

# Executive summary

## Roberts Policy Forum

### January 2008, Birmingham

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## Overview

The fifth policy forum hosted by the UK GRAD Programme on behalf of the UK research councils aimed to:

- explore the strategic importance for institutions of engaging with the Government's impact agenda for researchers
- identify the priorities of the sector in developing an evidence base to inform national and institutional policy and enhance provision
- build on the Rugby Team Impact Framework and identify existing and potential tools and mechanisms to increase the evidence base.

The forum combined plenary presentations, panel discussion and work groups. This report provides an overview, the outputs from the workgroups and recommendations of the forum. More detail on the plenary presentations, including slides, and the content of the individual work groups can be found at [www.grad.ac.uk/policyforum2008](http://www.grad.ac.uk/policyforum2008).

## Day 1 plenary presentations and discussions

### Introduction to the event

Introducing the forum, Chair Janet Metcalfe reflected on the achievements of the researcher development community: the developmental opportunities in place for postgraduate researchers and, increasingly, for research staff; signs that the sector is starting to look at researchers as a totality; and the extent of practice sharing and collaboration across institutions. Looking forward, she highlighted that evaluating impact of researcher development is critical to the enhancement of programmes and to ensuring sustainability of funding. The forum aimed to help HEIs consider how to translate the various agendas – government/national, institutional and individual researcher – into their local enhancement strategies and she encouraged participants to make practical recommendations to all stakeholders to support their local efforts more effectively.

As can be seen in its annual report<sup>1</sup>, the Rugby Team (RT) has made impressive progress in steering a sector-wide evaluation agenda over the last three years. However, as there is much work still to be done, it was strongly recommended that the RT or similar group be given a five-year mandate for a continuing sector-led working group.

### Update on the new 'researcher development' contract

Ellen Pearce, Head of the Researcher Development at CRAC: The Career Development Organisation, gave a brief update on the new 'researcher development' contract<sup>2</sup>, effective from 1 January 2008. This is held by CRAC in partnership with Janet Metcalfe, the universities hosting the regional Hubs of the UK GRAD Programme, and a new and important contract partner UKHERD, reflecting the extension of the contract's remit to cover UK research staff. The successful proposals build to some extent on proven features of the previous contract (eg Hubs), but the aim is fundamentally to build a new programme that meets the needs of all early career researchers.

2008 will be an exceptionally busy transition year. New strategies and operating frameworks need to be set up alongside continuing delivery, in time for the programme's official launch at the annual conference in September. The activities of the regional Hubs and of the UKHERD Taskforce will be coming together, informed by a forthcoming UKHERD membership survey. One of the innovative features of the new programme is a new national research and development unit. Research priorities identified by the policy forum will be a major influence on this unit's planning and priorities.

### Strategic inputs

Participants then heard a sequence of strategic inputs, from Professor Randal Richards, Chief Executive, Research Councils UK (RCUK) Strategic Delivery; Professor David Gani, Director of Research Policy and Strategy, Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Professor Wendy Hall, Council for Science and Technology (CST) and University of Southampton, followed by a 'Question Time' panel with the speakers.

### Attracting, training and supporting world class researchers

**Professor Randal Richards**, Chief Executive, Research Council's UK

Speaking on the theme of *Attracting, training and supporting world class researchers*, Randal Richards gave an incisive overview of the changed climate for UK research and the efforts needed to maintain the UK's global economic position. As part of the Government's response to the international challenges, the research councils themselves are reshaping. The UK *must* 'raise its game' on skills, training and knowledge. This means that universities must change their policies and practices towards research staff, in order to increase the quality of the research base (attracting the best researchers, improving their retention and increasing the skills and adaptability of the researcher workforce). HEIs should use Roberts' allocations strategically, particularly to support the new Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers<sup>3</sup>, which will be launched

<sup>1</sup> [www.grad.ac.uk/rugbyteam](http://www.grad.ac.uk/rugbyteam)

<sup>2</sup> [www.grad.ac.uk/newcontract](http://www.grad.ac.uk/newcontract)

<sup>3</sup> [www.grad.ac.uk/rci](http://www.grad.ac.uk/rci)

later this year. The UK must think globally and form research partnerships with new world forces China and India: RCUK has an important role in supporting this, and also, at national level, in brokering a Knowledge Transfer summit later in 2008. The delivery plans of the research councils identify where 'the action' will be. Of particular importance are:

- the increased need to ensure international visibility and respect for the UK research base and its products
- a greater willingness of the research base to engage with business – and vice versa
- a demonstrable commitment from all parties involved to ensure sustainable and attractive research careers available to all with the capabilities and commitment needed.

