

Do you have a good research idea – but need some support and some thinking time to make it happen?

Supported practitioner research projects January – July 2014

- Would you like the opportunity to carry out some action research to improve your own and colleagues' professional or organisational practice?
- Would you like to receive professional support in order to help you achieve this?

The Education and Training Foundation is pleased to demonstrate its commitment to supporting practitioner-led action research in our sector by offering opportunities for practitioners wishing to undertake a supported action research project. The approach builds on the significant work done in recent years to champion and design good models of research by FE practitioners for the purposes of improvement, innovation, and the development of professional practice. These opportunities are aimed at practitioners delivering provision funded by the Skills Funding Agency, and we are keen to ensure that all types of providers, and practitioners' and roles are reflected in the applications we receive.

There will be two programmes, each offering different models of support aimed at meeting the diverse needs of sector professionals.

Each programme is designed to ensure that participants are provided with the support they need to complete their research and implement change.

Both programmes will accept applications from any region of England, any type of provider and any type of practitioner role, as long as you are delivering Skills Funding Agency funded provision. All successful applicants, irrespective of which programme they participate in, will be awarded a bursary of £2,000 by the Foundation to cover their travel and staff cover costs of attending the relevant events, and costs associated with conducting their research projects.

The Foundation plans to organise a final dissemination event for all participants in both programmes.

Please read the following information about each strand in order to decide which one to apply for. Please note that as applications to both programmes cannot be accepted by the Foundation you should apply only to one of them.

The key features of each programme can be summarised as follows;

KEY FEATURES OF EACH PROGRAMME	SUNCETT Research Development Fellowship(RDF)/Research Development Advocate (RDA) Programme	emCETT Blended learning action research Programme
Study model	Three residential workshops take place in Sunderland, and give you time and support to progressively refine and develop your research and gauge its impact, as a member of the RDF/RDA community.	A blended learning model, combining an e-learning module and e-guide with a regional peer working group and face to face visits from a regional adviser
Accreditation	Opportunity to achieve 30 credits towards an MA Module by the University of Sunderland	Opportunity to produce evidence for QCF L5 unit in Action Research (optional DET/ CET unit)
Support	Provided through a research active personal mentor during and outside of the residential events, access to a strong community of practice which uses a model of change that has a proven track-record in helping practitioners bring about genuine improvements in learner outcomes.	Access to a regional adviser, with opportunities to work with the regional adviser and in regional groupings
Bursary	£2000	£2000

Further information about each programme is given on the following pages

SUNCETT Research Development Fellowship (RDF) /Research Development Advocate (RDA) Programme

How many times have you or a colleague come across a good educational idea only to find that that it was much more difficult to put it into practice than you first thought? It might be because it was an idea that looked great on paper but turned out to be lacking in substance; or that it was not supported by robust educational research; or that it was too theoretical or simply devoid of educational theory and research altogether! The problem might have been because you felt isolated in trying to put the idea into practice or that you felt someone else's new idea was considered to be 'the best in town' and was being forced upon you. Ben Goldacre (2013)¹ reminds us that teaching should be driving the research agenda by identifying questions that need to be answered.

At the same time we need to be mindful, when many are arguing that teachers do not need to be qualified, let alone research active, that it is now more important than ever that educational research clearly contributes to the improvement of educational practice and is able to prove that it has done so. The RDF/RDA practitioner-led support programme recognises the realities and complexities of these issues. It works alongside practitioners, in ways which reflect the values of vocational education and good educational research in practice. This strand will be delivered by SUNCETT and will be based around three residential research development workshops in SUNDERLAND beginning with,

1. A three-day RDF/RDA Fellowship Induction Residential from **Monday 3rd – Wednesday 5th March 2014** where recipients of Fellowships will work together with the SUNCETT team to refine and develop research proposals, develop a research plan and identify potential links and possible synergies between the Fellowship funded projects.
2. The second, interim three-day residential will be held from **Wednesday 9th – Friday 11th April 2014** to help Fellows analyse and interpret preliminary findings and to support them as they begin to write up and prepare research outcomes.
3. The final three-day residential will be held **Wednesday 25th – Friday 27th June 2014** will enable Fellows to share the research outcomes of the Fellowships and ensure that these can be successfully translated into practical messages which make sense to other practitioners working in other classrooms and contexts.

