



#Vitae
Con2022

Community reflections on the Vitae International Researcher Development Conference 2022

Dr Mathew Tata

Engagement and Policy Project Manager, Vitae

Even before COVID-19, the research system was changing.

‘Precarity’ had entered common parlance and careers beyond academia were increasingly less taboo. Considerable evidence had illuminated a lack of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in research, whilst academia had a pandemic of its own in the form of poor mental health amongst researchers. With the acceptance that now researcher development extends far beyond its historical remit of learning and development¹, and into the complex and intersectional world of ‘research culture’, so too has Vitae begun to widen its focus to meet this shift. This evolution was to be crystallised at our annual conference in September 2022.

Colleagues at Vitae faced an interesting challenge whilst developing the format for this year’s conference. Feedback from the previous year’s iteration suggested many had the appetite for moving back into an in-person setting, but the threat that COVID-19 may make a resurgence remained. Additionally, the digital revolution since early 2020 had meant conferences and meetings achieved greater accessibility and inclusion for participants by being hosted online, though ‘Zoom fatigue’ and typically lower quality interactions were recognisable caveats. How might we harness digital benefits without losing out on the value of ‘being in the room’? Ultimately, Vitae opted for both - hosting an online element during 13 - 15 September, and subsequently a one-day networking event covering an afternoon and the following morning (26 - 27 September) in central London.

After five plenary sessions, 18 live workshops or webinars, 16 on-demand contributions, five summary-and-discussion sessions, a Vitae Three Minute Thesis Competition® (all online), and four in-person workshops, we’re left to reflect on another fantastic event that coalesced existing and emerging communities of practice around core themes in researcher development and research culture. In this conference summary, we’ve sought the views and impressions of those presenting or participating at the conference. We asked each person what they had initially aimed to explore across different sessions, such as context-specific and global research policy, as well as best practices for supporting researchers and enhancing the quality of research across the sector. Contributors were then asked to reflect on how these ideas unfolded during the conference, what lessons they aim to take forward to bring impact in their own work, and any unanswered questions for exploring further on in time.

Thank you to everyone who joined Vitae’s first dual-format conference. Both for injecting real optimism into perceptions of the future for researcher development, and for openly showcasing outstanding examples of practice - Dr Neil Jacobs of the UK Reproducibility Network captured this perfectly whilst speaking during the in-person event when stating that “the richness amongst HEIs² work on research culture is striking”. Thank you also to our exhibitors whose support ensures we can keep the conference as engaging and inclusive as possible, year-on-year.

1. [Valuing the Impact of Researcher Developers](#) (Vitae Conference 2021)
2. ‘HEI’, higher education institution



Online sessions

13 - 15 September 2022

Professor David Oswell

Pro-Warden for Research and Enterprise, Goldsmiths, University of London, and Director of Trustees, CRAC³

Plenary chair for

'UK policy perspectives and predictions'

I was proud to open the conference and serve as chair for its first plenary. I understand how important the work of our community is, and working with this community, Vitae has further cemented its place in the landscape and at the heart of the research ecosystem and researcher community in the last 12 months. This includes a survey on the policy and practice of the researcher development sector, a range of member forums to channel the views of those actively supporting researchers' development, and further progress in evolving the iconic Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

Of course, this activity also includes this year's conference. Keeping abreast of the best in research culture is core to what we do and believe in as a charity and Vitae continues to be called on by those wanting to understand what research cultures, practices and policies work well, but also to help expose and make visible areas where we as a community can improve. The Vitae community's broad remit for advancing research culture has been made more manageable through the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat, something that I was delighted to see featuring so prominently in the second plenary later on the opening day.

