

Summer 2009

Hub News

Vitae South West and Wales Hub



Welcome and a Happy New Year!

And 2010 has started with many challenges—and I'm not just talking about the impact all the white stuff has had! The Christmas eve message from Peter Mandelson was hardly one of comfort and joy—a bleak midwinter chill passed through all in the university sector. And for those involved in the skills agenda, the questions over Roberts' money are still to be resolved...

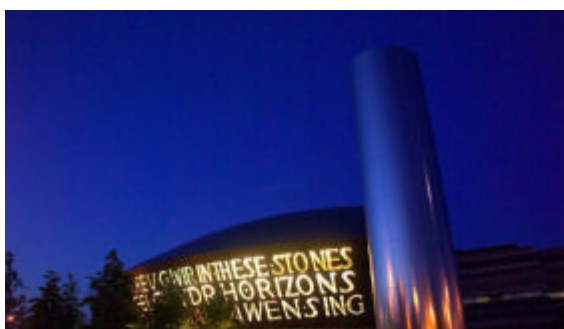
However, the Hub is planning a number of events over the coming months to continue to support you in your work—the first being our Annual Good Practice event, held this year in the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay. Details of how to book your free place below.

As usual, the Newsletter includes both national and regional news— if you wish to contribute an article for a future newsletter or want to be added to our mailing list please do contact us as we would love to hear from you.

Anne Goodman, Vitae SWW Hub Manager
swwhub@vitae.ac.uk

7th Annual Good Practice Conference

24th February, Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, 10.30—16.00



If you are a skills developer, a careers advisor, a supervisor, a Director of Postgraduate Studies, or have an interest in researcher development, book your place at this free event on www.vitae.ac.uk/swwhub. A full programme will be circulated shortly, but we are planning workshops on: collaboration, using coaching with researchers, online materials, evaluation and more. If you would like to offer a workshop, please email swwhub@vitae.ac.uk with a short outline of your proposal.

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Regional News

The Hub has had a packed programme of events since September.

For staff supporting researchers, the Hub has held sessions on:

- the new Researcher development framework
- influencing skills
- action learning

A **Careers Advisors Forum** was held in December which not only gave colleagues from Careers Services the chance to share practice, but also gave them a taster of the new Vitae Broadening Horizons career management program for researchers.

Also in December, the Hub held a joint event with the Wales Resource Centre for Women on **Building and Sustaining Networks**. Over 55 female researchers from the South West and Wales region attended and heard an inspiring presentation from Prof Averil Macdonald, Reading University about the Athena Swan Charter and heard representatives from BBSRC and UKRC SET and took part in workshops. The event was very well received, with one participant commenting

'The workshops were brilliant and very inspiring and the booklet on balancing life was extremely helpful - I put some of it into action immediately and have made some great changes this week. I also got lots of info about funding during the networking session, plus some inspiration for my career development. I found out a lot of things I would never have found out otherwise and met some interesting and inspiring people.'*

* *Vitae Balanced researcher booklet*

The Hub Manager attended the BBSRC Next Generation conference in Newport, running a session on career choices and also had a stand at the AHRC Regional event in Bristol. She also ran sessions at Bristol University Careers Service open day for postgraduates and the Student Induction day at the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

Finally, the Hub Manager together with colleagues from the Midlands Hub and external trainers devised and ran a successful GRADschool Manager training event.

A programme of events for 2010 being developed . If you have any suggestions or would like the Hub Manger to come to your institution, - get in touch! swwhub@vitae.ac.uk.

Athena Swan Award for Cardiff



Cardiff University has received the Athena Swan Bronze Award in recognition of its success in recruiting, retaining and promoting women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET).

Cardiff is one of only 19 universities nationwide to have been awarded a prestigious bronze award of 2009 under the Athena SWAN Charter for Women in Science.

The Charter commends good employment practice for women working in science, engineering and technology (SET) in higher education and research.

Universities South West

Is the new name for HERDA-SW. Universities South West represents 13 HEIS in the region, and have a new website to go with their new name: www.universitiessouthwest.ac.uk

At their 10th Anniversary conference in November, awards were made to individuals who had supported HERDA-SW in its first ten years. Our congratulations to:

Spirit of Partnership Award - Jill Sheen, SWRDA

A Decade of Support Award - David Williams, Arts University College Bournemouth

Founding Vision - Sean Mackney, HE Academy

Contribution to the Region - Marc Lintern, University of Plymouth

universities

SOUTH WEST



National Update

Researcher Development Framework update

Vitae recently consulted individuals as well as organisations with an interest in the personal, professional and career development of researchers on a new 'Researcher development framework'. The formal consultation closed on Friday 11 December but Vitae is still keen to hear your views (email rdf@vitae.ac.uk).