*'Are we fit for purpose? The agenda is changing.'* This is the question for every university and every research council.  
Randal Richards, RCUK

### Research careers development: challenges, new models and opportunities

**Professor David Gani**, Director of Research Policy and Strategy, Scottish Funding Council

David Gani, combining a Scottish and UK-wide perspective, reinforced Randal Richards' view of national and global challenges. In his address, *Research careers development: challenges, new models and opportunities*, he called for the extension of the collaborative model, including greater co-ordination between research and funding councils, to strengthen the UK's competitive position in the years ahead. The last 15 years of devolved government has seen some advantages of locally responsive policy making, but there are clearly challenges in behaving as a coherent UK system when the benefits of acting collectively are clear.

Policies tend to be developed at UK level (eg the Research Assessment Exercise, dual support reform and the Concordat), with implementation and budgets set at local country level. Strategic investment is proportionately a much larger budget line for the SFC than for HEFCE. In Scotland it results in a 'research pooling' approach where institutions group around a thematic or subject discipline. This enables them to offer better research facilities and training provision as a block and has proved a model that other parts of the UK might usefully explore. Another considerable investment in Scotland is SFC's financial commitment to supporting institutions to look after their postgraduate researchers better, increasing from £16.7m (Research Postgraduate Grant 2005–06) to £25.7m (2007–08).

Scotland also has a distinctive approach to knowledge transfer investment, channelled through the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Grant, covering cultural engagement and public policy as well as commercialisation of knowledge. A major issue for knowledge exchange is bringing researchers and practitioners into effective communication, and this has implications for researcher training and development.

The UK competes against the strong research performance of established OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) countries. The research councils and funding councils have to be effective in influencing UK-wide policy and funding decisions by government to sustain the future of the research base. The EU too, has an increasing role in research policy, funding, training and mobility, which the UK must capitalise upon. The UK is crucially dependent upon influencing international investments and inward talent flow.

### Pathways to the future: supporting the early careers of researchers

**Professor Wendy Hall**, Professor of Computer Science, University of Southampton and Council for Science and Technology  
In a lively address, Wendy Hall discussed the key findings of the Council for Science and Technology's report, *Pathways to the Future* (October 2007)<sup>4</sup>, which recommended a national framework to support research careers and greater independence and more responsibility for researchers much earlier in their careers. She called for universities, as employers, to take responsibility for their research staff and to treat their employment and careers in the same way as other staff: a change in mindset is urgently needed.

Uniquely, CST can take a 20–30-year view of research base needs. The report is based on a research study, including a focus group of early career researchers. This identified the need to increase the attractiveness of academic careers for the best researchers. There has been much progress since the Roberts' review *SET for Success*<sup>5</sup>, but much remains to be done, particularly with research staff. The study also identified that a global perspective is vital. Excellent research is pan-global: people and research funding are portable. The UK must forge strong international links and encourage the interchange of people and ideas.

A national framework to support research careers, with backing from funders, employers, higher education institutions and researchers would necessarily be flexible and non-prescriptive. It would encompass: possible career paths for researchers from doctoral level, both within academia, and through the various 'exit points' to other sectors; levels of responsibility delegated at particular stages; career guidance; opportunities for training and development; and possibilities for placements in other sectors or disciplines.

<sup>4</sup> [www.grad.ac.uk/rci](http://www.grad.ac.uk/rci)

<sup>5</sup> [www.grad.ac.uk/roberts](http://www.grad.ac.uk/roberts)

Giving researchers greater independence and more responsibility early on will make a research career more attractive. Fellowships are an excellent method of achieving greater researcher independence and more should be available. There is scope for universities to use overheads creatively, setting up university-funded fellowships, or jointly funded ones with the national funding bodies. There is also a need for investment in the training and development of supervisors, line managers and principal investigators (PIs). Advances in science and technology cross traditional disciplinary boundaries, therefore it is important to provide grants for those crossing boundaries and to create opportunities to learn from other fields.

Researchers themselves have a responsibility to take control of their careers. They also need effective representation. There is equally an urgent need to determine what 'carrots and sticks' the funding bodies need to employ. Career development should be embedded in the assessment of research proposals and evaluation of outcomes.