"... Vitae continues to be called on by those wanting to understand what research cultures, practices and policies work well"

It was my honour, though, to welcome three fantastic speakers in plenary one. To start, David Sweeney, outgoing Executive Chair of Research England, reflected on twenty years since the Roberts Review⁴, which birthed a researcher development revolution in the UK and ultimately led to it being embedded in universities. David noted that cultural issues have changed since, and though researcher assessment has a lot of potential, such as the use of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) to examine institutional research environments, I agreed with his feeling that it can only go so far in driving progress. I was also impressed by his reflection on viewing the research system from an external perspective, in questioning whether we can and should separate research culture issues from polarised societal issues, and also his feeling that when considering research as a career, it's vital to benchmark it against other professions.

3. 'CRAC' is the Careers Research and Advisory Centre Ltd, which manages the non-profit Vitae programme

4. **SET for Success** (2002)

We then passed the floor to Professor Rachael Goberman-Hill, co-chair of the UK Committee on Research Integrity (UK CORI). For those familiar with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, this provided a valuable (re)introduction to the impact of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and to highlight the intersectional value for researcher developers of working in partnership with UK CORI. Rachael described the organisation's mission of promoting high integrity across all research areas through better governance and by singling out adverse systemic pressures. I'm probably not alone in being excited to read UK CORI's report due in mid 2023 which will "bring together a vast portfolio of existing activity around enhancing research integrity" - a resource of likely huge benefit to institutions and funders alike.

On that note, our last speaker was Dr Lesley Alborough, Social Research Specialist at the biomedical research funder, the Wellcome Trust. Lesley spoke of her responsibility for creating an evidence base for innovative and experimental approaches to the delivery of Wellcome's Research Funding Programmes, with the ultimate goal of informing Wellcome's approaches to developing more equitable and inclusive research and research practices. To that end, Lesley was particularly honest about the funder's plans to be anti-racist, and how it's tirelessly looking at how EDI can be championed as part of its role in developing leaders, fostering research careers, and in designing research.

As has been captured by Kate Jones later in this summary, it was indeed brilliant to then join the in-person event in London two weeks' later. The importance of meeting in person and bonding our community was highlighted in Vitae's researcher development survey, where respondents spoke of how much networking had diminished since the start of 2020. The event delivered as intended: providing a space for the community to connect; bringing together diverse perspectives and experiences; showcasing what are we all doing and what is working; and harnessing an atmosphere ripe for collaboration and co-creation.

After an incredible year, marked by another brilliant conference, I think that we can all be immensely proud of our achievements in researcher development, in spite of very trying circumstances, and can look forward to a bright future. A year in which Vitae can further support the sector in championing a more open, responsible, and inclusive research culture and in which researchers' wellbeing and career development can positively thrive.



Online sessions

13 - 15 September 2022

Professor J. Tim Newton

**Professor of Psychology as Applied to Dentistry and
Dean of Research Culture, King's College London**

Plenary speaker for

'Concordat implementation: Successes and systemic issues'

I was invited to talk about Research Culture from my personal perspective and as Dean of Research Culture at King's College London (KCL), to which I was appointed about one year ago, building upon my previous roles in research ethics, governance and integrity. I saw the opportunity to bring together several areas of the research endeavour in a way that could support everyone involved in research to shape knowledge and impact such that is trustworthy, as well as open and transparent in its scope and limitations.

My immediate thoughts were to reflect on how I had been fortunate to be able to achieve my personal goals within the field of academia, and what factors had enabled me in that process. I also reflected on how other members of my family had not been so fortunate, and what had prevented them; in particular, my late sister who didn't go to university. I have spent some time thinking about how her life choices were limited, whilst mine were enabled, and how this specifically was a product of the systems in place at the time. Moving from the personal to reflect on the broader systems of support for academic development, the key message that I wished to convey was one of inclusion - building systems to support individuals to achieve their personal valued goals. I was therefore delighted to see that the theme of inclusion recurred in many sessions and discussions, both formal and informal. Several people mentioned to me that my thoughts on the centrality of inclusion reflected their own views.

The other speakers in my plenary gave fascinating insights into the development of a culture of research within an HEI that had previously focussed primarily on education - the challenges and opportunities afforded by this were fascinating. The third speaker, Hilary Noone of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) discussed the review of the research concordats⁵, which is likely to be hugely influential in thinking about how we improve research conduct, research training and culture.