The framework has been created as a tool for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education. It describes the knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities of researchers and encourages researchers to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development. It will be of value to anyone conducting research in higher education, whether this is their main role or part of a wider remit.

Further information about the framework can be found at www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf, and further update was given at the Vitae Policy Forum in January (see page 4). The final framework will be launched later in spring 2010.

Vitae authored report is to provide a strong basis for the postgraduate review

A new UUK report on *Promoting UK Doctorate* was recently discussed at the House of Commons to an audience of MPs and Vice-Chancellors. This joint UUK and Vitae event on 28 October hosted by Roberta Blackman-Woods MP (PPS to David Lammy) included speeches from Professor Steve Smith, President, Universities UK and Vice-Chancellor of University of Exeter; Dr Janet Metcalfe, Chair and Head of Vitae and co-author of the report; and Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP, Minister for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

During the event the report *Promoting the UK Doctorate*, authored by Vitae was recognised as providing a strong basis on which the postgraduate review by BIS (to be undertaken by Professor Adrian Smith) can be built. The report shows how study at doctoral level will provide the high level skills needed to help drive our economy in a post-recession environment

Professor Steve Smith, President, Universities UK highlighted areas addressed in *Promoting the UK Doctorate* for consideration in the PG review, a key one being a need to secure the support for the development and the future employability of PhD students.

'We need to promote the attractiveness of the UK PhD to employers, as well as students. We also need to do more to encourage mobility between academia and business, and vice versa. Transferable employability skills for PhD graduates, allowing them to work effectively within industry as well as academia, are critical.'

To support the skills development of researchers Professor Smith underlined the importance of Roberts Funding to be continued *'beyond the current timeframe of 2010/11 in a clear and identifiable way.'*

Also the international competitiveness and reputation of the UK doctorate were discussed. Professor Smith said: *'UUK will continue to work with organisations such as Vitae, RCUK, the British Council and others to promote the UK PhD brand, to ensure that the UK PhD in all its forms, and in all its diversity, continues to be one of the most highly respected in the world.'*



Professor Steve Smith, Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP, Dr Janet Metcalfe

The co-author of *Promoting the UK Doctorate* report, Dr Janet Metcalfe Chair and Head of Vitae, urged all to read the report which underpins areas critical to the continued success of the UK's doctoral provision.

'Our doctoral programmes are the best in the world but we can do better. Now is the time to capitalise on this strength and promote the 'UK brand' world-wide', Dr Metcalfe said.

'We need to ensure the financial sustainability of doctoral programmes and continue to improve the researcher experience through continued investment in training and development. We also need to recognise and capitalise on the talent of doctorates - across the whole of the UK.'

Download the full report at www.vitae.ac.uk/publications



Response to Postgraduate Review

Vitae submitted its response to the review of postgraduate education by Professor Adrian Smith in late December 2009.

Vitae's response, which focuses primarily on aspects that relate to postgraduate researcher employability and career development, was developed through consultation with key players from our HE network and in conversation with other sector-wide organisations.

Vitae recommends that all stakeholders work together to ensure that professional development of researchers is appropriately funded and integral to doctoral programmes.

Ensuring that our researchers are equipped with high level skills for their future careers is essential in the UK's ability to emerge successfully from the economic downturn and to our continued economic prosperity.

[Vitae's response to the review of postgraduate education.](#)

Response to REF

In November 2009 Vitae conducted a consultation of two of its main networks on the HE Funding Bodies' proposals for the Research Excellence Framework, the new arrangements for the assessment and funding of research in UK higher education institutions that will replace the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Comments were invited from Vitae's network of staff supporting the development of researchers; a network which includes staff working in training and development functions, human resources, careers services and research offices in higher education institutions across the UK. Vitae also attempted to engage its growing network of research staff contacts, inviting contributions from delegates at the first [Vitae research staff conference](#) and visitors to the [Vitae research staff blog](#).

The responses from these two network groups have been compiled into a single Vitae response which emphasises the need for REF to measure, and to help shape, the management, sustainability and enhancement of the research base. In particular, Vitae argues that there needs to be clearer links between the REF and the implementation of the principles of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#).

It is anticipated that the outcomes of the consultation will be announced in spring 2010. [Vitae response to the Research Excellence Framework](#).

Vitae Policy Forum

This invitation only event was held on 6-7 January in Edinburgh.

