

## Vitae South West and Wales Hub

Welcome to the first edition of the Vitae SWW Hub Newsletter. Vitae, the new organisation to champion the professional and career development of researchers, builds on previous work by the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD. Vitae is funded by Research Councils UK (RCUK) and managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation.

Previous readers of the SWW Hub Newsletter will notice that to reflect the wider remit of Vitae, we now have news items of interest to those supporting research staff (RS) as well as news relating to postgraduate researchers (PGRs) - the aim of the Newsletter is to keep you up to date with matters relating to those you support. If you are new to Vitae, we hope you will find the Newsletter useful. As always, we would welcome any contributions or comments. The next Newsletter will be published in the Autumn. We look forward to hearing from you.

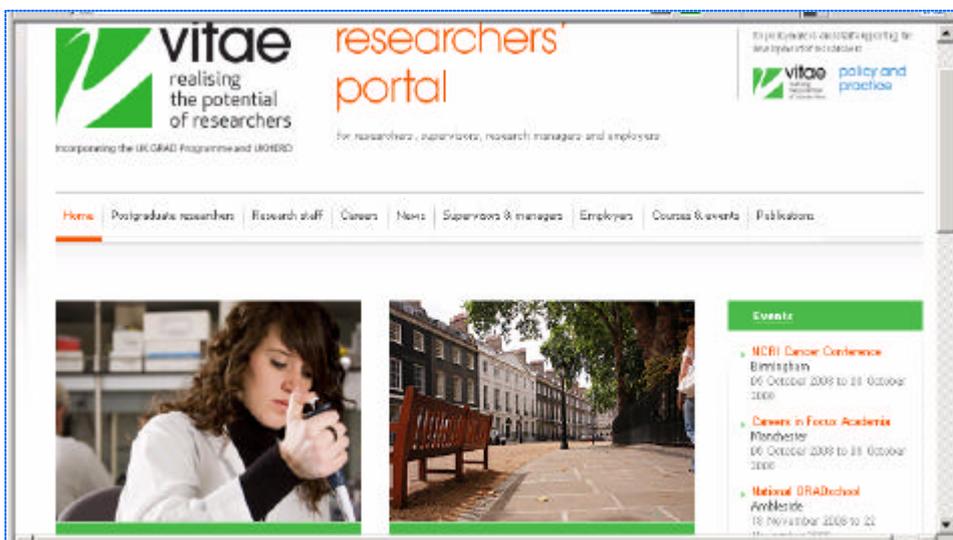
**Anne Goodman**, Vitae SWW Hub Manager  
[swwhub@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:swwhub@vitae.ac.uk)

## Vitae and Concordat Launch

Vitae was launched on 25 June by Ian Pearson MP alongside the new Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers. (See page 4 for more details.)

For more information about the Vitae programme, take a look at the new website at [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk).

The website has a Researchers' Portal, for researchers, supervisors, research managers and employers and a Policy and Practice area for policy makers and staff supporting the development of researchers. More details inside.



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## Hub News & Events

### Structures to support the Hub

As a result of the new Vitae programme the Hub, in consultation with HEIs in the Region, has a new structure to ensure the wider remit of Vitae is addressed. A smaller Steering Group drawn from across the region will be supported by two Network groups - one representing HEIs in the South West and one representing those in Wales. Both network groups will meet in July and the Steering Group will meet in early Autumn.

We hope that this dual structure will ensure that the depth of support we have enjoyed to date will continue and that the breadth we will achieve by welcoming those supporting research staff will ensure the activities of the Hub meet the needs of all the HEIs in the region.

A list of all currently involved in the Network groups can be seen on the Hub website. Details of Steering Group members will be posted shortly. [www.vitae.ac.uk/swwhub](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/swwhub)

### Hub Annual Conference—Early Warning!

A date for your diaries –our Annual Conference will be held on Wednesday 25 February 2009 at Bristol Zoo. Details will be posted on the website in the Autumn. We look forward to our first conference as Vitae, and to bringing together colleagues from the PGR and Research Staff areas.

### Focus On... events

One of the aims of the Hub is to bring together HEIs to discuss and share practice on issues relevant to the skills development of researchers. After discussion with the Network group members, two such issues have emerged for the first part of the new academic year. We therefore propose holding two events in the autumn.

#### *Focus On....Evaluation*

The first event will be around the topic of evaluating the effectiveness of skills development of researchers.

This one day event will look at the Rugby Team Evaluation Framework ([www.vitae.ac.uk/RugbyTeam](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/RugbyTeam)), give some practical examples of ways of evaluation, and give HEIs the opportunity to share practice. If you

have any examples of evaluation which you would like to share with others, please contact [swwhub@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:swwhub@vitae.ac.uk).