## Panel discussion

The panel of speakers further explored the challenges of persuading academics that it is in everyone's best interests to manage researchers and projects differently, and the 'carrots and sticks' that could help in this. Changing mindsets must work from vice-chancellor level down, and, with generally poor understanding of researcher issues by HR departments, all must work to raise awareness. At national level, all major funders should commit resources to supporting researchers, so that opportunities for skills and career development cover 100% of researchers.

Culture change depends on academics' perception of drivers, and a key one for PIs is the successor to the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Will PIs take the long view and invest more in their best research staff, or merely 'chain them to the bench' still tighter? The panel identified a number of negative 'unintended consequences' of the REF, and lack of joined-up thinking, including difficulties for inter-disciplinary collaborations where the disciplines involved are subject to different forms of assessment. The proposed citation-based assessment (of necessity meaning mature papers published seven to ten years ago) militated against universities prioritising support for early career researchers.

## Working group outcomes

Participants broke into their first work group sessions to explore the key initiatives/drivers influencing researcher development over the next five years. Individual work groups examined how these drivers will impact on HEIs' strategies for postgraduate researcher (PGR) development, research staff development and across the continuum of researcher development, then shared their recommendations in plenary.

Key opportunities and challenges identified by participants were:

### For postgraduate researcher development

- Providing equitable and accessible training to all PGR students (part time, full time, RC-funded, non-RC-funded).
- Engaging more closely with research supervisors so that the skills agenda can be seen as something that directly impacts on the output of PGRs – in both quality and quantity – and that can be better integrated into the everyday activities of PGRs.
- Considering whether there should be a level of assessment for skills development within research degree programmes.
- Tracking doctoral graduates and why they choose these options.
- Engaging more with employers who employ PhDs to ascertain what impact these people have within organisations.

### For research staff development

- Engaging research managers [and PIs] in the development of their staff and recognising the importance of skills development.
- Ensuring appropriate career development that accommodates the needs of research staff at all levels (academic career, research career, industry).
- Engaging research staff employers to inform development of researcher skills.
- Implementing the Concordat for researchers, with particular reference to the framework agreement (HERA – Higher Education Role Analysis) and benchmarking researchers' job descriptions to the equivalent scales on the single pay spine within and across institutions.
- Starting to collect evidence about the most effective way of structuring researcher careers/roles within HE.
- Creating (and increasing the diversity of) opportunities for research staff to pursue the career path they are aiming for.

## For researcher development across the continuum

- Managing the inherent conflict between providing generic central provision and making training opportunities relevant to the specific discipline area.
- Working collaboratively within institutions (and where appropriate across institutions) to provide coherent skills development provision.
- Identifying methods of auditing researchers' pre-existing skills and identifying skills deficiencies in a transparent and constructive way, then determining training.
- Accurately assessing the needs of employers, and the degree to which researcher skills development is helping to address these (including real engagement at local level from employers of researchers).
- Identifying new or alternative ways for providing career development that is both interactive and appealing to researchers but that does not rely on face-to-face provision.
- Identifying how, as institutions and as a sector as a whole, we capture and collate information about individual researchers' career trajectories.
- Developing researchers to be employable outside academia.
- Engaging constructively with all groups with a role in managing and supporting research students and staff; creating understanding of our aims so that supervisors and PIs value skills development.
- Assessing what impact training and development in transferable skills have on an individual's ability to do their job well and on the development of their career.
- Using the opportunity through institutions nationally collecting similar, well-defined, useful information that can create a powerful evidence base for the impact of practice to inform both programme development and strategy.
- Evolving strategies for the sustainable delivery of skills and careers support and the exploration of different funding models.
- Identifying whether the skills agenda will continue to be the sole responsibility of the research councils or if other funding bodies are looking at funding it collectively in the long term.

The outputs from the individual work groups were incorporated into the overall recommendations from the policy forum (see page [9]).

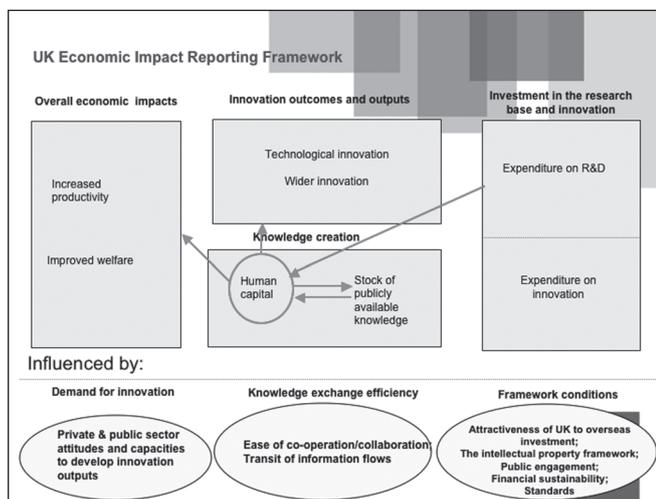
## Building the evidence base for policy decisions