The Forum was an opportunity to bring together the HE sector and key funding organisations for open and constructive discussion on how well the skills agenda is embedded in institutional structures and practice, and the implications of possible changes in funding mechanisms in the short and long term. The views of participants and the sector will inform the RCUK strategy for its research careers activities in the next spending review period from April 2011.

Go to www.vitae.ac.uk/policyforum2010 and click on workshops to download some of the presentations.



Vitae innovate

Vitae's £100,000 fund for innovative projects relating to the personal, professional and career development of researchers was launched in June. This fund has been extremely successful in catalysing new ideas and partnerships including engaging new organisations in the researcher development agenda. 190 bids were received in total with over 100 distinct organisations leading bids (78 HEIs, 26 other organisations). Total funding requested was in excess of £3million. The successful proposals were announced at the Vitae researcher development conference at the University of Warwick on Tuesday 8 September 2009.

These included:

- Open research: the application of e-knowledge tools in researcher careers training and development; The Open University (OU); £20,000
- Essential business skills for the low carbon economy: a bespoke programme for researchers; University of East Anglia; £15,725
- Researcher-led initiatives: generating frameworks for promoting a postgraduate researcher stake in researcher development; National Union of Students; £9,900
- Building impact into social science research; University of Leeds; £9,750
- The research impact agenda and early career development for historians: a pilot study; History Research Wales; £8,516
- Facilitating research as a creative process; Imperial College London; £7,160
- Win-Win: developing the transferable skills of research staff through mentoring; The University of Sussex; £4,500

The remaining unallocated monies will be carried forward in the Vitae innovate fund. Further information on the next call for proposals will be available shortly. In the meantime, thank you again to all bidders and congratulations to those who were successful. We are looking forward to the outcome of these projects.

An update of the History Research Wales project will be given at the Hub Good Practice Conference on 24 February.

Vitae researcher development conference 2009



On 8-9 September, over 400 people with a stake in developing researchers in higher education, met to listen, challenge, discuss, create and debate the future and immediate landscape. This included potential changes in policy, funding, structures of research and the implications for training and developing the next generation of researchers. The conference speakers, workshops and discussions raised issues relating to the long term future, the medium term and the immediate actions that needed to be taken. Also, 'Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2009: analysis of aggregated UK results' and 'The Rugby Team Impact Framework: one year on' reports were launched during the conference and are available for downloading at www.vitae.ac.uk/cros and www.vitae.ac.uk/rugbyteam respectively.

The full conference report is now available at [Vitae-researcher development conference 2009](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-development-conference-2009).



The Creative Researcher



This booklet, the second in Vitae's researcher booklets offers practical information and advice for researchers on creativity in a research environment. It is written by Dr Kevin Byron, Enterprise Education Coordinator at Queen Mary, University of London and a freelance trainer specialising in research skills, personal effectiveness, creativity and enterprise skills.

The booklet is available to download from www.vitae.ac.uk/publications or contact swwhub@vitae.ac.uk for hard copies.



Researchers' Skills and Competencies at a Glance

A new publication enabling employers to see at a glance what doctoral researchers and research staff can bring to an organisation. Download your copy at www.vitae.ac.uk/publications.

Recruiting researchers: survey of employer practice 2009

Watch out for this new report will be on the website shortly.

Database of career stories

The aim of this database is to provide access to a wide range of researchers' career stories in a searchable format. The stories illustrate the skills and knowledge gained through a PhD or research position, showing how these can be applied to future careers.

This database is in its first phase, and is fully searchable. The final version will have more story content plus upload facility, and will be launched in early February.

[Database of career stories.](#)

Intrapreneurship project update

The Vitae intrapreneurship project group is continuing to take forward a second phase of the intrapreneurship project. The project group is developing an 'Intrapreneurial lens' which will help researchers to reflect on their intrapreneurial capabilities and opportunities to develop these important transferable skills. This will be supported by a self-assessment questionnaire and a set of guides to help trainers and developers to review and introduce intrapreneurial development opportunities into their training provision.

In September, the project group published a PRES survey paper analysing the responses to the questions that the project group added to the PRES survey regarding researchers' self-perception of their innovation and intrapreneurial capabilities. This study provides fresh insight into how doctoral researchers perceive themselves to be innovative in undertaking their research, and through an 'Intrapreneurial lens' offers a new viewpoint on the value and potential of doctoral research competencies for organisational benefit.

To download a copy of the report, and to get further information about the project, please visit www.vitae.ac.uk/intrapreneurship.

