processing bookings
- monitoring bookings and informing the organisers on a regular basis - so that, if low, cancellation or postponement can be considered
- confirming catering arrangements once numbers known
- sending delegates a confirmation of their booking, the programme, venue map and any other required information
- printing and preparing delegate packs
- attending on the morning of the event to register delegates and ensure the venue/catering arrangements are in place
- ensuring speakers are given expense claims forms
- processing invoices from speakers
- ensuring payments from delegates are received
- providing the Training committee Chair with a summary of costs/income for each course
- maintaining the Course archive of training day materials/delegate feedback

APPENDIX 2 CURRENT SRA PROGRAMME OF COURSES

Courses run since 1998:

Date	Course
10 February 1998	Introduction to Focus Groups
4 March 1998	Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis
29 April 1998	Self Completion Surveys
30 Sept 1998	Introduction to cognitive methods
9 Dec 1998	Self completion surveys
16 March 1999	Introduction to Survey sampling
11 May 1999	Introduction to Qualitative Research
16 Sept 1999	Qualitative Interviewing Skills
6 October 1999	Intro to the analysis of qualitative data using computer packages
9 November 1999	Report writing and presentation skills
2 May 2000	Commissioning and Managing Social Research
26 Sep 2000	Focus Groups
21 Nov 2000	Better Questionnaire design
13 March 2001	Practical Sampling
16 May 2001	Introduction to Qualitative research
16 September 2001	Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis
7 November 2001	Telephone Research Methods
13 March 2002	Introduction to qualitative interviewing
11 September 2002	Introduction to Focus Groups
6 November 2002	Report writing and presentation skills
19 March 2003	Introduction to Focus groups
17 Sept 2003	Qualitative interviewing
16 Oct 2003	Introduction to Focus Groups
23 Oct 2003	Commissioning and Managing Social Research
18 Nov 2003	Better Questionnaire Design
18 February 2004	Qualitative interviewing
24 March 2004	Introduction to sampling
20 April 2004	Introduction to qualitative research
19 May 2004	Self completion questionnaires
15 September 2004	Introduction to qualitative analysis
20 October 2004	Introduction to focus groups
7/8 September 2004	Data Protection
9 September	Media Training
17 November 2004	Introduction to cognitive methods
24 February 2005	Introduction to qualitative research
2 & 9 March 2005	Ethics: principles into practice
15 March 2005	Telephone Research Methods
12/13 May 2005	Data Protection

Price structure in 2005:

SRA Member place(s) @ £100
Non SRA Member, Full-time worker place(s) @ £150 Fee includes membership.
Non SRA Member, Part-time worker or retired place(s) @ £135. Fee includes membership.
Student / unwaged places(s) @ £115. Fee includes membership
One of three Student place(s) @ £30. (Priority to FT self financing/grant PhD students. Proof of Student ID required. Fee does not include membership. This is £15 extra)

APPENDIX 3 SRA SCOTLAND – TRAINING COURSES 2003-2005

2003

June

An introduction to Sampling

December

Introduction to in-depth interviewing

Introduction to focus groups

Analysis of qualitative data

Qualitative research reflection study day

2004

January

Analysis of qualitative data x 3

Introduction to in-depth interviewing

Introduction to focus groups

March

Introduction to in-depth interviewing

Introduction to focus groups

Analysis of qualitative data

Qualitative research reflection study day

April

Reporting and presenting qualitative data x 2

May

Reporting and presenting qualitative data x 2

Understanding data protection in social research x 2

September

An introduction to sampling

November

Introduction to in-depth interviewing

Introduction to focus groups

December

Introduction to in-depth interviewing

Introduction to focus groups

Analysis of qualitative data

Reporting and presenting qualitative data

2005

January

Analysis of qualitative data x 2

Reporting and presenting qualitative data

May

Research design in the real world

June

Introduction to questionnaire design

APPENDIX 4 MODELS FOR INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES

Proposal for an integrated qualitative course

The purpose of the SRA offering an integrated course in qualitative research at an introductory level is to equip those attending with an overview of the research process and a grounding in the key skills required. The programme we propose would consist of three discrete components, distributed across five days, as Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1: Course Programme