**Mark Beatson**, Head of Science and Innovation Analysis, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

The final presentation of the day saw Mark Beatson, Head of Science and Innovation Analysis, Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), speak on *Building the evidence base for policy decisions*, giving a valuable insight into the forms of evidence that the Government is seeking from the HE sector when assessing return on government investment in the science base. Mark explained the UK Economic Impact Reporting Framework (EIRF) *Fig. 1* which forms the basis for monitoring the impact of research spend in the UK. It is used to:

- report on UK progress against ten-year framework objectives
- organise output and performance data from the research councils
- organise disparate material (bringing together, for example, direct interventions and influencing factors).

*Figure 1 UK Economic Impact Reporting Framework*



Good data on outputs should form a core of evidence, such as the numbers of researchers supported and undergoing training, and career development and qualifications gained as a result of support. Further output data should attempt to link production of trained researchers to research outputs and investigate the influence on future career paths of researchers over time. Persuasive outcomes data would include evidence about 'net' economic and social returns to highly qualified researchers. Such returns would be calculated net of the cost of investment in researcher education and training.

The Government is also concerned with quality and efficiency of delivery. This would comprise both quantitative and qualitative data and include perceptions of beneficiaries and comparisons of quantity/quality of output and different levels of investment.

Key considerations of impact evaluation are:

- that it takes time to put together: 'Rome was not built in a day'
- there is a strong emphasis on quantification, although qualitative information has its place and purposes
- the basics are important and should not be overlooked. First things first: 'what does the money buy?'

## Day 2 plenary presentations and discussions

### Update on Rugby Team 07 activities

**Professor Chris Park**, Director of the Graduate School, Lancaster University; Chair, Rugby Team

Chris first summarised six completed projects: an analysis of *Employers' views of researchers' skills*; sharing institutional practice relating to the QAA Special Review; a discussion paper on the purpose, role and actual deployment of research staff *What are HEI research staff for?*; supporting the development of the HEA Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES); developing the Impact Framework; and developing the specification for the UK GRAD Database of Practice.

Ongoing projects include Skills Training and Research Supervision Survey (STaRSS), researcher career profiles and the changing nature of the doctorate.

The Rugby Team's annual report recommended that:

- STaRS should be set up on a national, voluntary basis
- the researcher career profiles project should be progressed. (The objective here is to devise a more rational and systematic way of collecting researcher career profiles, which all agencies and institutions could use for both qualitative evaluation and in developing tools for supporting individual researchers' career development.)
- the Rugby Team, or a similar group, should be reconstituted with a five-year mission and revised membership.

Six core functions of such a team were proposed:

- Provide sector input on shaping a programme to build the evidence base.
- Inform national and agency policies and practices relating to the evaluation of skills development.
- Disseminate information and inform the sector about existing good practice in evaluating skills development.
- Provide advice to the new 'researcher development' programme.
- Harmonise the strategic direction of the main surveys relating to early career researchers (STaRSS, CROS, PRES and Research Leaders).
- Identify future projects and potential funding sources for evaluating skills development.

Email consultation would follow to enable participants to reflect and feed back on the balance of priorities. [The results of the consultation can be accessed at [www.grad.ac.uk/rugby\\_team](http://www.grad.ac.uk/rugby_team)]

### The Rugby Team Impact Framework

**Dr Tony Bromley**, Co-ordinator, UK GRAD Programme Yorkshire and Northeast Hub, Rugby Team and University of Leeds  
Tony introduced the work done on the Rugby Team Impact Framework to inform participants' thinking about evaluating impact in readiness for the subsequent facilitated workshops. The Impact Framework's approach was to *illustrate the many likely ways in which investment in researcher training and development activities benefits different groups of stakeholders*. Its aim was to *foster, support and potentially guide existing and new ways of effectively evaluating researcher training and development*.