If you have an interest in joining discussions on the topic of intrapreneurship in researcher development then you might like to join the project's JISCMail list. To do this you need to email: listserv@JISCMail.ac.uk with the following message: 'Subscribe INTRAPRENEURSHIP-RESEARCHER-DEV@JISCMail.ac.uk [include your name]'.



PGR Issues

National Union of Students: Postgraduate Campaign

NUS has recently taken steps to embed and extend its work around postgraduate students. In June 2009 NUS held its first annual postgraduate conference for student officers with responsibility for postgraduates in their Institutions. A committee of postgraduate representatives has been elected and a Research and Policy Officer appointed to carry out the work of the postgraduate campaign.

NUS's priority for the new campaign is to ensure that the postgraduate student voice is clearly heard in local and national debate around postgraduate education. The campaign is working closely with students' unions to enhance postgraduate representation and engagement.

Nationally, we are championing the Higher Education Academy's postgraduate experience surveys, working with Vitae on a researcher-led initiative project and carrying out our own research into postgraduate finance and postgraduate research students' experiences of employment (in partnership with UCU).

Most crucially, NUS has made a strong submission to the government's current Postgraduate Review (see below.)

For more information about the work of NUS Postgraduate Campaign email: postgraduates@nus.org.uk

NUS Submission to the BIS post-graduate review

NUS is using the BIS Postgraduate Review (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/postgraduate-review>) to let the government know what the issues are for postgraduate students in the UK. There are recommendations on finance and funding, information and guidance, careers and employability, support for international students, taught and research students, part-time students and much more. There is also data you can use to back up any of your own work on postgraduates. You can download the NUS submission at [NUS Submission](#)

For more information about the work of NUS Postgraduate Campaign email: postgraduates@nus.org.uk or visit <http://www.officeronline.co.uk/postgraduate>.

Winner of THE Award 2009 for outstanding support for researchers

Vitae congratulates Durham for providing access and support for all researchers

A team from Durham University was announced the winner of the Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers at the gala Awards dinner in London on 15 October. This Award was sponsored by Research Councils UK in association with Vitae.

Durham University won with a programme ensuring that transferable skills training is accessible to all doctoral candidates and early career research staff. Following a systematic study of barriers to successful completion of research degrees, the team worked to develop a wide-ranging programme providing an inclusive approach which benefits all researchers, including part-time or distance-learning students.

Professor Ian Diamond, RCUK Skills Champion, commented: *'This is an outstanding programme, consisting of an impressive mix of innovative actions generated by a real evidence base. The UK needs to support and build on our existing skills base, and forward thinking programmes like this, which ensure that all talented researchers can access excellent training whatever their situation, deserve recognition.'*

Congratulations should also go to the other shortlisted universities: University of Cambridge, University of Edinburgh, University of Manchester, University of Nottingham, and University of Oxford.

Read the RCUK press release 'Outstanding support and unexpected discoveries win RCUK accolades'

www.rcuk.ac.uk/news/2009/091016.htm



Research Staff Issues

HEI Strategies survey

The HEI Strategies survey, one of the six Concordat benchmarking projects, was launched on 6 January. A UUK I-Note announcing the launch of the survey, with instructions for how it can be completed, was sent to Vice Chancellors and Principals.

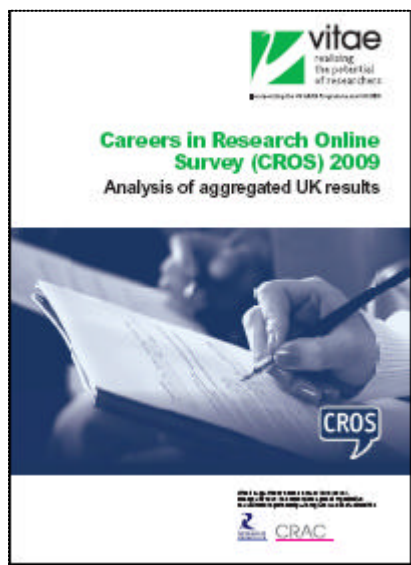
The survey will run from 6 January to 6 April 2010, to allow institutions plenty of time to prepare their answers. The survey will help UUK produce a report (to be launched in June) on strategies to support research careers.

As well as providing the information for the Concordat Benchmarking Projects, the HEI Strategies survey will also help institutions align with the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This is being implemented in the UK through the Concordat mechanism. Details of how this will be achieved and the links between the Concordat, the European Charter and Code and the HEI Strategies survey can be found on the Concordat website.

www.researchconcordat.ac.uk

For more details contact Thomas Papworth
Thomas.papworth@universitiesuk.ac.uk

More research staff actively managing their careers than ever before



Higher education institutions are doing a good job in

supporting their research staff, according to national responses from the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2009, published by Vitae.

