

# Vitae Researcher Development Framework

## Briefing for funders of research in higher education

### Overview

**Researchers make an important contribution to the UK economy, both in sustaining our research base and as leaders in the workforce. The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) underpins a major new approach to developing world-class researchers.**

**The framework has been developed by and for researchers working in higher education as an aid to planning, promoting and enhancing professional and career development. It articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages all researchers to realise their potential.**

**The associated Researcher Development Statement, endorsed by the UK HE Funding Bodies, Research Councils UK, Universities UK and other national organisations, provides a policy reference for researcher development strategies. Together with the full, operational framework it supports the implementation of policy related to researchers' professional development in the UK.**

**This is one of a series of briefings developed by Vitae for a range of stakeholders involved in the professional and career development of researchers.**

**For further information about the Researcher Development Framework and other briefings in this series visit: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)**

**“The Researcher Development Statement offers a valuable framework of knowledge and skills that research staff will need to meet a variety of career challenges. It assists institutions in their implementation of the principles of the Concordat and will help them continue to develop their research staff at all levels.”**

**Professor Sir Ivor Crewe, Chair,  
Concordat Strategy Group**

The Researcher Development Statement and the more detailed Researcher Development Framework, enable researchers to articulate their skills and take a proactive approach to their professional development. The Researcher Development Statement replaces the Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement (2001) as the UK framework underpinning professional development for researchers at all levels.

### The Vitae Researcher Development Statement can be used:

- as the basis for researcher development in support of UK goals to maintain global competitiveness and produce world-class researchers
- to inform strategies for the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education for research degree programmes
- to build a strategic and operational framework of development opportunities for researchers, extending the legacy of the Joint Skills Statement to all researchers.

The Research Councils UK Statement of Expectations recommends that research organisations fully embed researcher development into normal processes within the research and training environment, to ensure that the quality of skills provision and the employability of researchers are maintained and improved. More generally, research organisations are also being asked to give good account of their researcher development policy and practice, which can be communicated using the Researcher Development Framework.

The Researcher Development Framework supports the aims of funders of research by:

- enhancing the development of world-class researchers
- contributing to the development of highly talented researchers and individuals to enhance and strengthen the UK workforce
- providing an internationally leading framework for the career development of researchers
- ensuring that research staff and postgraduate researchers develop research, professional and career development skills that enhance their employability for a wide range of careers
- enabling researchers to take ownership of their continuous professional development.