## Plenary discussions

Subsequent plenary discussion first considered the relationship between the Impact Framework approach and the DIUS perspective as discussed by Mark Beatson. Where should evaluation efforts be focused? Is the Government interested in outputs as well as outcomes? Speakers stressed that Mark had emphasised output measures and that, as well as a primary focus on metrics, he had talked about the place for illustrative evidence: the key was seeking the right balance between quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Another contribution from the floor concerned the need to look at the explanatory variable of 'who the researchers are'. This is an input factor that needs to be highlighted. Other comments concerned the benefits to HEIs of more detailed evaluation: for example, information on wage premiums is of great value to alumni offices seeking reinvestment in the institution.

The subsequent facilitated workshops covered a range of topics related to the Impact Framework and were designed to review the existing evidence base, identify knowledge gaps, and identify priorities over the next five years for building understanding of the impact of researcher skills development. [More detailed information on the workshop discussions and outcomes can be accessed at [www.grad.ac.uk/policyforum2008](http://www.grad.ac.uk/policyforum2008)]

## Workshop outcomes

### Workshop 1: Understanding the needs of researchers and monitoring progress

This group identified the need for more comprehensive take up of national surveys by institutions and participation by individuals. The four surveys discussed were: PRES, CROS, STaRSS and the Research Leaders' survey. Main factors contributing to the challenges were survey fatigue, lack of clarity over purpose and outcomes of surveys. There was also a major gap in the lack of national surveys of doctoral alumni.

### Workshop 2: Defining researchers' skills – developing an overarching competency framework

This workshop agreed that there is an urgent need to go beyond the Joint Skills Statement in identifying the skills, competences and behaviours needed by researchers at various levels of experience. Such a project has the potential to underpin many of the activities of the new 'researcher development' programme and the work of the Rugby Team for the next five years.

### Workshop 3: Building effective practice – evaluating development interventions

This group identified three clear areas of need and possible projects to address these. These needs are:

- evaluating the added value of PhD graduates in employment
- tracking HEIs' former research staff
- integrating evaluation and learning at the individual level.

### Workshop 4: The role of career profiles and tracking studies in understanding researchers' careers

This group agreed that there is insufficient information about researcher careers to inform and evaluate skills development programmes and recommended a range of projects to fill these gaps.

### Workshop 5: Understanding the wider impact of researchers on the research base

This group recognised that this is a very complex area, with many variables impacting on research base trends. The aim therefore is to 'focus on what we can do', and three areas for research projects were selected: recruitment and retention of doctoral researchers, cultural change in HEIs, and employers' perception of the doctorate.

### Workshop 6: Achieving and demonstrating international competitiveness

This group recognised that many effects were indirect, very long term, and extremely difficult, if not impossible, to isolate. The group therefore focused on international postgraduate researchers and research staff, as direct, relatively short-term patterns could be traced. Discussion led to the identification of six potential projects, many of which link to proposals and projects discussed by other groups.

## Recommendations

During the day one work groups and day two workshops the policy forum produced a wide range of recommendations. These are summarised below by theme and reproduced in full for each stakeholder group in the Appendix.

### Competency Framework

[RT] Set up, as a priority for 2008, a sector-led working group to develop an overarching competency framework/model of professional learning for researchers that builds on the Joint Skills Statement and includes the complete researcher continuum – from postgraduate researcher to research staff to PI/supervisor – and the complete breadth of the academic role (WS2).

### Provision

[RT] Set up a project to create a Fully Integrated Researcher Evaluation system (FIRE), building processes to bring together information from training needs analyses, appraisals, programme and training evaluations. This would: link to supervision (PGRs) and appraisal (RS); be used by individuals to identify, record and set goals, log feedback, learning outcomes and behavioural change; be fully portable.

[HEIs] Recognise explicitly the diversity of researchers and adopt policies to reflect the need to provide highly individualised training programmes for all researchers (WG1).

- [HEIs] Provide national [AGCAS] and local [HEIs] targeted careers advice and resources for researchers (WG2).
- [HEIs] Provide equality of opportunity and treatment (appraisals, training, mentoring) for all researchers (WG5).
- [HEIs] Provide networking, independent mentoring and peer support structures for postgraduate researchers and research staff, including for careers advice (WG5).
- [RD] Establish RS training networks between institutions (WG6) and provide a quality kite mark for researcher training (WG5).

## Encouraging cultural change

There were a series of recommendations, primarily to HEIs, related to raising awareness of the importance of skills development of researchers through better communication and providing evidence and incentives (WG1, WG2, WG4, WG5, WG6).