Component	Content	Number of days	Delivery date
Foundation (optional component)	Introduction to key elements of the qualitative research process, including research design and sampling and the principles and traditions of qualitative research	(1 day)	Month 1
Fieldwork skills	General overview of fieldwork skills and topic guide usage. First day will focus on in-depth interviews; the second day on focus groups	2 days	Month 2
Analysis & reporting	First day on analysis; second day on presentation and reporting	2 days	Month 4

Participants attending the course are likely to have different levels of experience of qualitative research: some will be relatively experienced whereas others are completely new to the subject. The principal attraction of the package is likely to be the skills training offered in components two and three. However, a prerequisite for learning these skills is a basic familiarity with the basic principles of the research process, including research design and sampling. It is for this reason that we suggest an optional foundation component so that those new to qualitative research can acquire this initial grounding before proceeding to the other two components of the programme.

It is intended that the components should be promoted as a training package with the expectation that participants attend all 4/5 days. However, it is possible that some people will just want to attend one component or even one day of a particular component. We suggest that priority be given to those wishing to do the full programme and that any spare places be filled up from those wishing to attend individual days.

The components are intended to be delivered in the order as set out in the above table. This broadly reflects the flow of the research process. However, individual components could be repeated as often as required without the need to run the whole course.

The rationale for allowing a maximum of two days per component is to facilitate attendance for those in employment and/or those travelling from far afield. These considerations also apply in the scheduling of the individual components. In order to provide minimum disruption to participants' other commitments, the full programme will be spread over a period of 4 months as shown in the Table 1.

We feel that a total of 32 to 36 participants (which would break down into 4 small groups containing around 8 participants each) is optimum for this course.

Proposal for an integrated survey design course

The purpose of the SRA offering an integrated course in survey design at an introductory level is to equip those attending with an overview of the research process and a grounding in the key skills required. The programme we propose would consist of three discrete components, distributed across five days, as Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1: Course Programme

Component	Content	Number of days	Delivery date
Foundation (optional component)	Introduction to key elements of survey design, including mode of implementation, sampling and questionnaire design.	(1 day)	Month 1
Sample design	General overview of principles of sampling. First day will cover principles of probability and non probability methods; the second day will focus on sampling issues associated with specific modes (postal, telephone, face to face)	2 days	Month 2
Questionnaire design	First day will provide a general overview of principles of good questionnaire design; the second day will focus on issues associated with specific modes (postal, telephone, face to face)	2 days	Month 4

APPENDIX 5 CHARGES OF OTHER PROVIDERS

Day course charges of other providers are detailed below:

MRS - £285 for members; £385 non members

BMRB Centre of Excellence - £50 (note that most courses would not fall within SRA remit)

National Centre for Social Research - run some 2 day workshops/courses. Fees vary - range £400 to £500.

Centre for Applied Social Surveys - 2 day courses = £300; 3 day courses = £400.

University of Surrey - £120 standard charge; £100 for those from educational institutions or charitable sector; £20 Phd students

APPENDIX 6 ESRC RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE SCHEME: SRA PROPOSALS APRIL 2005

Key Extract from Funding Application

Title: Development of extension training programme for Senior Researchers over three year period

Proposals

The *ESRC Researcher Development Initiative* scheme offers an exciting and valued opportunity to expand and strengthen SRA training in key areas of demand, and at the same time enable it to work more extensively with its academic constituency who are both practitioners and trainers in research.

The proposals are for development support to underpin an extension and improvement of SRA training needed to address a gap in more advanced provision. It is proposed to achieve this by developing a suite of high quality options relating to various stages of the research process which take forward the experience of those already equipped with some confidence and grounding in social research. The aim is to develop and deliver training that strengthens knowledge and skills in three areas. **'Research and Project Management'** in other words effective planning, management and utilisation of research; **'Contemporary areas of Development'** in the light of evolving contexts, such as quality assurance, ethics and also new approaches; and finally **'Professional Development'** offering opportunities for continuing advanced skills tuition.