# Background

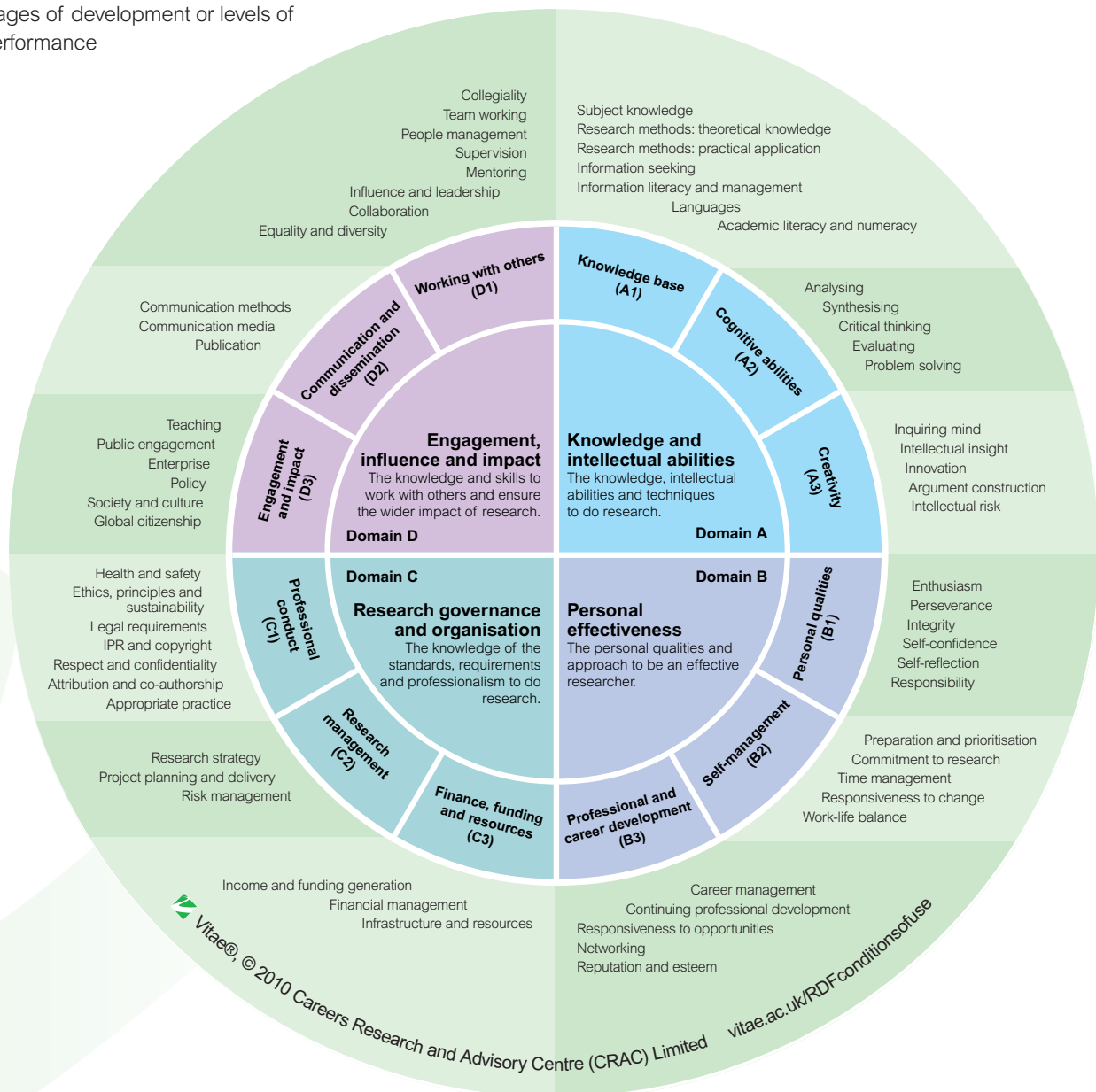
The Vitae Researcher Development Framework and Researcher Development Statement underpin policies for supporting the professional and career development of researchers. Institution-wide implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education for research degree programmes and the Roberts recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff are enhanced and strengthened by use of the Researcher Development Framework and Statement.

# Structure

- The Researcher Development Framework and Statement were created through interviews with researchers and empirical data, leading to the identification of the characteristics of excellent researchers
- Characteristics, expressed in the framework as 'descriptors', are structured into four domains and twelve sub-domains, encompassing the knowledge, intellectual abilities, techniques and professional standards to do research, as well as the personal qualities, knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research
- Three to five phases for each descriptor present stages of development or levels of performance

# Who is the Researcher Development Framework for?

- Researchers – to evaluate and plan their professional development
- Principal investigators and supervisors of researchers – in their role supporting the development of researchers
- Researcher developers, trainers, human resources specialists, careers advisors, senior managers and others – in planning and providing support to researchers
- Policy makers, funders and other organisations – to inform and reinforce policy and strategy relating to researchers
- Employers – to provide insight into the unique blend of researchers' skills and to enable exploration of researchers' potential benefits to the company as employees



## Funders say:

“ We are delighted to endorse the Researcher Development Statement. It is vital that we continue to support the career development of researchers to ensure that the impact they have on the economic and social wellbeing of the UK is truly felt. RCUK encourages research organisations to use the new Researcher Development Statement to underpin their professional development programmes for students.”

Professor Rick Rylance,  
RCUK Champion for Research Careers Lancaster University

Research Councils UK have fully endorsed the Researcher Development Statement

In their Statement of Expectation, the **Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)** refer to the Researcher Development Statement. Researchers are expected

“ to develop the higher-level capabilities as outlined in the Researcher Development Statement ”

“ HEFCE recognises the importance of developing researchers and endorses the Researcher Development Statement as an enabling framework for both the QAA Code of Practice and the Concordat.”