The CROS survey found that most researchers feel valued, are satisfied with their work-life balance, have discussed career development with their manager or principal investigator and believe their employer is committed to equality and diversity.

'There has been marked improvement in the uptake of processes like induction, appraisal and training opportunities among research staff, compared with previous surveys, which demonstrates progress in achieving the aims of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers,' said Janet Metcalfe, Chair and Head of Vitae and co-author of the report.

Robin Mellors-Bourne, CRAC Research Director, who conducted the analysis, commented: *'It is heartening to see that half of the research staff claim to have a distinct career plan. Taking ownership of their career appears to be a significant motivating factor for researchers.'*

The Chair of the CROS Steering Group, Dr Andy Wilson said: *'the CROS report provides enormously valuable insights into the experiences of researchers in UK universities. The real contribution of CROS, though, will come from institutions making comparisons with their own results and then both planning for improvements and sharing their good practice through Vitae.'*

The Chair of the Concordat Strategy Group Sir Professor Ivor Crewe concluded: *'the CROS findings will provide valuable information to those committed to the training and development of the next generation of researchers. Investment in researcher development ensures that our researchers are world-class and able to contribute fully to the UK economy, culture and society. The new Concordat launched in June 2008 is clearly beginning to have an impact.'*

Download your personal copy of the CROS 2009 report at www.vitae.ac.uk/CROS



NESTA Crucible programme

NESTA, with the support of Vitae, is creating an online resource to assist those working in researcher development to create their own Crucible programmes. Crucible is part professional leadership programme and part collaborative research incubator. Aimed at experienced research staff or those in their first academic position, the programme is carried out over three residentials, each consisting of guest speakers, informal discussions and facilitated networking. Funding is made available for participants to develop interdisciplinary research ideas developed on the programme.

This year NESTA is running its final national Crucible programme and is looking for universities, regions or other institutional groupings to adopt the model. The programme has already been adopted in Scotland, and after a successful pilot will run there for a further 3 years funded by the Scottish Funding Council and NESTA.

Dr Ruth Neiland, GRADskills director at St Andrews and Scottish Crucible founder said "it's an effective way of supporting talented researchers to become more innovative, more interdisciplinary and more aware of how research can have an impact on society through knowledge transfer."

Once the online resource is completed in early 2010, NESTA is planning to hold training and information sessions. Anyone interested in finding out more, or discussing how such a programme could be run in their region, should get in touch with Dr Rachel Brazil at NESTA (rachel.brazil@nesta.org.uk).

Research staff conference

On 5 November Vitae held its first national research staff conference with over 30 higher education institutions represented among the participants. The conference aimed to create a national network of research staff associations specifically to address issues around personal, professional and career development.

Specifically, the conference provided an opportunity to input to the REF consultation, the implementation plans for the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers', the proposed 'Researcher development framework' and the Vitae programme.

The conference outcomes will be posted on the Vitae website soon on our website soon. The conference report will be available in mid-December. For more information and future updates, visit www.vitae.ac.uk/researchstaffconference

Vitae launches a multi-author blog for research staff

Articles are invited by all members of research staff and those interested in their development. Several articles, for example 'Exploring research in a digital age', 'Wanted: researcher with unconditional reliability', 'On being an older researcher' and 'A matter of engagement (on recently published CROS 2009 report)' have already generated some lively comment threads.

Please feel free to post articles on career, professional and personal development, policy developments e.g. the Concordat, feature articles such as interviews, career histories, academics talking about their time as a member of research staff etc. and any useful resources. We hope this will continue to grow and provide useful and supportive online community for research staff.

www.vitae.ac.uk/rsblog



Research Staff Communities

The Vitae website now has a handy list of research staff communities including, associations, online communities, representation, international communities and research staff support websites.

Please email tennie.videler@vitae.ac.uk if you know of any that are missing. <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rscommunities>



Other News

BIS launch a national action plan to encourage the best brains into research careers

This new report, launched in late December 2009, contains good news for the UK as we are already meeting key elements of European best practice in the four areas covered by the National Action Plan on Researcher Mobility and Careers (NAP): open recruitment, pensions and social security, attractive working conditions and skills.

The report identifies future actions so that we can continue to build on our good practice and remain an important destination for top quality research.

These include developing and strengthening the implementation of the UK Researchers' Concordat. This Concordat, developed by the research community, aims to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of UK research careers and to improve the quantity, quality and impact of research for the benefit of UK society and the economy.