The event will be held on Wednesday October 15 at the University Conference Centre, Cardiff University. Bookings will open shortly.

#### *Focus on.....Enterprise*

Later in the year in December, we will be holding an event looking at the topic of Enterprise and Researchers. Planning for this is in the very early stages. If you have any suggestions on content for this day drawn from your HEI or beyond, please get in touch.

As well as these face to face events, topics of interest may in future be discussed 'virtually' via the Vitae website. We will keep you posted on developments

### Local GRADschools News

UWE ran another successful GRADschool in May. Building on their expertise and reputation, UWE will be leading on the planning of a Regional GRADschool to be held next year, which will be open to PGRs in the South West. More details soon.

Bristol, Bath and Exeter are collaborating on a local GRADschool to be held at Exeter University from Tuesday 19 – Thursday 21 August. The intention is that this will be a rolling programme hosted by each university in turn.

October sees Bangor's GRADschool, to be held from 20-22.

### How to Be an Effective Researcher

This two day course for PGRs who are 12-18 months into their research continues to be rolled out successfully in the Region, with Bangor being the latest institution to run the course. They join Bath, UWE and a joint course for researchers from Cardiff, University of Wales, Newport, UWIC the University of Glamorgan. Since the first Hub run Regional course last April, over 150 PGRs have benefited and the Region has ten tutors who are able to deliver the course. For an outline of the course go to: [www.vitae.ac.uk/effective\\_researcher](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/effective_researcher).



## Vitae Update

### Vitae Researcher Development Conference

September 8-9 will see the first Vitae conference. Held over two days with a dinner on the evening of Monday 8, the conference will focus on a new era of professional and development support for researchers in the UK. Themes to be covered include:

- strategies for sustaining personal and career support for researchers
- new models and approaches for understanding researchers as professionals
- supporting innovation and skills development
- understanding, developing and promoting researcher careers
- research, evidence and evaluation relating to the skills and careers of researchers

Speakers include Professor Sir Richard Brooke, Director, Leverhulme Trust; Andrew Dearing, Secretary General, European Industrial Research Management Association; and Phillip Esler, Chief Executive, AHRC.

There is a 3 for 2 offer for non-residential places. [www.researcherconferences.org.uk/2008](http://www.researcherconferences.org.uk/2008)

### Vitae Programme Brochure

You will have received a copy of the Vitae programme brochure which gives details of the activities and reach of Vitae. If you would like further copies of these for colleagues please contact the Hub.



### Explore the Vitae website

The new website (which is still under development) has a wealth of information for you and the researchers you support.

The Researchers' Portal has dedicated sections for postgraduate researchers and research staff, covering issues such as:

Developing as a researcher; developing your academic career; managing yourself; rights and responsibilities and more.

There is also extensive careers information on the portal, including a section called 'What is a Career' which looks at the impact change has had on careers and how both organisations and individuals contribute to career management.

The Policy and Practice section, aimed at you, has all relevant Policy documents, plus the Database of Practice and other Resources.

The UK GRAD site will be operational until the end of the year, and all current log ins remain the same.

### The Balanced Researcher

Written by Hugh Kearns, Head of Professional Development at Flinders University, this booklet looks at strategies for busy researchers. A copy can be downloaded from the Vitae website or contact [swwhub@grad.ac.uk](mailto:swwhub@grad.ac.uk) for copies.





## National News & Events

### Concordat Launch

*The revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was officially launched on June 25 2008. Tristram Hooley, Senior Networks Manager Vitae, gives some background information*

The Concordat is designed to be a clear statement of some key principles for the support and management of researchers and their careers. If employers and funders embrace these principles they represent real progress for researchers.

The Concordat has come about because Research Councils UK (RCUK) and Universities UK (UUK) brought together an HE sector working group to develop policies that would enhance the research workforce, improve conditions for researchers themselves and bring benefits to the UK economy. The Concordat draws on work that has been going on since the publication of the earlier Concordat on Contract Research Staff Career Management (1996) including Gareth Roberts, SET for Success (2002) and the funding and changes which followed that report.

The Concordat is signed by the major funders of research in the UK and supported by an even wider range of sector based bodies. It aligns closely to the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and so implementing it will ensure that institutions are able to meet the expectations of funders within the UK as well as the European Commission.

The Concordat encourages institutions to consider how they can improve the way they support and manage researchers. It builds on the Roberts' agenda and therefore offers a good opportunity to profile and consolidate what has already been done and to go on to engage senior managers in what still needs to be achieved.