Finishing the conference, the main thing that struck me as important to reflect on was the variety of approaches being taken to address both research culture and the development of researchers.

5. [Research concordats and agreements review](#) (2022)

There were several initiatives that I felt would be important to consider implementing at KCL; however, the evidence base for choosing between approaches needs to be more fully developed.

“ . . . we need to work in ways that share good practice and promote our shared vision, and the conference succeeded in creating a safe space for these discussions to take place”

The Vitae conference was an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing the many and diverse topics that fall within the scope of research culture and researcher development, and I believe that it has started to open up discussion about the specific relationship between the two. There is a huge amount of complementarity in these two areas: we need to work in ways that share good practice and promote our shared vision, and the conference succeeded in creating a safe space for these discussions to take place.

Researcher development is key to transforming the culture(s) of research. However, I think it is important to understand that the issues are wider than simply developing our future researchers - we need to ensure that the policies, procedures and systems that support research within our institutions reflect the priorities, values, expectations and norms of current and future researchers. This will be challenging for those, like myself, who have spent their career in one system. There is much work to do in managing the transition.

I believe that the key role that Vitae can play in improving the research system is twofold. First, it should continue to act as a safe space for candid discussions in this area. Second, it should act as a representative voice to advocate for change across the sector in order to promote good research and good research culture, including tackling any perverse incentives that support poor research practice. I look forward to joining future opportunities from Vitae in both regards!

Online sessions

13 - 15 September 2022

Dr Julie Reeves

**Researcher Developer and Senior Teaching Fellow,
University of Southampton**

Workshop contributor for
*'Capacity development for research –
taking a strategic and holistic approach'*

I was invited to join Dr Dawn Duke from the Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF), Adrian Fenton from the British Council and Clare Viney, CEO of CRAC-Vitae, to share my experience as the Co-Investigator leading the capacity development work package for a Global Challenges Research Fund project - BRECCIA. The project had focused on food and water security in Africa and was unique in that we were part of a cohort that focused on building research capacity, which suggested a more holistic approach than is usual with research projects.

In the talk, I drew on the BRECCIA experience to illustrate two key ideas. The first was how it is possible to design professional development interventions for a whole team and the whole research life cycle whilst also meeting the needs of a range of individuals within the team, which I did through 'design thinking' and the '70:20:10' model of professional development. This all required a multi-layered approach that provided researchers with a 'mini PI' experience'. Secondly, I wanted to share some of the key learning and challenges we encountered as a research team; I suspected that much of this was common to other international collaborative research projects like ours. I highlighted these with some of the key findings in a report by CRAC in July 2022⁶, as CRAC had undertaken an 'assessment of the difference BRECCIA had made'.

The CRAC report noted the benefits that mutual learning and an inclusive and holistic approach brings, as well as some of the challenges presented by differing institutional processes and systems. The project had also made a difference in terms of benefiting individuals and institutions, and raised the profile of researcher development and management as we hoped, although the longer term impact and sustainability remain uncertain at this stage. Chiefly, I hoped to suggest that researcher developers have opportunities for brokering between departments, disciplines and institutions in the international and interdisciplinary space and that we should think about how we can prevent reinventing the wheel with each new research project. My key take-home message to convey was that we need to be more outward facing in all respects.

6. **Summary report:** Building REsearch Capacity for sustainable water and food security In drylands of Africa (BRECCIA)

“...I'd like to see researcher developers exercise their incredible expertise and move away from delivering 'stuff' to effecting real cultural change”

Throughout the conference, there were presentations, examples and comments that resonated with the topics in my presentation and connected to my experience. For instance, in plenary 3, Linda Lua cited the 70:20:10 model whilst Robin Mellors-Bourne referred to a trend in 'intentional leadership'. In the second plenary, Astrid Wissenburg made a comment in a Q&A on avoiding siloes and siloed thinking, and fellow contributor Saneeya Qureshi shared her example of 10 days' training that was different to the 'mini PI' model in my own presentation - I would have liked to have explored all these examples further. Dawn Duke's talk in our session highlighted the need for institutional buy-in, which is something that BRECCIA as a more typical research project hadn't really considered. So, I would add that to the list of areas where researcher development can add value too.