Minister for Science and Innovation Lord Drayson said:

'We are investing record amounts into research. This investment is vital to make sure that the UK, and Europe, is to fulfil our economic potential and address the great challenges ahead. That includes creating an environment which encourages the brightest young people to choose research careers.'

News from the Research Council

RESEARCH
COUNCILS UK

Research Councils UK launches Research Outcomes Project

The Research Councils UK (RCUK) Research Outcomes project will establish an ongoing dialogue with the research community to allow the outcomes of research to be reported at any stage during the funding agreement and, most importantly beyond

RCUK recognises that outcomes of research are sometimes only realised after funding has ended. This project aims to develop an ongoing data collection system to improve the evidence available from the outcomes of UK research.

The project follows on from the Outputs & Outcomes Collection (OOCs) project, which simplified the research grant final reporting process and established the case for developing new processes of collecting research outcomes data. A new system will benefit researchers, academic institutions and Research Councils alike by providing access to data collected in a more systematic and immediate manner.

Consultation with the research community is now underway to establish requirements for the new system, and the project team is working closely with HEFCE to align, where possible, with similar requirements for the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Once this stage is complete RCUK will invite tenders to develop and implement a system. Subject to the successful completion of the tender, the project is expected to have a pilot system in operation by summer 2011, with full roll out in late 2011.



Leading science for better health

MRC Chief to step down

Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council (MRC), has been nominated by the University of Cambridge Council as Vice Chancellor for the next period of office. Subject to the approval of Regent House, the University's governing body, Sir Leszek will take over from Professor Alison Richard on 1 October 2010.



Aber's Adam makes Top 10

BBSRC-funded research that developed the first machine to have independently discovered new scientific knowledge has been hailed as one of the Top 10 scientific discoveries of 2009 by Time magazine.

In their 'Top 10 of Everything 2009' feature Time listed Prof Ross King's BBSRC-funded research at Aberystwyth University that developed 'Adam' - a computer-controlled robot that fully automates the scientific process. The research was published in the journal *Science* in April 2009.

The scientists designed Adam to carry out each stage of the scientific process automatically without the need for further human intervention. The robot discovered simple but new scientific knowledge about the genomics of the baker's yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, an organism that scientists use to model more complex life systems. The researchers used separate manual experiments to confirm that Adam's hypotheses were both novel and correct.

Alongside Adam the Robot, Time listed other scientific milestones from 2009, including the restarting of the Large Hadron Collider and the discovery of water on the moon.



Changes to ESRC's Board and Committee structure

The ESRC's current four boards and four committees will, from 1 April 2010, be restructured in order to ensure delivery on the new Strategic Plan. The new structure will include three policy committees (the Research Committee, the Methods and Infrastructure Committee, and the Training and Skills Committee), two virtual networks (impact and international), an Evaluation Committee and an Audit Committee.



No New Postdoctoral Fellowships for STFC

STFC Council's announcement on 16 December of its five-year investment strategy included a 25% reduction in the funding provision for new studentships and fellowships from 2010-11. This decision was taken on the advice of Science Board as part of the refocussing of the entire STFC programme.

STFC's Education, Training and Careers Committee (ETCC) has now considered the implementation of the decision on studentships and fellowships, as part of the wider managed implementation of the five year programme. ETCC has decided that its top priorities should be the PhD studentships and advanced fellowship programmes, and has therefore decided to preserve as far as possible the number of new awards in these two areas.

ETCC has accordingly recommended that STFC should not award any new postdoctoral fellowship awards in 2010, rather than the 12 fellowships initially proposed. The decision to not award new postdoctoral fellowships applies only to 2010, and ETCC will consult with heads of departments on options for future years.

ETCC believes this action will allow STFC to limit the reduction in the number of new studentships and advanced fellowships from 25% to around 15% in 2010.



It's Just Not Cricket!

TaleEnders™ is a project, run by The George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of Glamorgan and funded by the [AHRC's Knowledge Catalyst](#) Scheme, that seeks to gather the oral narrative heritage of Welsh cricket and to explore the use of digital technology as a way of turning those narratives into artefacts and making them available to the broader community. Six clubs across Wales have already contributed to the project and a further six clubs are already lined up to work on a second phase. The team are already developing a linked KTP project, a training programme and on-line toolkits for community use in order to support self-archiving, co-curating and a sustainable future for TaleEnders™.

<http://storytelling.research.glam.ac.uk/documents/>



Events for you

UKCGE Winter Conference 2010

The Future of the Research Degree: Diversity, Convergence, Comparability will be held on 15 February British Library Conference Centre.