The intended target audience is therefore those with some experience of doing and managing research including supervision. This proposal as such falls under strand (i) of the RDI scheme specification. The orientation of training developed will be the work undertaken at the more applied end of the research spectrum. As such the proposals will be coincident with the recognised need for researchers in HE Institutions to develop capacity to exploit 'third stream' funding opportunities more effectively, although it is envisaged training will be open to experienced and senior researchers across the board.

The model envisaged is to develop training through a strategic partnership framework. This will capitalise upon the considerable expertise and experience amongst practitioners within the SRA's membership to design and deliver new courses. This will draw on the under utilised potential for systematic collaboration, and the distinctive and high level knowledge and skills possessed by researchers in different sectors. The approach will be to utilise the SRA's capability to act as a 'hub' to develop the proposed extension training, setting up individual partnerships which will draw actively upon the unique strengths of specific research areas, institutions and individuals to achieve consistent strategic improvement in research practice. The SRA is well placed to exercise such a role and to focus on the development of expertise and skills needed to execute and manage research in the demanding and complex contexts that constitute much contemporary applied research.

This focus aims to complement research training offered by the major national research methods centres and other key providers, who have particular strengths in methodological skills training. In accordance with the proposed model, which develops the SRA's existing approach to training, active partnership would be sought in the event of any overlap that may emerge, in order to optimise the quality and utility of training offered.

Proposed new training programme for experienced and senior researchers

The proposal is to develop, over a three-year period, a programme of training for experienced research practitioners from all sectors, including HE, under three key themes '**Research and Project Management**', '**Contemporary areas of development**' and '**Professional Development**'.

Funding is sought for the development costs of the programme, reflecting the innovative character of some topics, the almost entirely new provision that is being made, and the preparatory time needed to identify and develop sustainable individual course partnerships with senior 'concept drivers' and speakers

Activities proposed:

A training expansion development programme in three stages involving:

- ***Initial four month programme planning phase***, establishing an SRA RDI steering group. This will include at least one SRA Officer, the Chair of the Training Committee and senior members of the profession from academia and non-academic settings. This will be responsible for prioritisation of topics, detailed work programme, individual partnership scoping, developer/concept-driver 'recruiting' procedure.

Main Phase

Design and delivery of 13 individual training events, 5 - 6 topics over each 12 month period for 30 months, averaging one 'course' every 2 months. Exact dates will depend upon venue and availability of personnel. The training will be delivered through a series of short courses, study days and workshops.

Content: Topics would be prioritised on a flexible basis depending on demand and experience of needs in this area, but are likely to include the following. :-

Research and project management

Research management – 2 study days

To explore the tasks involved in the management of research projects and the skills and resources required.

Day 1 will cover project management including preparation of research proposals, constructing and monitoring budgets, staff and time management and external relations.

Day 2 will cover wider issues of research management including research commissioning

and governance, training and staff development, time management and research networks

Both days will provide opportunities for participants to discuss problems encountered in project management and potential solutions.

Data protection in research * - ½ day course

To give participants an insight into recent legislation as well as allowing an opportunity to look at practical examples relating to research practice.

Research and policy - study day

To examine the roles of research in formulating, developing and evaluating social policy. The day will bring together research commissioners and practitioners to consider how research is used, the requirements and constraints of policy related research and the factors that lead to effective partnerships between commissioners and contractors.

Contemporary areas of development

Systematic reviews - study day

To explore the different uses of systematic reviews and the key stages and processes involved.

Participatory research - study day

To examine the circumstances in which participatory and forms of peer led research might be used and its benefits and limitations.

Quality in social research - 2 day workshop

To consider markers of quality in social research and how they can be used in designing and conducting research and in assessment and review. The workshop will cover both general principles of concern to all forms of research and some specific features of relevance to particular methods.

Ethics* - 2 day workshop

To understand how the principles surrounding ethical research practice can be operationalised in research practice. The course will aim to highlight the ethical dilemmas and questions raised by 'real world' research, and to explore the considerations that shape decisions about research design and conduct.

