

The *on.track* planner

The screenshot displays the 'My On Track Planner' interface. At the top, it says 'Welcome RONEL' with links for 'View Profile', 'Logout', 'How To', 'How To Video', and 'Print'. Below this, there are navigation options: 'Show 6 12 All' and '<< Prev Next >>'. The main area is a calendar grid with months from May 2013 to January 2014. Tasks are listed in colored boxes with status icons (checkmarks, pencils, and red X's). A sidebar on the right lists tasks under 'Steps', 'Workshops', and 'Dates' tabs.

My On Track Planner [View Calendar Settings](#)

May 2013

- Do preliminary literature review ✓ ✎ ✕
- Embarking on a research degree: planning and first steps ✓ ✎ ✕

June 2013

- Wait for proposal feedback ✓ ✎ ✕
- Identify knowledge gap/research problem ✓ ✎ ✕

July 2013

- Protocol development ✓ ✎ ✕
- Create your own skill ✓ ✎ ✕
- Submission date for December graduation ✓ ✎ ✕

August 2013

- Submit thesis for examination ✓ ✎ ✕

September 2013

October 2013

November 2013

December 2013

- Submit thesis for examination 31 Aug ✓ ✎ ✕

January 2014

Steps Workshops Dates

- Create your own step
- Do preliminary literature review
- Decide on a topic
- Identify knowledge gap/research problem
- Identify a supervisor
- Formulate research question/hypothesis
- Do detailed literature review
- Write proposal part 1: Background & research problem
- Write proposal part 2: Literature review
- Develop research design
- Write proposal part 3: Research design/methods
- Draw up research budget
- Draw up project plan for

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Drop-out /not completed

SA doctoral students (2001 – 2005 cohorts)

| | 2001 cohort | 2002 cohort | 2003 cohort | 2004 cohort | 2005 cohort |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Not complete by 2009 | After 8 years 46% | After 7 years 54% | After 6 years 55% | After 5 years 60% | After 4 years 65% |

*Source: Johann Mouton (2013)
African Doctoral Academy
University of Stellenbosch*

Why?



- Barbara Lovitts' (2001)
 - Students do not leave due to a lack of competence or failed admissions processes.
 - no academic differences between completers and non-completers.
- McAlpine (2012)
 - Are students who don't progress simply lacking agency?
 - Not necessarily. Students who made progress also had “enabled personal networks” so that they could “**make the system work for them.**”
 - First generation graduates?
- Hofstee (2006)
 - Problems come in after the structured phase.

on.track features



- Practical and visual
- Structures time
- Creates manageable steps
- Skill development planning
- Positive, efficient supervisor/student interaction
- Allows supervisor to track students' progress

on.track benefits



1. The *on.track* planner as **navigational** tool:

Shows student what to expect of both the research process and the institution.

2. *on.track* planner creates **ownership**:

Project plan with student as project owner.

3. *on.track* planner communicates **expectations**:

Neutral discussion and things you want to tell the student 'up front.' It is not predesigned formula, only the starting point for this discussion. Can be completely customised.

4. *on.track* planner helps students to identify the **value** they would get from the PhD:

Being able to identify the knowledge and skills you are developing or planning to develop, assists motivation and learning, assists in finding employment after completion and ensures realistic expectations before embarking on the degree.

New developments



1. supervisor resource – on.track phase two: can allow document uploads, comments, emails etc.
2. *keep.track* – to identify obstacles and to assist in creating progress reports.

Further information



- Contact Ronel Steyn at ronels@sun.ac.za if you are interested in bringing on.track to your institution
- On a different note:
- New Voices in Science –project
- [Watch the video!](#)
- <http://youtu.be/4GdncEsxYCc>