[More details](#)

Highlights of the Conference include:

- a look at widening participation to postgraduate study
- a comparison between an 'old' and a 'new' University's strategies in recruiting postgraduate students
- an examination of changes in the postgraduate market
- a view on the international postgraduate student market
- a look at research students perceptions of research
- results from HEA's survey of Taught Master's Programmes
- a session focusing on Collaborative Research Training Masters

Vitae GRADschool Tutor Training hosted by YNE Hub

This workshop is designed for anyone who is planning to be a tutor on a GRADschool programme run by a higher education institution, will be held on 22-23 February. Contact yorksandnehub@vitae.ac.uk

8th Annual Postgraduate Conference Access, Employer Needs and Competitiveness

Speakers at this event on 25 February include Dr David Docherty, Chief Executive, Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE); Advisor, The Postgraduate Review, The Department of Business Innovation and Skills. www.neilstewartassociates.com/conferences/index.php

Save the Date

The Vitae researcher development conference 2010 will be held from 6 - 7 September at the Manchester Midland Hotel. Further details will be sent as soon as they are available.

Events and News for Postgraduate Researchers and Research Staff

Please pass details of these events on to your research staff and postgraduate researchers. Booking forms can be found on www.vitae.ac.uk/events.

For research staff

Advancing in Academia 29 March, Manchester

An interactive one day event that provides research staff with the opportunity to explore and develop some of the skills, knowledge, experience and attributes required to advance an academic career.

For postgraduate researchers

Careers in Academia 30 March, Manchester

This interactive one-day event is aimed at early career researchers and will address topics related to how to succeed in a competitive and complex research environment and allow them to think about the pros and cons of different career options available.

GRADschools

Three-day courses designed to help postgraduate researchers identify and develop their transferable skills and help them to make more informed choices about the next step of their career. Places are limited.

National GRADschools

- 2 - 5 March
- 19-22 October
- 16-19 November

For both research staff and postgraduate researchers

Digital researcher—managing your networks and building your profile 15 March, London

An interactive one day event run by the British Library and Vitae exploring the use of Web 2.0 in research, networks and building researchers own profiles.



School placement scheme, Researchers in Residence, has revamped its website.

The website (www.researchersinresidence.ac.uk) now enables researchers and schools to apply online, making it even easier to arrange a placement.

The scheme, funded by RCUK and supported by the Wellcome Trust, places researchers in host secondary schools across the UK. Everyone benefits: researchers develop their teaching and communication skills by running fun and interactive activities related to their work; teachers gain from extra classroom support; while students get an opportunity to experience real research and link it to classroom theory.

The new-look website includes case studies and researcher profiles to showcase previous Researcher in Residence placements and illustrates the benefits of participation. Scheme manager, Dr Alexandra Humphris-Bach, said, “by hosting researchers, teachers bring a positive role model into the classroom who will, with little extra effort, help enrich the curriculum.”

Commenting on her experience of the scheme, Tamsin Langley, a former Researcher in Residence stated: “It is a really good way for new researchers to get experience of public speaking and build their confidence. You could organise an outreach activity by yourself, but you would not get the training and support that you do through the programme.”

Fresh Science Project

Science Learning Centres are looking for early career researchers to get involved with their Fresh Science project .

The idea behind the project is help secondary science teachers to bring contemporary science and real scientific data into their classes through collaboration with researchers. The project gives researchers the opportunity to communicate their science to a public audience and could lead to longer-term associations between the researchers' institution and schools.

Each researcher would work with one or two individual teachers and interact with them via a website. The aim would be to work with the teachers to develop a classroom resource using the researcher's data. Anticipated time commitments would be 1 hour/week for 12 weeks.

Researchers who would like to know more or who are interested in taking part should email the external contact at freshscience@slcs.ac.uk.

Unlocking the power of the voluntary sector of postgraduate funding

Introducing a major new student guidebook on funding PhDs and masters from charities, foundations and trusts

Everyone understands the challenges postgraduates face in securing funding from research councils and universities, particularly in the current economic climate. ***The Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding*** has one simple aim: to give students another serious option.

There are hundreds of charities and trusts out there who will fund postgraduates- usually quite obscure small bodies. They will often consider students of any nationality, subject, or academic record. Individual grants rarely exceed £2000, but they can mount up.

Unfortunately, very few students apply, or even consider applying. Why is this, and what can be done about it? Luke Blaxill, main author of the *Alternative Guide*. has won 35 awards, successfully financing his PhD in History (raising over £40,000).

