



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

News update

September 2008

Vitae is a national organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of researchers. Our vision is for the UK to be world class in supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers. With a renewed five-year commitment by the Research Councils to Vitae, we have an opportunity to create real and lasting positive change in the development of our postgraduate researchers and research staff. The launch of the new Concordat and a clear drive by Government for high level skills, research and innovation provide key policy drivers. Vitae will provide practical ways for colleagues to engage with, and contribute to this agenda.

Vitae was formally launched in June, and since then we have been further developing our activities. As we are managing a transition to a fully operating programme, this newsletter is to update staff working with researchers in higher education institutions about recent developments. As we build on the previous work of the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD, we aim to balance our work for doctoral researchers and for research staff.

For those of you who have been involved in either the UK GRAD Programme or UKHERD over the last few years, you will notice a change in emphasis in Vitae's activities. We will continue to work with all stakeholders, but we will increase our focus on research, evidence, innovation and pilot projects.

An outline of latest activities and resources for those supporting the development of postgraduate researchers and research staff is provided in this news update.



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Supporting postgraduate researchers

2020 vision – the changing UK doctorate

Vitae is co-sponsor of the HE Academy event '2020 vision – the changing UK doctorate' on 24 November and hosted by the British Library. The aims of the event are to review:

- the global standing, positioning and reputation of the UK doctorate
- the ways in which the doctorate makes an impact, economically, socially and culturally
- the ways in which the UK doctorate, and the doctoral student experience, are evolving in response to changing expectations, opportunities, challenges and requirements.



Speakers include Mary-Louise Kearney, Director, the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge and the Rt Hon Bill Rammell MP, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education.

The outcomes of the event are expected to help inform and shape the policy dialogue about the UK doctorate. For more information www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/policy/doctorate

Resources

Vitae website

The Vitae website has a dedicated section for postgraduate researchers. It is a 'one stop' resource for information and advice on a broad range of doctoral issues, including:

- **managing research projects**
www.vitae.ac.uk/pgresearch
- **managing yourself**
www.vitae.ac.uk/pgmanage
- **personal development**
www.vitae.ac.uk/pgdevelop
- **raising personal profile**
www.vitae.ac.uk/pgprofile
- **supervision and key relationships**
www.vitae.ac.uk/pgsupervision
- **careers**
www.vitae.ac.uk/careers

www.vitae.ac.uk/pg

Careers in Focus events

Vitae continues to run a small programme of national events. One-day Careers in Focus events offer postgraduate researchers insights into specific career sectors. Through working with employers, doctoral researchers have a chance to explore the skills and competencies that employers are looking for, find out what it's really like to work in a particular sector and how to make a successful application. Our 2008 programme includes careers in academia and investment banking and we are currently working with employer contacts to develop a careers in pharmaceuticals event.

“...a really useful insight to the academic career path. A worthwhile day!”

www.vitae.ac.uk/cif

How to be an effective researcher for postgraduate researchers

A finalist in the 2007 Times Higher Education Awards the 'How to be an effective researcher' programme for postgraduate researchers is a two-day, non-residential workshop aimed at those who are three to twelve months into their doctoral studies.

Written and developed by Dr Sara Shinton and Janet Wilkinson, piloted at the University of Edinburgh and funded by the UK GRAD Programme in 2005, the programme has since attracted significant interest from a number of institutions. More than 1000 postgraduate researchers have now attended a course.

This developmental training opportunity focuses on building understanding, skills and confidence in communication, planning, time management, problem solving, leadership and assertiveness. Learning and working styles are explored in the following areas:

- PhD project planning and time management
- working effectively with others in the research environment
- collaboration and negotiating
- culture within research groups, institutions and countries.

The programme is supported and made available through Vitae and available for free use by the UK higher education sector.

For further details about the programme, and to discuss opportunities to run this programme, please contact jonathan.roberts@vitae.ac.uk

www.vitae.ac.uk/effectiveresearcher

“ I was sceptical but had no reason to be, this course is excellent. It actually gives PhD students the skills they need and the help to change certain aspects of their project – leaves them feeling in charge and in control ”

Publications for postgraduate researchers

Vitae has several publications specifically for postgraduate researchers:

GRADBritain

GRADBritain is an online magazine, by and for postgraduate researchers. It is published once per academic term (three times per year) and contains articles written by PGRs of all ages and backgrounds from a variety of disciplines in the sciences, arts and humanities. GRADBritain provides a platform for PGRs throughout the country to share experiences, advice, and ask questions in order to improve the experience of their doctorate. www.vitae.ac.uk/gradbritain

PGR Tips

PGR Tips is a monthly email service for postgraduate researcher subscribers. The monthly update includes tips on diverse subjects that are related to being a successful doctoral researcher. Recent issues have covered maintaining a healthy work-life balance, building a support network and preparation for viva.

www.vitae.ac.uk/pgrtips

PhD planner

Through our Hub networks, Vitae annually distribute the 'Planning a doctorate – schedule for success' wall planners as part of our support for first-year postgraduate researchers at their induction. The planners include tips on how to successfully plan and complete their doctorate.

www.vitae.ac.uk/planner

Handy tips on completing a doctorate

Vitae produce handy fold out cards with practical information on the crucial last stages of completing a doctorate. These contain advice on thesis writing, preparing for and undertaking a viva and planning a postdoctoral career. The new revised version of these cards will be available in October 2008.