Professional development

Evaluation methods - 2 day course

To review different traditions of evaluation and their philosophical underpinnings; the main approaches used in applied policy research and their benefits and limitations; and the uses of different evaluative methods. It will also explore some of the common concerns in carrying out evaluation including preparatory work with host organisations, confidentiality and anonymity of contributions, interim feedback, ownership of findings and public uses of evaluative outputs.

Multiple method research - 1 day workshop

To examine the problems involved in mixed method research using examples brought by

participants. Ways of optimising the combined use of different forms of statistical and qualitative research will be explored in the second half of the day.

Advanced qualitative data analysis - 2 day course

To study developments in qualitative data analysis.

Day 1 will focus on data management and include a review of different methods and software packages, the features they offer with some demonstration.

Day 2 will explore the later stages of the analytic process including classification, detections of patterns of association, explanation, interpretation and drawing wider inference.

Advanced quantitative data analysis - 2 day course

To examine multivariate methods going beyond the basic principles and techniques to understanding the assumptions behind the methods, how violations of these assumptions can be identified and dealt with, and how results of analyses should be effectively presented.

Day 1 will explore the principles of linear regression and its application in real world research

Day 2 will focus on logistic regression and factor analysis

Explanation and interpretation in social enquiry - 2 day course

To explore different routes to explaining and interpreting social research data.

Day 1 will examine methods and means of providing explanation, covering qualitative and quantitative data in turn

Day 2 will consider issues surrounding generalisation and the formulation of interpretation.

Dissemination - 1 day workshop

To examine methods of dissemination which optimise knowledge and use of research evidence. Uses of different media (including audio, video and the internet) will be explored with examples provided both by tutors and participants. This development will be able to draw upon the SRA's current work with partners through its' Dissemination Group.

** These training sessions have already been developed and delivered and were welcomed by more senior practitioners. We envisage that they will form part of the series but will not require the same level of resources for development. This has been taken into account in the budget submitted.*

Delivery options and partnership concept

Training formats will be developed according to suitability for the topic as 1 or 2 day programmes, ranging from fairly conventional short course formats to study workshops designed to better facilitate structured knowledge sharing with specialists and experienced researchers. Intellectual coherence will be balanced with adequate opportunities for practical discussion and skills development.

The proposed RDI Steering Group will, following initial partnership scoping, invite

expressions of interest for collaboration to deliver training on specific topics, recruiting 'concept drivers' for each topic. People engaged as 'concept drivers' will be leaders in their field, expert specialists from the social research community. They may be drawn from HE institutions with recognised strengths in a particular area, or from other research institutes and organisations with specialist experience. In some cases they may be individuals unattached to institutions and with a particular record of experience in a research area pertinent to the training topic.

Course development framework: staffing and process

For each topic, the proposal is for:-

- A *course 'concept driver'* with appropriate expertise who will be responsible for design and development of the learning objectives, outcomes and syllabus including identifying and collaborating with suitable contributors, and co-ordinating delivery and materials.
- *Speakers* as appropriate. Typically a one-day course might involve up to four speakers. Each will be expected to design, prepare and deliver individual sessions suitable for the course aims and intended training outcomes, including specific materials. The aim will be to have people who are the experts in their field, paying for their time to develop their contributions.
- *Administrative support* for new promotion & advertising, course registration, venue research and liaison, materials production support, finance administration

Funding is being sought for the costs of development of courses only and these are outlined below. Funding is **not** being sought for the delivery costs (eg delivery fees, venue and catering) which will be recovered through course fees to participants in line with prevailing SRA training fee policy.

This model of combining specialist concept-drivers and top level speakers to develop course structures and outlines is a new approach for the SRA and innovative in research training. The development work will result in an entirely new framework of courses, which can then be repeated and used many times in the future.

- ***Final phase*** during the last six months of funding will be a formative review and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the model (concept-driver; collaborative delivery whether individual or institutional; various formats) drawing upon monitoring/ feedback collected throughout and collective reflections. This will be used to enhance the responsiveness, quality and sustainability of continuing provision once ESRC support finishes.