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Gaining Cognitive Superiority Through Dry-stone Walling – Building Another Type of Doctoral ‘Thesis’ Within a Multinational Organisation

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As part of its focus on harnessing experience and knowledge to support the Alliance’s transformation objectives and cognitive superiority agenda, the Supreme Allied Command Transformation [SACT] of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [NATO] has sought to stimulate change within the organisation by enhancing its research capability through the creation of an in-house programme of research skills leading to a professional doctorate.

In partnership with a commercial training provider and Cardiff Metropolitan University NATO’s professional doctorate programme is run for the benefit of the Organisation NOT solely the individual learner and is about CREATING change not managing change once it has been created. One of NATO’s objectives is to harness cognitive and professional skill development whilst candidates are still in their professional roles and therefore there is a focus on the development of key outputs along the doctoral journey to inform practice whilst the journey is taking place rather than once the journey has finished.

To secure this, a candidate’s ‘thesis’ will model a ‘dry-stone’ wall and be built from a series of carefully selected and crafted outputs created throughout their professional practice and linked together, using a ‘through stone’ of a level 8 narrative to evidence doctoral-level thinking and practice.

This workshop will initially set out the framework under which NATO and its partners developed its concept of a professional doctorate, and detail and exemplify the research skill development phase of this framework. We will then facilitate discussion as to how a series of credible professional outputs can be built into a portfolio-style thesis underpinned by a robust and integrity-maintaining level 8 narrative. We want to draw on attendees’ experiences of similar processes to expand the concepts being considered and add depth to the debate.

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