GRADschools

Vitae continues to offer a small programme of national GRADschools, five in 2008 and four in 2009. GRADschools are experiential learning courses designed to develop postgraduate researchers personal effectiveness and to empower them to take ownership of their learning and careers. We also provide support and resources to institutions to develop and manage local GRADschools, some of which are run in collaboration with other local HEIs.

For a full list of GRADschools, please see www.vitae.ac.uk/events.

If you are interested in finding out more about running your own GRADschool contact Peri Cihan (peri.cihan@vitae.ac.uk).



Supporting research staff

Supporting part-time researchers



The Vitae Midlands Hub has developed an inter-institutional project designed to investigate the experience of part-time researchers and deliver a unique training package specifically for that group.

Findings suggest that many part-time researchers are isolated and do not feel a part of the research community in which they operate. This lack of academic enculturation presents a considerable barrier to part-time researchers completing their doctorates and entering an academic career.

As part of the project the Midlands Hub Part-Time Researcher Project developed a series of workshops, geographically spread across the region which any part-time researcher from any participating university could attend. The workshops aimed to give part-timers the time and space to share their experiences and develop their understanding of the academic environment and process of research. The project combined the delivery of this series of workshops with a research project that investigated the needs of part-time researchers.

The project will go on to produce a series of recommendations for HEIs and a toolkit for training professionals charged with supporting part-time researchers based on the project's workshops.

The part-time researcher course resources will be available to UK HEIs. Institutions that are interested in finding out more about resources in 2008/2009 should contact Jonathan Roberts at Vitae on jonathan.roberts@vitae.ac.uk

Resources

Vitae website

The Vitae website has a dedicated section for research staff. It is a 'one stop' resource for advice on a broad range of topics, encouraging researchers to develop awareness and skills in:

- research methods
- applying for funding
- presenting research
- ethics
- intellectual property
- publishing
- establishing networks
- public engagement
- working collaboratively with others
- self-reflection
- career planning

This section of the website is in addition to the general researchers' careers section, which covers aspects such as teaching, administration and supervision. It also outlines some of the mechanisms in place to help researchers reflect on and plan their development, such as probation, professional development reviews and mentoring.

www.vitae.ac.uk/researchstaff

Broadening Horizons: 'Shedding light on pathways for researchers'

Broadening Horizons: 'shedding light on pathways for researchers', is an intensive two-day programme. It explores career pathways for early career researchers, with the aim of enabling them to gain a clearer self-orientation of where they are within their career and what next steps to take.

The programme is a collaborative project between Vitae and CRAC: The Career Development Organisation, and has been successfully piloted at the University of Oxford and the University of Warwick.



The programme uses a variety of group-based activities that provide opportunities to work with fellow researchers and facilitators from across a variety of disciplines. During the two-day programme, participants explore their personal career motivations, challenge their career assumptions, are encouraged to widen their career horizons and consider how to make the next step within their career.

For further details about the programme, and to discuss opportunities to run Broadening Horizons: 'shedding light on pathways for researchers', please contact jonathan.roberts@vitae.ac.uk

“ (Broadening Horizons was) open, honest, supportive and interactive...
I identified what I want from my career and figured out how I get there!”

Participant 2007

How to be an effective researcher for research staff

Building on the success of the 'How to be an effective researcher' programme for postgraduate researchers, this two-day, non-residential programme was developed to support researchers moving into a research manager position.

Through a series of experiential learning activities, participants explore the practical skills required for successful project management and the development of intellectual independence.

The programme has been designed to integrate self-awareness and learning across a number of key areas which include:

- project management – for participants' own projects, and in assisting others with their projects
- people management – managing others and being managed
- prioritisation of competing tasks and managing complex, diverse workloads
- orientation within a longer-term career.

The programme was developed by Education-Training Ltd and Shinton Consulting Ltd, run in partnership with the Midlands Hub and part-funded by the UK GRAD Programme. Following a series of successful pilot events, the programme will be available for free use to the UK higher education sector from the end of September 2008.