- [HEIs] Be explicit about opportunities offered and the value of training and development for postgraduate researchers, research staff, supervisors and PIs (WG4).
- [HEIs] Actively engage researchers and all staff (not just supervisors) in the design and delivery of skills programmes and in career development (WG1, WG2).
- [HEIs] Provide more 'carrots and sticks' by rewarding supervisors and PIs for being good mentors/trainers (WG4) and linking internal funding to evidence of provision of adequate training and development for researchers (WG5).
- [RT] Use the STaRSS, CROS and Research Leaders' surveys to investigate the level of cultural change in HEIs with respect to the skills agenda. Provide independent evidence that skills development is effective and that it improves research (WG3).
- [Funders] Require HEIs to be explicit in grant/funding applications about what has been done to develop researchers (WG4). This is to include feedback from researchers about the training they received (WG6). Link funding to training provision/achievement of certain criteria (WG5).
- [Funders] On a pump-prime basis, provide national funding for PI development distributed to, and ring-fenced within, HEIs (WG3).
- [Funders] Require HEIs to have an HR strategy for researchers as central to institutional strategy (WG4).

## Researcher careers

There were a range of recommendations (WG1, WG6, WS4, WS6) related to creating a national data set of information about researcher careers via profiles (snapshots) and longitudinal tracking (over time), using and adapting current alumni processes, HESA institutional reports and exit surveys, so individual HEIs can collect robust data, which can also be collated on a national basis.

- [HEIs] Map the information currently available in the institution to enable collection of researcher career profiles and longitudinal surveys. In particular, develop mechanisms to record contact details for all researchers and work collaboratively with alumni associations to encourage all researchers to take part in longitudinal studies/national career profiles (WG1, WS4).
- [Funders] Extend the reach of national longitudinal studies, particularly include a higher proportion of non-RC-funded researchers in the proposed RC longitudinal tracking study.
- [RT] Further develop the framework for career profile information (WS4). Seek career profiles of international staff and UK researchers overseas as part of the national repository (WS6).

Several recommendations proposed working with large employers and professional/sectoral organisations to articulate the need for researcher skills development in non-HE employment sectors.

- [RD/RT] Investigate employers' perceptions of inherent researcher skills and how these are valued by employers. Encourage employers to articulate the skills they require (WG1).
- [RCUK] Sponsor a research project to compare the performance of employees with and without a doctoral qualification (WS3).

## Evidence base

The usefulness of the Impact Framework was recognised and several recommendations suggested how it could be developed further.

- [HEIs] Work with other stakeholders to support the further development of the RT Impact Framework so that impact can be demonstrated nationally (WG2).
- [RT] Produce an evidence base that is not just based on researchers: it needs to impact on the whole sector, all the way up the chain (WG6).
- [RD] Develop good practice guidelines for making use of disparate sources of researcher information at HEI level, such as course attendance and use of career services (WS4).
- [HEA] Set up an exit survey that builds on PRES, containing specific sections to enable inter-institutional comparisons (WS1).

The workshop exploring the international standing of the UK made several recommendations to the Rugby Team and other interested stakeholders (WS6).

- [RT] Research student choices in the international postgraduate research market.
- [RT] Conduct a comparative study of PGRs in different countries, possibly liaising with international bodies (EUA CDE, US CGS) to ascertain the competitive position of the UK.
- Engage with professional bodies to investigate the comparability of UK research-degree-trained professionals.

Building on the opportunity created by the existence of CROS, STaRSS and the Research Leaders' surveys, the RT, RD and others were urged to set up a national committee by May 2008 to explore refining, aligning or combining the existing survey questionnaires. The surveys should be accessed through a single portal with a range of route choices, and this work should be complete by 2010 (WS1).

## Sustainability

Several recommendations tackled the issue of sustainability of the skills' agenda, particularly if the Roberts' funding does not continue beyond 2011.

- [HEIs] Assess the true costs and capacity requirements of skills programmes (WG2). Lobby funding bodies to provide funding to satisfy those requirements (WG1).
- [Funders] Consider how they intend to support PG skills training beyond 2011 for all PGRs (not just RCUK-funded students) (WG1).
- [RD] Broker a dialogue between the sector and RCs regarding funding beyond 2011 (WG4).

## Strategic recommendations

Two recommendations raised fundamental issues for higher education, which extended beyond the immediate remit of the skills agenda.

- [Funders' Forum] Initiate a study of how universities' employment structures impact upon research processes and outputs (WG3).
- [All] Revisit the debate on what is quality research (WG6).
- [All] Recognise continuity/portability of training in order to enable mobility of qualifications and experience (WG5).

## Appendix 1: Recommendations by stakeholder group

[Recommendations are tagged to be traceable from day 1 work groups (WG) and day 2 workshops (WS).]