The activity of Vitae will be closely involved with the implementation of the Concordat. Vitae will support universities and research institutions to achieve the principles of the Concordat through the provision of information and the facilitation of the sharing of best practice. Vitae will also work with the HE sector and other stakeholders to review progress in implementing the Concordat.

For further information about the Concordat visit [www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice).

#### The Concordat's key principles

- Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.
- Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.
- Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.
- The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.
- Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.
- Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.



*Janet Metcalfe, Chair and Head of Vitae speaking at the launch of the Concordat.*

*See Christian Carter's article on page 8 for the opportunities offered by the Concordat....*



## PGR Issues

The section which rounds up news, views and events for you and your postgraduate researchers

### For You

**Review of Skills Development and Training Strategy at Cardiff.**

*Terri Delahunty, Head of the Graduate Centre reports on Cardiff's approach.*

Cardiff University recently conducted a review of its skills development and training strategy. Although initially conceived as a consultative process using our four Graduate School management groups, it was agreed to convert to a university-wide workshop to which the School Directors of Postgraduate Research Studies and Postgraduate Research Student Representatives were invited. It was felt that this approach would enable a broader disciplinary input than the Management Groups, as well as facilitate networking among staff.

The day was opened by the Vice Chancellor who underscored the need to encourage PGRs to undertake skills development. He also described the enhancements for postgraduate researchers which were incorporated in the University's strategic plan. A presentation about the implementation of the strategy followed, which was supplemented by student perceptions from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. Discussions followed in smaller groups around topics that had been identified by our Graduate Development Committee (GDC): whether our student-centred, needs-based approach remained appropriate; how the supervisors could be engaged in needs analysis processes; and how the needs of part-time and distance researchers could be met. Reporting back was followed by lunch to enable a period of reflection before recommendations to the GDC were developed.

Key outcomes were a confirmation of the needs-based approach and a commitment to articulate further the expectations for researchers to undertake professional development. The discussions revealed that doctoral researchers had a very high level of awareness of the skills programme and valued it, but that supervisors were less clear. There was also helpful feedback that the transferable skills elements of the Joint Skills Statement are perceived by some as skills for future employability rather than as skills relevant to researchers in completing their projects as *well as* transferable to future roles.

There was diversity of views among supervisors about their role in assisting researchers in identification of development needs. A statement about the respective roles of the supervisor and the research students will be developed to address this. The review and monitoring of development needs required by our Code of Practice and 'personal development planning' (PDP) were seen as interchangeable although the latter terminology is less acceptable to students and supervisors. There was agreement that a separate, different PDP system may not be necessary if the needs analysis, recording and monitoring were taking place.

Overall, it was a productive day that provided a rare opportunity for supervisors and doctoral researchers from across the disciplines to discuss their challenges, their perceptions of the support available in the university, and to identify areas for enhancement.

## Conferences for You

### HERDA-SW Conference

This year's event on 13-14 November in Torquay, will focus on the future role of Higher Education (HE) and will be addressing key issues for the South West in its development, and the role HE plays in society, the region and the wider environment.

Topics will encompass enhancing regional partnership and engaging employers in the range of activity undertaken by Higher Education, for example, in research & development, knowledge exchange and innovation, workforce development and lifelong learning.

Delegates will have a chance to hear from speakers to include Bill Rammell MP, Minister of State, Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Steve Smith, Vice-Chancellor, University of Exeter and Wendy Purcell, Vice-Chancellor, University of Plymouth. [www.herda-sw.ac.uk](http://www.herda-sw.ac.uk).

### Issues in Inclusivity in Research Communities

This seminar on October 22 is funded by the Disability Equality Partnership (DEP) and is part of a Research Seminar Series on the theme of inclusion. Speakers include Dr Douglas Halliday, Dean of the Graduate School; Val Farrar, Diversity in HE Consultant; Dr Stan Taylor, Academic Staff Development Office; Dr Lowry McComb, Director of Postgraduate Training. To book email [carolyn.mcalhone@durham.ac.uk](mailto:carolyn.mcalhone@durham.ac.uk).



## Doctoring Practice

What defines practice led PhD research in the visual disciplines (art, studio craft, design) and how does it differ from other advanced, investigative creative practices? Just one of the questions to be discussed at a symposium on Practice-led PhD Research in Art and Design to be held on Bath School of Art and Design, Bath Spa, University Friday 12 September. See [www.doctoringpractice.co.uk](http://www.doctoringpractice.co.uk) for more information.