I was fortunate in being able to attend for the majority of the conference. I really enjoyed hearing about trends in work and skills from Robin - should I be surprised or just disappointed that senior staff do not disclose disability? Or that less than 1% of UK professors are Black/Caribbean as told by Farzana Shain in plenary 4? I found both Tim Newton and Farzana's talks especially moving in these respects.

I also found the work around mental health (ReMO⁷ and Dragonfly Mental Health) inspiring and was intrigued by the small comment about using AI for mental health training - I would love to learn more about that. I will absolutely be following up with both wellbeing and mental health initiatives back in my institution as a result of these discussions. I've also tucked the examples on careers programmes from the brilliant Watch Party session 'up my sleeve' for future reference. Finally, as I am an 'old hand' in researcher development, outgoing chair of Research England David Sweeney's point that the world had changed since the Roberts Review really resonated with me.

Overall, the conference featured an excellent selection and variety of speakers. I appreciated hearing about what is going on in other countries (though more from other sectors would be useful in future conferences too) and also what policy officials have to report on, which is always welcome. Lastly, I really enjoyed the innovations, like the Watch Party and the broadcasted summaries in Kumospace - now that we are getting used to Kumospace, it is actually quite fun!

In the coming year, I'd like to see researcher development helping to shape the national and international agenda as much as possible. This would involve it brokering between disciplines, departments, institutions, governments and even countries, extending out to 'train-the-trainer', and to create collaborative and richer outcomes and interventions for our researchers and sector. I'd like to see researcher developers exercise their incredible expertise and move away from delivering 'stuff' to effecting real cultural change. Brokering, coordinating, leveraging - whatever we call it, is a much under-rated leadership skill (as said by leadership expert Leandro Herrero).

The global sector needs a Vitae to advocate on issues from the grass-roots upwards and I appreciate the practice sharing that Vitae facilitates. So, in that regard, I welcome a future filled with more Vitae roundtables, symposia, and deep-dives with policy makers and global change makers!

7. 'ReMO' is the 'Researcher Mental Health Observatory, a [COST action](#)



Online sessions

13 - 15 September 2022

Dr Catherine Millett

**Senior Research Scientist and Strategic Advisor,
Educational Testing Service (ETS), US**

Conference participant

In joining #VitaeCon2022, my goal was to listen to and learn from colleagues who are working across researcher development. At its heart, I hoped to hear about their success, challenges, and the opportunities they see in the immediate future and in the coming years. For that reason, I appreciated the breadth of the conversations, which ranged from different perspectives on mental health and wellbeing, defining what is 'a research culture', down to innovative approaches to delivering researcher career development.

From a personal perspective, my intention was also to convey that ETS is excited about working with Vitae and CRAC to have the RDF take a more prominent role in US graduate education and in work to develop researchers personally and professionally. Participating in the online and in-person event only strengthened these intentions. The conversations that I participated in highlighted the importance of having champions for researchers, and reinforced my impression that it is central to have our work encompass the personal, professional and career development of researchers. We want to enable excellent research and researchers to flourish in all countries, now and in the future.

I was lucky enough to participate in both the online and in-person programmes, which proved to be very beneficial. While I was not able to participate in the entirety of the online program, for the sessions I joined the speakers were excellent, being transparent and honest, and conveying valuable insights at every opportunity. It was encouraging to have such an engaging range of talks in spite of the usual barriers that come with virtual participation.

During the virtual sessions, I was able to join an interesting variety of sessions that employed different formats or perspectives to keep the conference feeling fresh. The 'Watch Party' on 'Supporting Researcher Career Development', where contributors had pre-recorded their presentations and could then answer questions in the chat as they came in, was a really helpful way to digest a talk, and allowed for deeper presentations from several speakers.