### To higher education institutions

#### Provision

- Take note of QAA requirements on PG skills training and lobby funding bodies to provide funding to satisfy those requirements (WG1).
- Recognise explicitly the diversity of PGRs, and adopt policies to reflect the needs of part-time, distance learning professional doctorate PGRs amongst other 'non-standard' PhD categories, recognising the need to provide highly individualised training programmes for all students (WG1).
- Ensure that diversity is addressed and the programme moves on (WG2).
- Assess the true costs and capacity requirements of skills programmes and consider implications for providers of research (including the HEI) (WG2).
- Provide targeted careers advice and resources for PGRs (WG2).
- Provide equality of opportunity and treatment (appraisals, training, mentoring) for ALL early career researchers (WG5).
- Provide networking/peer support structures for research staff as well as for PGRs (WG5).
- Provide an independent (non-PI) mentor for research staff, and include careers advice (WG5).

#### Engagement and embedding

- Take steps to raise awareness of the importance of skills training in the development of PGRs by engaging both students and staff (not just supervisors) in career development (WG1).
- Continue actively to engage PGRs and supervisors in design and delivery of programmes (WG2).
- Be explicit about opportunities offered throughout training and development – ie, for PGRs, research staff, supervisors and PIs, give proof (WG4).
- Identify good practice in the quality of the experience of researchers (WG4).
- Reward supervisors and PIs for being good mentors/trainers (WG4).
- Link internal funding to evidence of provision of adequate training and development for researchers (WG5).
- Invite all researchers to take part in longitudinal studies/national career profiles (WS4).

## Working with other stakeholders

- Take note of QAA requirements on PG skills training and lobby funding bodies to provide funding to satisfy those requirements (WG1).
- Contribute to the Impact Framework and, once it is agreed, support the framework in order that impact can be demonstrated nationally (WG2).
- Map the information currently available in the institution to enable collection of researcher career profiles and longitudinal surveys. In particular, HEIs should develop mechanisms to record contact details of all their research staff and work collaboratively with alumni associations (WS4).

## To the Rugby Team

- Finalise the Impact Framework (WG2).
- Further develop the framework for career profile information (WS4).
- Consider the strategic implications of creating a national data set of information about researcher careers via profiles (snapshot) and longitudinal tracking (over time). Also consider the funding, maintenance and sustainability of mechanisms to build the evidence base, and make further recommendations (WS4).
- Provide independent evidence for PIs and RS that development is effective and that it improves research (WG3).
- Consider that a national committee be set up, with members from the Rugby Team, 'researcher development' programme, funding bodies and other sector representatives, by May 2009 or as soon as possible thereafter, responsible for refining the existing survey questionnaires and deciding how they should be combined or aligned. The surveys should be accessed through a single portal with a range of route choices, and that this work should be complete by 2010 (WS1).
- Set up, as a priority for 2008, a sector-led working group to develop an overarching competency framework/model of professional learning for researchers that builds on the Joint Skills Statement and includes the complete researcher continuum, from postgraduate researcher to research staff to PI/supervisor, and the complete breadth of the academic role (WS2).
- Set up a project to create a national system for tracking research staff, looking at using and adapting current alumni processes, HESA institutional reports and exit surveys, so that individual HEIs can collect robust data that can also be collated on a national basis (WS3).
- Set up a project to create a Fully Integrated Researcher Evaluation system, building a process to bring together information from TNA, appraisals, programme and training evaluations that would: link to supervision (PGRs) and appraisal (RS); be used by individuals to identify, record set goals, log feedback, learning outcomes and behavioural change; be fully portable (WS3).
- Broker the following impact studies, in collaboration with HEA where appropriate (WS5):
  - Investigate the impact of the Roberts' agenda on doctoral researcher and research staff recruitment and retention.
  - Investigate cultural change in HEIs (for STaRSS, CROS and Research Leaders' survey steering groups).
  - Within the current exploration of 'What is a PhD?', investigate employers' perception (inherent skills and how employers would value them).
- Research student choices in the international postgraduate research market (WS6).
- Conduct a comparative study of PGRs in different countries, possibly liaising with international bodies (EUA CDE, US CGS) to ascertain the competitive position of the UK (WS6).
- Engage with professional bodies to investigate the comparability of UK research-degree-trained professionals (WS6).

## To the Rugby Team and the Funders' Forum

- Initiate a study of how universities' employment structures impact upon research processes and outputs (WG3).
- (Rugby Team) Engage with HESA/funding councils to investigate why HEI data for HESA Staff Data Collection is not robust (WS6).