## Graduate Centres

Cardiff University hosted a meeting on 16 May to share practice around Graduate Centres. Attended by 35 participants representing 20 universities, the meeting was organised to enable those managing centres and those considering setting up such centres an opportunity to find out what was happening at other HEIs. A new JISC list has been set up to enable on-going communication, and a report of the meeting can be found in the archive. If you wish to join, send an email to: [jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk) (no subject is needed). In the body of the message, type: Subscribe GRADUATE-CENTRES then put two dashes on the next line.

## For your PGRs

### Vitae - Careers in Academia

A free one day event for PGRs who want to discover what skills and strengths are needed to succeed in what can be a very competitive environment. The event will be held in Manchester on October 6. More information can be found on the Researchers' Portal [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

### The Learning Journey

PGRs from Social Science, Arts & Humanities, Education and Health (non-medical / clinical only) are invited to take part in national study on the learning journeys that doctoral candidates follow as they develop research knowledge and skills. The project will result in the production of materials and resources for universities to use on doctoral training courses, including DVDs and printed resources. Participation in the project will also provide PGRs with an opportunity to reflect on their progress, as a doctoral student. More details on <http://tinyurl.com/yq3g89>. The study is being run by INSPIRE, Anglia Ruskin University - contact Mark Warnes [mark.warnes@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:mark.warnes@anglia.ac.uk).

## Graduate Junction

This brand new website aims to give research students an easy way of making contact with others who share their research interests regardless of the department, institution or country in which they work. The site has been created by other research students, who believe the site can grow into a really useful tool for postgraduates working in any field of research, in any part of the world.. Over 2000 students registered in the first two weeks. [www.graduatejunction.com](http://www.graduatejunction.com)

## PGR Conferences

*Let us know if PGRs at your institution are organising a conference—we will publicise it on the Vitae website and in the Newsletter*

### One thing leads to another.....

A day of discussion and debate around Practice-led PhDs organised and led by research students is to be held on Thursday 11 September at Bath School of Art and Design, Bath Spa University. More information available on [www.doctoringpractice.co.uk](http://www.doctoringpractice.co.uk).

## The Source Event



Now in its 2nd successful year, The Source Event is a dedicated science career fair from *Naturejobs*, combining an exhibition with conference and workshop sessions. The programme is divided into 3 streams: Graduate, Post Doc and Non-traditional careers.

Vitae is an ambassador for The Source Event and will chair the morning sessions of the Graduate stream. The Graduate stream is aimed at those at the very early stage of their careers who have a BSc, MSc or are currently studying for their PhD. It is meant as a practical introduction to finding a first role in science.

Exhibitors at The Source Event include a wide range of employers, recruitment agencies and governmental institutions.

Space for the sessions is limited. Full details, including online registration, can be found at: [www.source-event.com](http://www.source-event.com).

## Research Staff Issues

The section which rounds up news, views and events for you and your research staff

### For You

#### Positive Futures 2008: Bristol University's Research Staff Conference

Networking Session



Now in its fifth year, Bristol University's Research Staff conference was held in April. The conference gave Research Staff the opportunity to learn about confident networking, effective career management and progression and promotion.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Eric Thomas, addressed the conference and also took part in a Q&A session to end the event. Details from some of the sessions together with feedback comments can be found at [www.bristol.ac.uk/researchstaff/documents/conferencedocs/08summarysheet.html](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/researchstaff/documents/conferencedocs/08summarysheet.html).

### Keep Up to date

There are now over 300 subscribers to RESEARCH-STAFF-SUPPORT JISCMail list. If you are interested in the training and career development of Research Staff in Higher Education make sure you join now. Send an email to: [jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk) (no subject is needed). In the body of the message, type: Subscribe RESEARCH-STAFF SUPPORT then put two dashes on the next line.

### Staff Opinion Service

Building on their experience of using staff feedback to inform and evaluate HR and University performance, Bristol University have launched a Staff Survey Consultancy Service. Go to [www.survey.bristol.ac.uk](http://www.survey.bristol.ac.uk) for more details or email [survey-help@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:survey-help@bristol.ac.uk).

### For your Research Staff

#### European Researchers' Mobility Portal gets a Make-over



The European Researchers Mobility Portal has a new name and web address. EURAXESS is the new overarching name for four initiatives for researchers, including EURAXESS Jobs, Services, Rights and Links. [http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index\\_en.cfm?l1=0&l2=0&l3=0](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index_en.cfm?l1=0&l2=0&l3=0)

### Work Shadowing Opportunity



NERC's Policy Placement Scheme allows researchers and other staff involved in environmental science research to work closely with policy-makers within government and other organisations in the UK.