I enjoyed also the Vitae-led session on their recent ‘Toolkits for enhancing managers’ support of early career researchers’ career development and progression’⁸, which gave a good snapshot of the project and their ground work with different stakeholder groups, before moving into breakouts to gather ideas from institutional representatives on how they might use the toolkits locally. Lastly, ‘Researcher development by stealth’ took a sideways glance at the issue of researchers not engaging in their own development to explore how the use of language can influence their decision to take up training and development activities.

Following the online component, I greatly appreciated the group work at the in-person event. This was a rich opportunity to interact and discuss issues with colleagues, and conversations during each breakout covered a lot of ground in a way that the online equivalent does not always match.

“ . . . I particularly appreciated the group work at the in-person session. This was a rich opportunity to interact and discuss issues with colleagues”

The conference also brought out some new ideas or ways of thinking. While it was not a novel concept for me, I appreciated the discussion about ‘I-shaped’, ‘generalists’ and ‘T-shaped’ people, and I started to think about how a good mix of these three types of individual is needed in the workforce. I gained a deeper appreciation of what could perhaps be framed as the global need to consider the mental health and wellbeing of researchers, as well as thinking about the respect and security they may or may not experience as employees. I also valued the focus on DEI⁹ and it was noteworthy that the issues we are working through in the U.S. are also occurring in the UK, particularly Farzana Shain’s work supporting the next generation of black women researchers.

#VitaeCon2022 was outstanding - the programme, the speakers and the participants were all excellent, and the range and mix of activities created an engaging meeting. I appreciated the use of online tools to galvanise participants, as well as the in-person experiences to mix up the meeting format from listening to engaging with colleagues.

Over the next year, I think researcher development has a role to play in a number of issues, and perhaps Vitae is best positioned to address them having attended the conference. First, when ‘push comes to shove’, do leaders want to see change in a system that has benefited them? I’d be interested to see how Vitae can hasten this change. Second, there is evidently an opportunity and possibility of focusing on DEI in the broader research community, as well as the opportunity to shine a spotlight on the need for better mental health and wellbeing for researchers. And third, if one aims to be a thought leader on what is research culture, can we as a sector strike a common understanding or definition of it?

My understanding is that Vitae is already playing an important role with these questions - what will be important in this pursuit is to grow existing relationships and cultivate new ones.

8. [Toolkits to enable managers to support early career researchers](#)

9. ‘DEI’; diversity, equity and inclusion



Online sessions

13 - 15 September 2022

Vani Naik

Researcher Developer, Edinburgh Napier University


Conference participant

This was my second Vitae conference, which I was grateful for being available online (as with the preceding one I attended the year before). This previous experience meant the conference platform and its social networking space Kumospace were familiar to me - I had learnt the hard way from last year to book places at my preferred workshops as I had previously missed out. I also benefitted from spending proper time digesting the programme ahead of the conference and choosing workshops of interest. What made a very welcome addition this year was the summary sessions after the workshops, which meant that when I was unable to choose between workshop sessions, I could relax knowing that all contributions would be summarised at the end of each morning or afternoon. The recordings are of course available online too.

The most compelling session for me personally, 'Researcher development by stealth', was delivered by Dr Dana Magregor, an academic member of staff and not a researcher developer. This in itself reminded me exactly why diversity is so important, as she was able to bring a completely fresh perspective and the immediate impact for me following this session was to rethink what we call our researcher development sessions. I would welcome contributors from outside researcher development at future Vitae conferences to ensure that as researcher developers we ourselves do not become too insular.

I was also struck by the contribution of Dr Linda Lua from the University of Queensland as part of the panel of Plenary 3: Horizon scanning in researcher development. Her description of the University's '70:20:10' model of researcher development (70% on-the-job training, 20% informal conversations and 10% formal training workshops) conveyed instantly the common misconception that formal researcher development programmes account only for courses and classes. The model encourages greater appreciation of experiential learning, which will be a valuable message to continue broadcasting in the future.