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

## Stakeholders say:

“ The Researcher Development Statement offers a valuable framework of knowledge and skills that research staff will need to meet a variety of career challenges. It assists institutions in their implementation of the principles of the Concordat and will help them continue to develop their research staff at all levels.”

Professor Sir Ivor Crewe, Chair, Concordat Strategy Group

“ The Vitae Researcher Development Framework provides a valuable mechanism to increase institutions’ capabilities to develop world-class researchers. It provides a strong basis for the delivery of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the QAA Code of Practice for research degree programmes.”

Professor April McMahon, Vice-Chancellor and Chair, External Advisory Group, Researcher Development Framework

“ The Researcher Development Framework provides a fantastic way for research staff to consider their professional and career development alongside other performance criteria. Individual research staff will find using the framework to review strengths and priorities really useful as preparation for conversations about career opportunities.”

Guy Gregory, HR Director, University of Bristol,  
Universities Human Resources (UHR)

## The on-line Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner

[www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)

The **Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)** acknowledge the Researcher Development Statement in their Doctoral Training Partnerships:

“ BBSRC also supports the development by Vitae of the ‘Researcher Development Statement’, which outlines the areas of professional development that research organisations should be addressing in their training programmes.”

“ The Researcher Development Framework provides researchers with a tool to use to help identify their transferable skills, strengths and capabilities and how to develop them. All of which are relevant to a range of careers and extremely valued by employers.”

Jackie Wilbraham, R&D Science Policy Director, AstraZeneca

“ The UKRSA promotes the RDF Professional Development Planner as a useful tool to help focus researchers on their career development. UKRSA encourages local research staff associations in organising sessions for researchers to share their own experiences using the Professional Development Planner. It provides an excellent basis for identifying shared needs for careers and professional development whilst providing the basis for seeking additional support.”

The UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA)

“ The Researcher Development Framework provides an excellent resource both for managing my own career development and for helping my staff identify particular training needs at key points in their research careers.”

Patrick Hadoke, Tenure-tracked Senior Academic Fellow in Pharmacology, University of Edinburgh

“ I would like to achieve a readership within two years. My attitude towards target setting and using a five year plan to guide my progress and create opportunities consistent with my career development goals has helped me reach my current phase.”

Sandra Hiett, Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader in Art and Design, Faculty of Education, Community and Leisure, Liverpool John Moores University

# Practical actions for funders of research in higher education institutions:

- Use the Researcher Development Framework to define training and development requirements of funded researchers
- Reflect the importance of the Researcher Development Framework for professional researcher development through linking it to policy, priorities and practice
- Reinforce the value of researchers engaging in personal, professional and career development
- Recommend the Researcher Development Framework as a basis to support the continuing professional development (CPD) of researchers

## Useful links

### For the Researcher Development Framework

- Researcher Development Framework: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)
- Researcher Development Framework researcher profiles: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfprofiles](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfprofiles)
- Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)
- Contact: [rdf@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:rdf@vitae.ac.uk)

### Other resources

- Vitae website: [www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice)
- Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: [www.researchconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk)
- Vitae stakeholder briefings on the Concordat: [www.vitae.ac.uk/concordat](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/concordat)

## Conditions of use

The Researcher Development Framework was produced by Vitae in conjunction with colleagues from the UK higher education sector. Conditions of use, including requirements for acknowledgement, can be found at: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconditionsofuse](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconditionsofuse).

## About Vitae

Vitae is the UK organisation championing the professional and career development of postgraduate researchers and research staff in UK higher education institutions and research institutes. We play a major role in the drive for high-level skills and innovation and in meeting the UK's goal to produce world-class researchers.

Vitae works with institutions to embed professional and career development for researchers into the research environment. It plays a leading role in innovating, sharing practice and enhancing the capability of the higher education sector to provide support for researchers in this area.

For further information about Vitae visit: [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

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