

Vitae Researcher Development Framework

Briefing for principal investigators and supervisors

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

“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

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.

Using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) enables your researchers to articulate their skills and take a pro-active approach to their professional development. You can use the Researcher Development Framework to develop your researchers and optimise their performance. Together, you can decide on priorities for professional development and consider the skills and experiences that will enhance the career prospects and research contributions of individuals within your team.

You can use the Researcher Development Framework to enable you to:

- manage your researchers effectively to achieve research excellence
- explore your researchers' strengths and areas for development (in review meetings or appraisals)
- signpost to your researchers relevant development and career opportunities
- plan professional or career development for your research groups
- plan your own professional development

The Researcher Development Framework has been incorporated into a downloadable Professional Development Planner to enable researchers to identify the areas they should focus on, create an action plan and form a basis for career conversations. www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner

By encouraging your researchers to engage with the Researcher Development Framework, you are helping to align your institutions' strategy with relevant UK policies such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the UK Quality Code for Higher Education for research degree programmes, and to fulfill the intentions of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers that managers of researchers will 'actively encourage researchers to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity, so far as is possible within the project' (Principle 3, paragraph 9).

Background

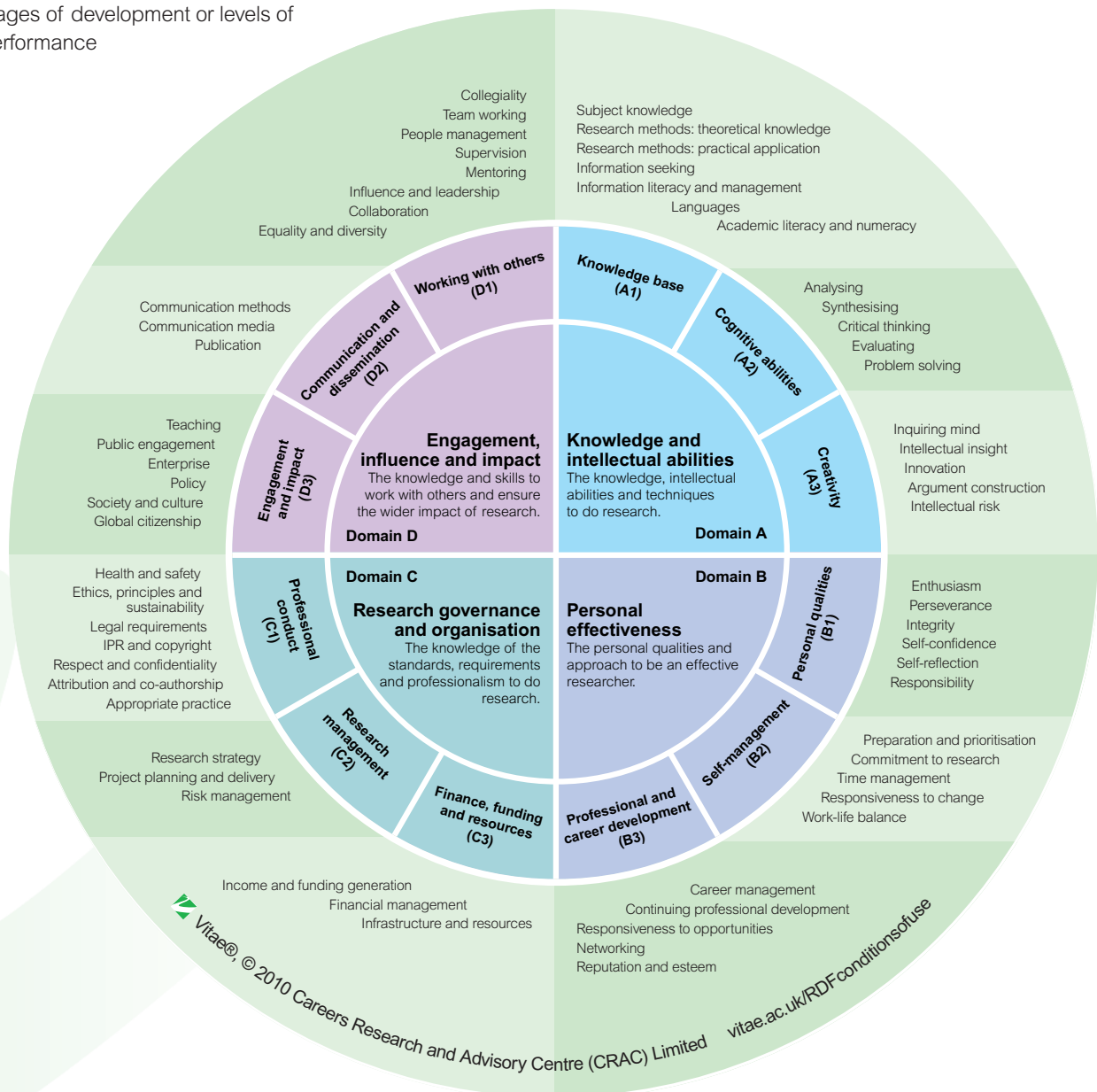
The Vitae Researcher Development Framework and Researcher Development Statement underpin policies for supporting the professional and career development of researchers. Institution-wide implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 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