Such a model, in my view, speaks to all researchers as they can identify with the parts of development that they do already engage with, and yet highlights the aspects that may be missing. It also made me reflect that the Vitae conference, for me, represents part of my 10% of formal training.



When I do connect with fellow researcher developers and colleagues from other departments, such conversations, which could easily be considered as ‘not part of my job’ and potentially a distraction, are in fact a part of my career development. This #VitaeCon2022 has fostered both new connections with fellow researcher developers, as well as strengthened connections made last year. This presentation of the 70:20:10 model from the University of Queensland is also a reminder that Vitae is *the* International Researcher Development conference - bringing these different international perspectives is really important given the global mobility of researchers.

The conference this year also reminded me of the range of Vitae resources available, such as during the workshop describing ‘Toolkits for enhancing managers’ support of ECRs’ career development and progression’. I really appreciate having a clear list of potential actions from an institutional perspective, and I hope to spend some time over the next year evaluating which of these I can implement locally.

“ . . . I most appreciated the sessions that had strong practical take-home points that can be implemented at my institution without the need for a huge amount of additional resource”

I also really enjoyed the new presentation format of the ‘Watch Party’, where presenters had already recorded their talks, which made the digital chat function much livelier and more engaging (as the recording played back). Presenters were able to answer questions in real time during the presentation and this minor tweak provided a very positive impact and a reminder that amidst the pressure to be creative and innovative, small adjustments can be very effective.

Overall, I greatly enjoyed the online element of the conference and ‘hanging out’ in Kumospace, and hope to attend next year. I most appreciated the sessions that had strong practical take-home points that can be implemented at my institution without the need for a huge amount of additional resource. Following on from select sessions this year, I would also welcome further presentations from researchers themselves in 2023. For example, Dr Cecile Menard’s discussion around long-term researchers brought necessary academic rigour to researcher development, which was gladly received at the conference. I would also welcome sessions by research stakeholders (e.g. funders, councils and representative bodies) that share information on funding calls so that researcher developers can be more directly involved with shaping the landscape on research culture and researcher development.



In-person networking event

26 - 27 September 2022

Dr. Kate Jones

Head of Learning and Development, Vitae

Speaker giving

'Closing remarks'


We said it so often across the two days we met in London it almost became a cliché - it was so good to be back meeting in person for the first time since 2019! I was reminded very quickly that the Vitae community is at its best when gathered around tables, surrounded by post-it notes, pens and flip chart paper; freely imagining a future vision for researcher development.

That vision, framed around the general theme of the four workshops, explored the myriad components of 'research culture'. The first workshop from the University of Strathclyde entitled 'What does a positive research culture look like and how can we measure it?' encouraged attendees to share any and every facet they attributed to a healthy culture. We were subsequently challenged to define key performance indicators that can be employed at institutional- and sectoral-levels to assess progress made towards reaching that positive research culture - an activity that encouraged us to consider the merits of measuring it at all.

I was grateful to see this process revisited by Sophie Morris in the final workshop on day two, with her exploration of a theory of change approach to evaluate the impact of researcher development, something Vitae also champions. Sophie's background in public engagement shone through and emphasised the importance of including diverse perspectives in sustaining the push towards a positive research culture.

The remaining two sessions drilled down into two key pillars of research culture: strategies for recognition and reward and the mental health and wellbeing of researchers. Colleagues from the University of York described their experience piloting two award schemes as part of UKRI-funded work, which they had extended to include professional support staff (PSS) alongside the more traditional beneficiary groups. The hesitant and patchy engagement of PSS with the schemes provided a useful example of how understanding barriers to inclusion remains a critical factor for achieving a positive research culture.

On a different note, presentations from leaders in the COST-funded action 'Researcher Mental Health Observatory' (ReMO) stressed the need for building an evidence base around levels of wellbeing amongst the academic research workforce. Such a pressing concern has understandably drawn a large community of practice into ReMO, with a deep literature database capturing national and international trends in researcher mental health, and a survey on the way.



