

## News from Nova Scotia

### Moving Research Bootcamp Online during a Pandemic

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When COVID-19 forced libraries in Atlantic Canada to close in mid-March 2020, Dalhousie Libraries was preparing to host Research Bootcamp, an annual program for graduate students. The typical format for Bootcamp was primarily face-to-face: graduate students gathered to attend in-person sessions covering the various aspects of doing research, from “Writing a Literature Review” to “Creating a Conference Poster” and everything in between. Bootcamp sessions are taught by librarians and other specialists at Dalhousie University, including members of the writing centre.

The closure of the libraries posed a unique challenge for Research Bootcamp. We needed to move the program online, but how? In the past, Bootcamp sessions had been broadcast to other campuses via videoconferencing. Should we shift the confirmed scheduled to Zoom, hosting live, synchronous sessions throughout the spring? Or, should we consider this challenge an opportunity to re-think the program for a new, online environment?

We went with the latter option. As coordinator for Research Bootcamp this year, I was tasked with figuring out how to make this shift successful. From the beginning, I had two priorities. If the program was going to be online, I wanted to make sure it invoked a spirit of exploration and discovery for participants so they would be empowered to fully engage with the content. I also wanted to make sure the program was accessible to as many graduate students as possible. With these priorities in mind, and a spirit of willingness from all Research Bootcamp presenters, we decided to move the program to Brightspace, the learning management system used at Dalhousie.

Next, I adapted the original Bootcamp program so the content was organized around seven thematic units. Within these units, presenters created modules or “learning areas” for their assigned topics (see program below). Modules differed but included content such as video presentations, exercises, and discussion forums. The goal with this structure was to encourage participants to think about the thematic connections between topics as they worked through the different modules. All video presentations were pre-recorded so that participants could access the material on their own time and video scripts were provided to promote accessibility.

In terms of format, I was conscious of not overwhelming participants with too much content at once. For this reason, units and corresponding modules were released on a weekly basis, from late-May to late June. This helped to keep people engaged with the program over the entire month.

We had over 500 participants register for the program and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. What seemed, at first, like a daunting challenge was in fact a valuable opportunity to take a risk and try something new. We're now thinking about other creative ways to support graduate students and their research in the online environment.

## **Research Bootcamp 2020 Program**

### Unit 1: Core Skills 1: Getting Started

Modules:

- The research process
- Getting started with research

### Unit 2: Core Skills 2: The Literature Review

Modules:

- Researching for the literature review
- Writing the literature review (separate modules for Arts/Social Sciences & Sciences)

### Unit 3: Core Skills 3: Citation Management & Copyright

Modules:

- Citation Management
- Copyright & the Curriculum

### Unit 4: Subject Searching

Modules:

- Searching PubMed
- Searching for grey literature
- Humanities resources
- Beyond PubMed
- Legal resources for non-law students
- Finding Canadian data and statistics

### Unit 5: Managing Research Data

Modules:

- Getting started with data management planning
- Easy Excel for beginners

## Unit 6: Research Synthesis Methods

Modules:

- Evidence synthesis
- Exploring the steps of systematic and scoping reviews using Covidence software

## Unit 7: Publishing & Presenting Research

Modules:

- Introduction to conference posters
- Open Access and predatory publishers