Principal investigators and supervisors say:

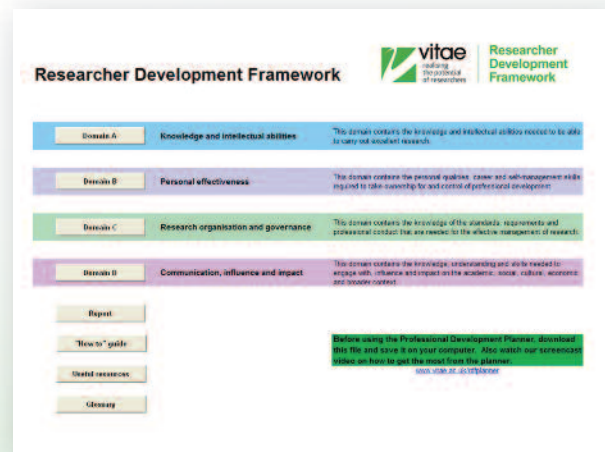
“ I have found the Researcher Development Framework to be a fantastic tool to help my researchers identify areas of their work to focus on. It is a great way of identifying where strengths lie and where more work needs to be done. It also encourages them to think more broadly and creatively about their skills base and what the opportunities are for personal development in the PhD and research process”

Dr Will Medd, Lecturer in Human Geography, Lancaster University

“ Vitae’s Researcher Development Framework has given me an opportunity to support the career and professional development of my research staff and postgraduate researchers. It is a useful tool to identify key strengths and weaknesses, understanding their skill development needs and prioritising their responsibilities. An excellent resource to facilitate researchers’ professional development.”

Dr. Sophia N. Karagiannis, NIHR/BRC Senior Research Fellow, St. John’s Institute of Dermatology, King’s College London

The on-line Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner



www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner

Stakeholders 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 encourage 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

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 ”

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 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 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 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 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

Practical actions for principal investigators and supervisors

Working with individual researchers:

- Empower your researchers by encouraging them to complete the Researcher Development Framework and discuss with you their action plan for professional development. Use the online Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner: www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner
- Improve the self-awareness of your researchers through constructive discussions about their strengths and weaknesses
- Encourage your researchers to identify formal and informal opportunities for professional development within and outside the research environment
- Signpost your researchers to relevant development opportunities
- Use the Researcher Development Framework as a basis for review meetings or appraisals
- Talk to your researchers about possible career paths based on their strengths

Managing a team:

- Discuss the Researcher Development Framework in your next team meeting and explore how it may help the development of your researchers
- Consider whether your team's strengths encompass all aspects of the Researcher Development Framework and how you might develop your team
- Identify any collective team training and development needs using the Researcher Development Framework

For you:

- Plan the next steps in your own professional development
- Talk to your head of department/school/faculty about the Researcher Development Framework and how you have used it with your researchers
- Use the Researcher Development Framework to assess your own strengths and areas for development as a researcher
- Highlight your use of the Researcher Development Framework to demonstrate your effectiveness as a manager of researchers
- Use the researcher Development Framework to give a good account of researcher development policy and practice in your research environment

Useful links

For the Researcher Development Framework

- Researcher Development Framework: www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf
- Researcher Development Framework researcher profiles: www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfprofiles
- Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner: www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner
- Contact: rdf@vitae.ac.uk

Other Vitae resources

- General advice and information for principal investigators: www.vitae.ac.uk/pi
- Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS): www.vitae.ac.uk/pirls
- Research staff blog: www.vitae.ac.uk/rsblog
- The researcher booklets: www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets
- 'What do researchers do?': www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd
- Researcher career profiles: www.vitae.ac.uk/careerprofiles

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.

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

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