For further details about the programme, and to discuss opportunities to run this programme, please contact jonathan.roberts@vitae.ac.uk

“ (Effective researcher) made me value the skills I have as a researcher and made me want to develop them further ”

Participant 2008



Careers in research online survey (CROS)

Vitae is working with an extended CROS steering group to revise CROS, the research staff survey tool in light of the launch of the new Concordat to support Career Development of Researchers. A revised draft survey will be available for comment during September and October. A small trial will take place in November, with the finalised survey available to the sector in January 2009. Sign up to the CROS-INST JISC list to be kept informed of progress www.jiscmail.ac.uk.

2008 Concordat

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers sets out the responsibilities of researchers, their managers, employers and funders.

It aims to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK and to improve the quantity, quality and impact of research for the benefit of UK society and the economy. The concordat website has further information, including information on a national implementation process (www.researchconcordat.ac.uk).

Vitae will be central to implementing the Concordat because we champion the personal, professional and career development of researchers in the UK. Vitae will enable debate and opportunities to share knowledge, ideas and information to influence policy and practice.

Vitae is developing a series of publications aiming to share practical approaches to implementing the Concordat for our various stakeholder groups. These will be made available online or through your regional Hub in the Autumn.

One of Vitae's key aims is to build an evidence base to support the researcher development agenda. We will be working with the Concordat Strategy Group, our HE networks and other stakeholders to review progress in implementing the Concordat and to input to the benchmarking study specified in Principle Seven.

Supporting researcher development

Rugby Team activities

Prof Ella Ritchie, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, University of Newcastle has been appointed as the new chair for the Rugby Team and oversees the terms of reference for the sector led working group for the next five years (2008 – 2012).

The Rugby Team is a sector-led working group proposing ways to evaluate the effectiveness of researchers' skills development. It will work closely with Vitae to support evidence-building activities relating to researcher development. Projects for 2008 include supporting institutions interested in reviewing and implementing aspects of the Impact Framework, in a joint project with Vitae, developing a framework of competencies and attributes of researchers and progressing the framework for researcher career profiles.

STARSS, the survey tool designed to gather supervisors' views on the skills agenda, developed by the Rugby Team 2007, is now available free to BOS licence holders (www.survey.bristol.ac.uk).

A full update on the Rugby Team is available at www.vitae.ac.uk/rugbyteam.

Regional Hubs: It's all about the networks...

The regional Hubs will continue to support local networks and have expanded their activities to include research staff as well as postgraduate issues. The Hub Steering Groups have been re-worked to include representation from staff supporting research staff. The Hubs provide:

- **Events:** ranging from region-wide events to collaborative and smaller meetings, Vitae Hubs are making opportunities to share practice and ideas. Filter the events listing on the Vitae website for events local to you. Forthcoming free Hub events include regional good practice workshops, some with either a research staff or postgraduate focus
- **News:** regular newsletters and other bulletins keep Hub networks informed on issues and opportunities related to researcher development. Sign up now to receive the autumn newsletter and read previous copies online
- **Resources:** your Hub is your link to Vitae resources available or under development nationally as well as a source of information on what's going on locally.
- **Have your say:** the Hubs also provide links and ways of engaging in national policy development. Get in touch with your Hub manager if you want to input your views.

To get involved and find out more about any of the above, get in touch with your local Hub Manager www.vitae.ac.uk/hubs.

Resources

Vitae website



researcher careers section

The Vitae website contains extensive materials and advice on careers. There is a dedicated section for researchers (both postgraduate researchers and research staff) which explores the concept of career as well as opportunities outside HE and research, working overseas and how to market yourself effectively to employers.

www.vitae.ac.uk/careers



for staff supporting researchers

For developers, trainers and careers professionals the 'policy and practice' section of the Vitae website provides a wealth of useful resources. These include a digest of recent policy developments, access to relevant publications, research such as What Do PhDs Do? and a growing resources section featuring learning resources, examples of practice from HEIs and a database of trainers.

www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice



overVIEW: A newsletter for supervisors and managers of research

overVIEW is a regular Vitae publication aimed at supervisors and research managers. Published twice a year it provides news, policy updates and insights into good practice. overVIEW actively seeks contributions, so if you've got an idea for an article that would be of interest to supervisors and research managers, please get in touch.

Recent issues of overVIEW have featured articles on the trends in employment of PhD graduates, the UK response to the Bologna process, the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey (PRES) and the Researchers in Residence scheme. The next issue due in autumn 2008 will be the first to introduce research staff issues and will accordingly have a new look and feel.

To see previous issues of overVIEW visit www.vitae.ac.uk/1389/Supervisors-Managers.html. To submit an article to the editor, email overview@vitae.ac.uk.

Vitae is in the process of recruiting an advisory board for overVIEW. If you are interested in becoming part of the advisory board contact Vitae at overview@vitae.ac.uk

The balanced researcher

'The balanced researcher' publication helps researchers tackle and juggle the many demands of undertaking research. It offers strategies for achieving work-life balance and how to be more effective in work. The resource is a useful addition for those who provide training and development for researchers. Copies can be downloaded from the website www.vitae.ac.uk or hard copies can be ordered by emailing us at orders@vitae.ac.uk.