## To RCUK/research councils

- Co-ordinate approaches to data collection and other requirements across individual research councils to avoid requiring HEIs to develop duplicate programmes (such as doctoral training accounts) (WG2).
- As part of the final reporting process, require feedback from research staff project members on the training they themselves received (WG6).
- Sponsor a research project focusing on non-academic employers and seeking to compare the performance of employees with and without a doctoral qualification. (WS3).

## To funding bodies (RCs, FCs and others)

- Consider how they intend to support PG skills training beyond 2011 for all PGRs (not just RCUK-funded students): ring-fencing part of the block grant for PG skills training would be fair and effective (WG1).

- Compare the research grant application eligibility policies of each funding body, clarify the process and roles and explain/justify the differences between different policies for the benefit of research staff and their institutions (WG3).
- On a pump-priming basis, provide national funding for PI development distributed to, and ring-fenced within, HEIs (WG3).
- Require HEIs to have HR strategy as central to institutional strategy (WG4).
- Require HEIs to be explicit (giving actual examples) about what has been done to develop researchers when applying for any grant/funding (WG4). Link funding to training provision/achievement of certain criteria (WG5).
- Extend the reach of national longitudinal studies (the research councils, DIUS, the funding councils and the Government). In the short term, develop the proposed RC longitudinal tracking study to include a higher proportion of non-RC-funded researchers. In the long term, we recommend a substantial national longitudinal survey of researchers and their careers (WS4).

### To the 'researcher development' programme

- Engage with large employers and professional/sectoral organisations to get their help in articulating the need for PG skills training: statements from industry and commerce about the skills they require may be more effective in influencing government and the rest of the sector (WG1).
- Undertake a mapping exercise to build a picture of what is currently available in relation to both collecting researcher career profiles and career tracking information (WS4).
- Seek career profiles of international staff and UK researchers overseas as part of the national repository (WS6).
- Over the next five-year contract, identify research staff as a distinct group, not subsumed into a general 'researcher' category (WG3).
- Provide a quality kite mark for all researcher training (WG5).
- Establish RS training networks between institutions (WG6).
- Develop good practice guidelines for making use of disparate sources of researcher information at HEI level (such as course attendance and use of careers services) (WS4).
- Broker a dialogue between the sector and RCs regarding funding beyond 2011 – and start it now (WG4).
- Facilitate an authoritative voice for RS – across institutions (WG6).

### To HEIs and the 'researcher development' programme

- HEIs to use techniques for tracking PGRs through their careers (eg allocate an email address for life) and the 'researcher development' programme to collate data from HEIs to provide a more comprehensive picture of PGR career progression (WG1).

### To QAA and funding bodies

- Develop a code of practice for research staff (WG4).

### To HEA

- Set up an exit survey that builds on PRES, containing poolable sections for HEIs to be able to make inter-institutional comparisons (WS1).

### To AGCAS

- Develop national targeted resources for PGRs (web-based) (WG2).

### To HESA

- To support HESA's recommendation to include level 6 qualifications in the 2011 census questionnaire, and to extend this for all UK social surveys (WS4).
- That all national organisations publishing survey data make the distinction between masters and doctoral qualifications (WS4).
- That recruitment (UK and international student) statistics are collected and published at national level and trends monitored (WS6).

### To all stakeholders

- Recognise continuity/portability of training in order to enable mobility of qualifications and experience (WG5).
- Emphasise producing an evidence base that is not just based on researchers: it needs to impact on the whole sector all the way up the chain (including VCs) (WG6).
- Revisit the debate on what constitutes quality research (WG6).
- Look at how management buy-in can be developed (WG6).
- Develop separate academic and non-academic career paths and involve employers and sector skills development agencies (WS4).

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## NEW PROGRAMME ANNOUNCEMENT



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

### Vitae

The Vitae programme, officially launched at the Researcher Development Conference in September 2008, builds on the work of the UK GRAD Programme and the UK Higher Education Researcher Development Group (UKHERD). Its vision is for the UK to be world-class in supporting the professional development of researchers and researcher careers. Vitae works with universities and other employers, research funders, national and international organisations, government, and researchers themselves.

The 2009 Roberts Policy Forum will be run by Vitae.

For further information about specific offers and the range of our activities please contact us or visit our website: [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

Vitae is supported by Research Councils UK (RCUK) and managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation.

To order a copy, please contact Vitae.  
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