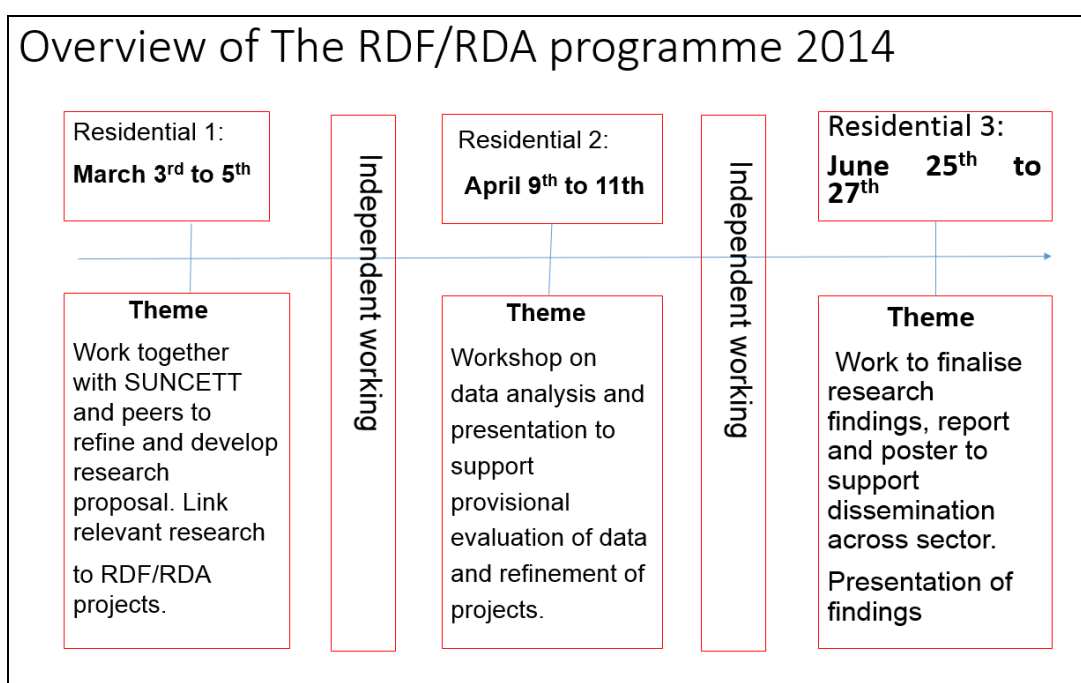
¹ Goldacre, B. (2013) *Bad Science*. [<http://www.badscience.net/2013/03/heres-my-paper-on-evidence-and-teaching-for-the-education-minister/>]

The SUNCETT programme is designed around the format of the Research Development Advocate (RDA) and Research Development Fellowship (RDF) programmes previously delivered very successfully on behalf of LSIS. Examples of past RDF and RDA projects can be found here:

- <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/634>
- <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/23561>

Successful applicants will be expected to conduct their research studies with support from a manager and (if possible) a mentor from within their own organisation. As successful Fellows, outside of the residential events, practitioners will pursue their research in collaboration with colleagues in their own institutions and will be guided and supported through regular contact with a critical friend and research mentor from the SUNCETT team.

Opportunities for the recognition and accreditation of achievements and insights gained through the Fellowship experiences and research outcomes from the action research projects will be offered by the University of Sunderland at a variety of academic levels which can be accredited up to Masters Level.



To apply please click [here](#) and return by Friday 31st January 2014. For further information please contact Clare Kerr, suncett@suncett.ac.uk. Places are limited so early application is advisable.

emCETT Blended Learning Action Research Programme

This strand will be delivered by emCETT offering a blended learning approach, with support from a Regional Adviser. Since emCETT's inception, in 2007, it has been both our mission and our passion to promote and facilitate staff development that is meaningfully situated within the context of quality issues arising in day-to-day professional practice.

What is action research?

The blended learning action research programme is based on the following definition:

'There are two essential aims to action research: to *improve* and to *involve*. Action research aims at improvement in three areas: first the improvement of *practice*; second the improvement of the *understanding* of the practice by its practitioners; and third, the improvement of the *situation* in which the practice takes place'.

(Carr and Kemmis, 1986. p165¹, original emphasis)

Figure 1: Action Research Cycles
(taken from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk>)



The model in more detail:

- (i) Ongoing support from a team of **regionally based advisers**. Regional Advisers will guide, support and coach practitioners through the planning, data collection, analysis and reporting stages of the research spiral. The practitioner will determine research questions, the methods and the means of carrying out research.
- (ii) **Peer support facilitated by Regional Advisers**. The Regional Adviser will organise and facilitate a regional peer support group to help practitioners refine and finalise their research theme and produce a draft action plan. Practitioners will identify resources, a research question plus method, and a multi-media approach for reporting on learner and organisational outcomes.
- (iii) **Action research blended module**. Designed to support practitioners who have identified an aspect of practice that they wish to investigate and improve, and who wish to design and carry out their own action research project in order to do so. This module will demonstrate key research principles, standards and methods of practitioner-led action research. It will be modelled on the [QCF unit T/503/5380](#), from the level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, and hosted on emCETT's online learning platform, Adobe Connect.
- (iv) **Practitioner E-Guide**. This E-Guide will help practitioners design learner impact measures and present action research outcomes using a multi-media approach (such as a participatory video, poster, podcast or written account).

Overview of the emCETT Blended Learning Action Research Programme

Expert and peer support

Regional Adviser (RA) support

Two days support provided flexibly to each practitioner or group of practitioners

Peer support facilitated by RA

One day peer support through a regional network of practitioners engaged in action research

Up to 63 practitioners applying as individuals or as groups, from SFA funded organisations reflecting the diversity of the sector, and across England, receiving support from the practitioner-led action research programme to design and undertake their own action research projects. Projects will support the practitioner's organisational improvement strategy and the Foundation's commitment to delivering better outcomes for learners in the themes below.

Blended learning support

Action Research E-Learning module

Modelled on a module from the level 5 Diploma in Education and Training (1 day)

Practitioner E-Guide

Reporting on learner impact and presenting action research outcomes using multi-modal approaches

Project themes

We encourage practitioners to identify research ideas within the seven listed themes. Additional ideas that sit outside these themes can be proposed, but we will give priority to these areas first:

- a) Working with employers to develop vocational education and training
- b) Developing learners' English and mathematics abilities
- c) Designing holistic learning programmes
- d) Assessment for learning
- e) Embedding equality and celebrating diversity in education and training
- f) Effective teaching methods; such as active, collaborative learning
- g) Using new technologies and online learning approaches

Application process

To apply please click [here](#).

Completed applications must reach emCETT by **Friday 31 January 2014**. For further information please contact Jo Byrne, joanne.byrne@slcollege.ac.uk (0116 264 3535 ext. 3722)