'Supporting the development of researchers: workshops for support staff'

In 2006/07, as part of the UK GRAD Programme, we developed and piloted a series of workshops specifically for staff supporting the development of researchers.

The workshops were designed to complement activities already offered through the Hub network, good practice events, Vitae conference, Roberts Policy Forum and access to online resources, and were offered on a regional basis via the Hubs.

The workshops were well received, and as part of our 2008/09 activity we are proposing to offer them again either on a regional or national basis. The workshops are aimed at a variety of stakeholder groups within the context of staff supporting researchers:

- **Staff new to developing researchers** – anyone new to working in the research/development environment
- **Staff involved in researcher development** – anyone responsible for the design, implementation and delivery of a whole programme of development or individual trainers

“Excellent thought-provoking stuff!”
Participant 2007

- **Co-ordinators/administrators** – anyone responsible for managing, co-ordinating or administrating researcher development activities
- **Careers advisors** – careers advisors working with researchers
- **Supervisors** – supervisors with an interest in their own development and those of their researchers.

Look out for further information on workshop topics like:

- So you're new to developing postgraduate researchers?
- So you're new to developing postdoctoral researchers?
- Engaging research staff
- Preparing for academic practice
- Facilitation skills
- Designing effective development programmes for researchers

The one-day workshops are highly participative. Vitae is committed to enhancing the capability of the higher education sector to provide world-class professional development and training for researchers. We see a key role in supporting training and development professionals in realising this vision.

Diary of events 2008:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 8-9 September | Vitae Researcher Development Conference |
| 8-10 September | Local GRADschool (non-residential), Oxford Brookes University |
| 16-18 September | Local GRADschool (non-residential), University of Oxford |
| 23 September | Careers in Focus: Investment Banking event, London |
| 6 October | Careers in Focus: Academia event, Manchester |
| 15 October | South West and Wales Hub, Focus on... evaluation (Practitioners' event) Cardiff University |
| 20-22 October | Local GRADschool (residential), Bangor University |
| 20-24 October | Local GRADschool (residential), University of Warwick |
| 23 October | East of England Hub, Good Practice event (focus on policy) |
| 28 October-1 November | 2 National GRADschool, Bournemouth |
| 6 November | South East Hub, Good Practice workshop, Sharing practice on accredited skills training, University of Portsmouth |
| 7-9 November | Local GRADschool (residential), UCL |
| 18-22 November | National GRADschool, Ambleside |
| 20 November | Midlands Hub, Good Practice event, University of Birmingham |
| 24 November | '2020 vision – the changing UK doctorate' HE Academy event co-supported by Vitae and hosted by the British Library, London |
| 4 December | East of England Hub, Regional Poster event |
| 10 December | Yorkshire and North East Hub, Good Practice workshop |
| 12 December | South West and Wales Hub, Effective Researcher for Research Staff, Taster Day for staff supporting research staff |
| 16 December | South East Hub, Good Practice workshop, Managing Research Degree Programmes at the Departmental level, Canterbury Christchurch |
| 16 December | South West and Wales Hub, Focus on... enterprise (Practitioners' event), Bristol University |

Looking into the New Year 2009:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 7-8 January 09 | Roberts' Policy Forum, Manchester |
| 27 February 09 | South West and Wales Hub, Annual Good Practice Conference, Bristol Zoo |
| 8-9 September 09 | Vitae Researcher Development Conference, University of Warwick |



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

As 2008 progresses, you will notice further developments in Vitae's activities. Full functionality, including the database of practice (www.vitae.ac.uk/dop) will become available on the Vitae site. Discussion modules and comment facilities will enable you engage in conversations and communities of practice; sharing ideas, thoughts and resources.

We will be launching our innovation unit later this year, which aims to catalyse innovations in researcher careers and skills development. In the spring 2009 the next in our 'What Do PhDs Do?' research series will be available.

Vitae will also be working closely with the Concordat Strategy Group to support the implementation of the Concordat. Look out for news, briefing documents and opportunities to share practice and approaches.

The regional Hubs remain a key way for you to engage with local contacts. Do keep in touch with your local Hub and sign up for regular newsletters.

The next Vitae conference will take place on 8-9 September 2009 at the University of Warwick. Our annual Roberts' Policy Forum will take place on 7-8 January 2009 in Manchester.

If you are interested in working as part of the Vitae team, do get in touch with **francesca.fallon@crac.org.uk**; we will be recruiting for additional members of staff during the Autumn.

We look forward to working with you; we welcome any ideas, feedback or thoughts about current or future activities.

For further information on upcoming events, check events calendar at

www.vitae.ac.uk/events