“Charities are often not listed online, and strong applications require highly specific skills and strategies. There is little guidance around for students— few universities currently have more than a few paragraphs about the voluntary sector on their websites. The Prospects Guide has two pages, and FunderFinder is a search facility not specifically designed for students. At the moment, postgraduates are missing out in a big way”

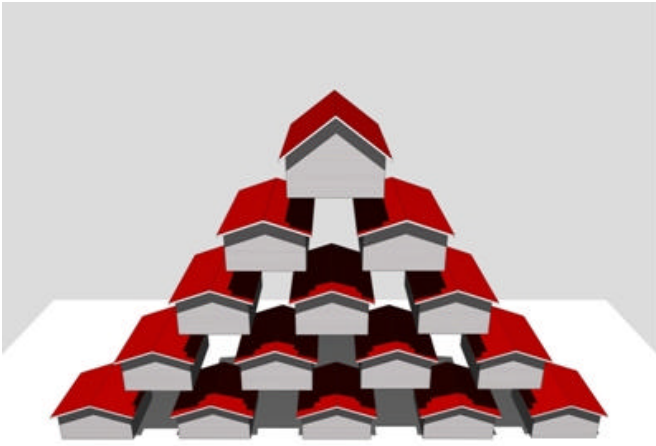
“I wanted to help others achieve what I was able to achieve, without the months of painstaking research and trail and error. I felt the most accessible resource would be a step-by-step guide showing how to identify, find, approach, and then apply strongly to charities. The *Alternative Guide* is written by real students who faced and overcame funding difficulties by thinking outside the box, and it can help others do the same.”

The Alternative Guide has already sold 50,000 printed or electronic copies. It can be licensed to universities in PDF form, or purchased in hard-copy.

To find out more, visit www.gradfunding.co.uk, email enquiries@gradfunding.co.uk or Tel: 0207-564-8172.



The Last Word.....



Roberts' funding – safe as houses?

“Green shoots of recovery” is the official government line now that the level of GDP is moving more positively for the UK. What impact does this great news have on the future of researcher development? None really, the picture is not rosy at all for UK Universities as the UK's debit surpasses £2 trillion. I'm not really sure what a 'trillion' is; but I have a feeling it's a lot.

When I am overdrawn the bank generally want the cash back, with interest. So where are the savings going to come from? The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development latest estimate is that government will need to shed around 350,000 jobs in the public sector between 2010/11 and 2014/15.

Front line staff in areas such as hospitals, schools, and the police will probably not see great cuts. So where will the axe fall?

Roberts funding comes in at around £20 million a year and it ends in 15 months, will it become a victim of cuts to pay for the overdraft? My prediction is, I am afraid to say, yes it will. Not popular amongst us in researcher development but what impact would such a cut have in the short term on the general population; probably not much.

I suspect we will all agree this would be a wrong decision, but just complaining will not be enough to save us. When I say 'us' I really mean it, Vitae figures estimate that around 200 development professionals, responsible for delivering much of the improvements over the past three years, are directly employed on such funds.

We need to be able to show real impact at all levels

from the outcomes of a skills workshop though to an improvement in research quality. The Rugby Team are doing some great work on this but it is at the local level where I suspect the real battles will be won or lost.

National economics and politics have probably already passed judgement on the delicate future of the national Roberts fund. Expect to see words like 'mainstreamed', 'local priorities' and 'part of HR strategy' emerging from RCUK over the next few months as the precursor for an announcement that an 'earmarked' fund will cease from the summer of 2011.

It will be up to us to develop local cases for investment as being part of HR and University Strategy. This will drive benefits for research staff across the UK rather than a 'centralised' fund. Staff Development and HR professionals need to start developing a business plan, perhaps even a sales strategy now to prepare for battle - along with all the other functions that are about to fight for survival.



Christian Carter is Personnel Manager (Policy Development) at Bristol University. He writes in a personal capacity.



Diary Dates:

Upcoming conferences, events and training opportunities

For full details see www.vitae.ac.uk/events

What's on...?

February 2010

- 15 UKCGE Winter Conference, London
- 22-23 GRADschool Tutor Training , Leeds
- 24 SWW Hub Annual Good Practice Conference, Cardiff

March 2010

- 2-5 National GRADschool, Windermere
- 2 Improving performance through wellbeing and engagement in challenging times, Leeds
- 15 Digital Researcher, London
- 24-25 UKCGE Residential workshop, Bristol
- 29 Advancing in Academia, Manchester
- 30 Careers in Academia, Manchester

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