The host partner organisation must be a relevant user of NERC research such as a government department, public agency or charity and placements are for up to one month. More information can be found on [www.nerc.ac.uk/using/publicsector/workshadow.asp](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/using/publicsector/workshadow.asp)



## The Last Word.....

*Christian Carter is Personnel Manager (Policy Development) at the University of Bristol. Here in the first of a regular column he muses on opportunities offered by the new Concordat .*

### Once in a lifetime...

.....an opportunity like this comes along.

'What on earth is he talking about?' I hear you say. I have been working as an HR professional in Higher Education for ten years now ( before that working in the NHS and Further Education). Buried amongst the other 'duties' on my job description was an item that read something like 'implement the research staff concordat for Bristol researchers'. Just like you I also thought, 'What on earth are they talking about?'

To be honest I don't think I'd ever heard of the word 'Concordat' and the Oxford on-line dictionary just confused matters even further:

*"An agreement or treaty, especially one between the Vatican and a secular state"*

As a HR professional I had on many occasions used the benefits of 'any other duties' on a job description, but even I had not considered that my job stretched as far as this. Common sense led me to the assumption that I would probably not be working alongside the Pope, and the delights of Google confirmed this by taking me to a strange looking document.

The 1996 Concordat (or I guess more simply 'agreement') starts off by outlining *This Concordat sets standards for the career management and conditions of employment of researchers employed by universities and colleges on fixed-term or similar contracts and funded through research grants or analogous schemes*'.

The thing that struck me as a fresh faced, and I suspect slightly naive Personnel Manager, was that the document was describing the obvious. .How do you get the most from employees? 'Set out clearly what the job is', 'give them freedom to make decisions', 'offer support and feedback', 'develop them for this and future roles' and 'be a pleasant human being' – it really is that simple.

I started to think that the similarities between the Concordat and some religious teachings might be closer than I had first imagined.....

Given that, is it 'simple' to describe what has changed over the last twelve years? It's true that progress has

been slow, and I guess many would say that up to the *Roberts' Review* real action was limited to local initiatives which supported research staff in Universities. However, over the last three years a whole load of positive developments have converged, so that the sector is now in a strong position to move forward on this agenda. Perhaps for the first time the sector is listening to the most senior HR professionals and we have recruited a number who really know what they are talking about. The government, through the *Roberts' Review*, has delivered significant amounts of cash that will probably never be repeated. The European Union has introduced not only new employment laws, but also signified a real will to develop the strength of European research through tackling some of the employment issues that face our researchers.

The new Vitae contract is the perfect opportunity to pull

#### *How do you get the most from employees?*

- *set out clearly what the job is*
- *give them freedom to make decisions*
- *offer support and feedback*
- *develop them for this and future roles*
- *be a pleasant human being.*

*It really is that simple*

all of these opportunities together, lead the way,

communicate practice, develop the community, and facilitate real change through regional Hubs **and individuals like us in Universities.**

The Vitae contract is only for five years, and earmarked 'Roberts' funding is planned to last up to the end of 2010/11; hence time is already running out. The government will, quite rightly, expect to see a return on the £30 million they are pumping into this agenda (that's a lot of potential hip operations and therefore votes).

We need to make sure we all work together, as a sector, to demonstrate funds have been effectively used to push forward researcher careers and HE research. We have a responsibility to ensure the whole £30m is spent well, not just our own 'slice'. Involvement in Hubs and Vitae is crucial to the success of the whole agenda.

A once in a career opportunity? - I think so.. A link between the concordat and the church? – less certain...



# Diary Dates:

*Upcoming conferences, events and training opportunities*

See also [www.vitae.ac.uk/events](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/events)

## What's on...?

### July 2008

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- 22-25                      **National GRADschool**, Bournemouth
- 28-31                      **Local GRADschool**, Durham

### August 2008

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- 19-21                      **Local GRADschool**, Bath, Bristol Exeter,

### September 2008

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- 8-9                         **Vitae Researcher Development Conference**, London
- 11-12                      **Doctoring Practice and One Thing Leads to Another**, Bath Spa University

### October 2008

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- 6                             **Careers in Academia**, Manchester
- 15                           **SWW Hub Hot Topic Forum, Evaluation**, Cardiff
- 22                           **Inclusivity in Research Communities**, Durham
- 28-1 November         **National GRADschool**, Bournemouth

### November 2008

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- 8                             **National GRADschool**, Windermere
- 13-14                      **HERDA-SW Conference**, Torquay

### December 2008

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- tbc                         **SWW Hot Topic Forum—Enterprise**, Cardiff

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**Would you like to contribute an article for *South West and Wales Hub News*?**

Email [swwhubhub@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:swwhubhub@vitae.ac.uk)