With the in-person event nearly at an end, I pondered complexity of the term ‘research culture’, which had struck me even before the conference and had been regularly reinforced since. Raymond Williams calls culture ‘[o]ne of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’¹⁰. In my closing talk, I tried to draw attention to the fact that, as a result of its complexity, we are all using the word ‘culture’ differently when we talk about research culture.

An example of this confusion appears on the UKRI website, where the over-arching category “Supporting a healthy research and innovation culture” contains open research, bullying and harassment, research integrity, equality, diversity and inclusion, preventing harm and, notably, research and innovation culture¹¹. Here it appears that culture is containing culture: does this mean cultures at different levels or something else? On closer inspection, the description underneath the “Supporting a healthy R&I culture” heading states that UKRI are working to “foster a dynamic, diverse and inclusive *system* of research and innovation in the UK”¹². This suggests that the overarching category is, in fact, the R&I system rather than the culture, and that the aforementioned elements, including research and innovation culture, are organised beneath this.

“ . . . This work belongs to us all; we are all responsible for, and stand to benefit from, a new conception of positive research culture . . . ”

Depending on one’s perspective, this lack of clarity may or may not matter. On the one hand, the flexibility of culture means that it is a concept under (or into) which we are able to fit a wide range of other concepts, topics and initiatives. On a practical level this means that funding (such as UKRI’s ‘Enhancing Research Culture’ allocations) can be directed towards a variety of different activities, depending on the specific needs of the institutions that receive it.

On the other hand, if stakeholders across R&I are using ‘culture’ to mean different things, and if culture is being used synonymously with ‘system’ or ‘structure’ or ‘ecosystem’ then there is a real danger of speaking at cross-purposes. This lack of clarity about what is or isn’t part of research culture also has potentially negative implications for the process of measuring changes to research culture, and the impact of measures to enhance research culture.

Furthermore, the accommodating nature of the term culture is likely to mean that issues such as the underrepresentation of black researchers in R&I, which are primarily influenced by top-level systems and structures (that result from historic ‘research culture’) will be categorised as being part of research culture. As a result, the important work of achieving structural and systemic change may be diluted and weakened as our attention turns to research culture - that is, changing current behaviours and values - and away from challenging and evolving an outdated, hierarchical and exclusionary conception of research culture that surely needs to be dismantled through the systems and structures it created.

This work belongs to us all; we are all responsible for, and stand to benefit from, a new conception of positive research culture as inclusive not exclusive, collaborative not competitive, and open not impenetrable.

For our part, Vitae will continue to use research and intelligence to unpick structural elements of the research ecosystem and, through Vitae 2025¹³, enhance our engagement with Vitae members and the wider community to gather and share perspectives, experiences, good practice and evidence. We will work collaboratively to (re)define research culture; and through our institutional research culture programme, we will offer a process through which research culture can be examined, understood, and evolved.

10. Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), p.87

11. [Supporting a healthy research and innovation culture - UKRI](#) [accessed 30 September 2022]

12. Ibid. My italics

13. [Vitae 2025](#)

What next?

Take a look at some of our publications and media. Our annual report reflects on the last year, and you're now able to watch back all recordings of online sessions at the conference. You can also look forward to events and activities coming up in the next 12 months, and register your interest for the Vitae international researcher development conference in September 2023.

- Vitae **annual report 2022**
- Watch recordings of online sessions at **#VitaeCon2022**
(These can be found accompanying the description for each session)
- Vitae **annual programme 2022 - 2023**
- Register for the next **annual conference in 2023**

Read some of the news articles reporting on the conference.

- **Research community 'must share responsibility of culture change'**
- **Generation Z has 'higher expectations' of universities**
- **Inclusion should be a 'necessity' for universities**
- **Research assessment 'not a magic wand' for career issues**

Vitae and its membership programme are managed by the **Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited** an independent registered charity. CRAC Registered Charity No 313164.

Published by Vitae ©2022 The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited