

Part-time researcher skills workshop

Getting the best from a part-time supervisor

Facilitator manual

Vitae resources: developing the
skills and careers of researchers

Vitae is supported by Research Councils UK (RCUK),
managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation
and delivered in partnership with regional Hub host universities

Part-time researcher skills workshop – getting the best from a part-time supervisor

These workshop materials have been developed for Vitae. The programme and materials have been designed and developed by Dr Heather Dalglish, Dr Gerard Hall, Dr Tristram Hooley and Dr Kate Mahoney.

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Getting the best from a part-time supervisor

(90 minutes)

Purpose

This session provides participants with guidance on how to work effectively with their supervisor so that they can get the best from them.

By the end of the session participants will have:

- decided what it is they require for effective supervision
- considered the issues which supervision on a part-time, long-distance basis causes
 - for themselves
 - for their supervisor
- understood more about the other demands on their supervisor, and who their supervisor is
- considered their own approach to their supervisor
- determined a way to optimise the supervisor/researcher relationship.

Process

A discussion and exercise based session led by the workshop facilitator.

Structure

Introduction to the session and the supervisor-hero exercise	10 mins
Exercise: the ideal supervisor	20 mins
Supervisor issues and activities	10 mins
Difficulties the supervisor faces	5 mins
What does your supervisor know about you?	15 mins
The ideal postgraduate researcher – barriers and changes required	10 mins
Communication and dealing with serious problems	15 mins
Summary	5 mins

Resources

Getting the best from a part-time supervisor PowerPoint slides
Flipchart paper and pens per group
Pro-forma 1: improving supervision handout
Pro-forma 2: supervisor meeting handout
Data projector

Detail

Time	Slide	Facilitator's notes	Resources/additional comments
10 mins	1 – 4	<p>Slide 1 and 2 – introduction Introduction and overview to the session</p> <p>Slides 3 and 4 – supervisor-hero Begin to introduce the supervisor-hero exercise</p>	
20 mins	5 – 6	<p>Slide 5 – now you have the technology Explain the ideal supervisor exercise.</p> <p>Working in small groups they have to build an ideal supervisor. They have 10 minutes to make their design.</p> <p>Each group to briefly present their ideal supervisor to others.</p> <p>Trainer should comment on each design – remain positive but raise awareness that supervisor has limits.</p> <p>Slide 6 – the role of the supervisor Suggests supervisor role and what might realistically be expected of them.</p>	<p>Materials required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each group requires flip chart paper and pens.
10 mins	7 – 9	<p>Slide 7 – part-time supervision issues Provides some possible part time supervision issues that can be encountered – allow researchers time to raise other issues.</p> <p>Slide 8 – supervisor-hero world A group discussion of the supervisor-hero world – may be informed by research ethos session in morning.</p> <p>Slide 9 – other academic demands A day in the life of an academic. This gives a non-comprehensive list of examples of activities that supervisors might be engaged in.</p> <p>Take this opportunity to make the point that academics may find it difficult to</p>	Feed back any comments to flip chart.

Time	Slide	Facilitator's notes	Resources/additional comments
		meet all the demands on them, too. Life for the typical academic is not just spent thinking in an ivory tower!	
5 mins	10	Slide 10 – part-time issues for your supervisor Talk through the difficulties a supervisor might encounter in having a part-time researcher.	
15 mins	11	Slide 11 – what does your supervisor know about you? In groups, get participants to discuss and feed back what they would find helpful for the supervisors to understand about them. What changes in approach would they like to make? Each group can feed back their own findings to others to generate discussion.	Materials required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart paper and pens
10 mins	12 – 14	Slide 12 – the ideal postgraduate researcher What would their supervisor like from them as a researcher? How well do they achieve this? Slide 13 – barriers to the ideal Are there barriers which affect them achieving their ideal situation? Slide 14 – consider a discussion with your supervisor An exercise for participants individually to think about what changes they would like to make to their supervision arrangements and how to discuss this with their supervisor. After giving five minutes to fill in the pro-forma, ask if any other issues need to be raised at this stage.	Materials required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-forma 1: improving supervision handout
15 mins	15 – 16	Slide 15 and 16 – communication and serious problems Dealing with serious problems – spend some time on avenues of help if problems occur which are unresolved between the researcher and supervisor.	

Time	Slide	Facilitator's notes	Resources/additional comments
5 mins	17	<p>Slide 17 – finally: to do</p> <p>A reminder of what to do after today. Participants should consider arranging a meeting with their supervisor to discuss their working relationship.</p> <p>If time permits, encourage participants to consider an appropriate agenda for this meeting, or suggest as a task to return to later.</p>	<p>Materials required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-forma 2 handout (can print on reverse of pro-forma 1)

Pro-forma 1: improving supervision

Things my supervisor needs to understand about me (eg family commitments):

Things I could change to work more effectively (eg meeting deadlines):

Areas where I need help (eg specific research suggestions, making contacts):

Anything else!

Pro-forma 2: supervisor meeting

To do:

- arrange a face-to-face meeting with your supervisor
- ensure that enough time is given for the agenda to be properly covered
- ensure that your supervisor is aware that you wish some time to be given to issues other than pure research.

Date of next meeting:

Proposed agenda:

- potential changes to method of supervision
- what frequency of contact is needed
- specific help required
- what methods of communication will suit you both best (eg telephone, email)
- other areas...
- research-related topics.



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

About Vitae

Vitae is supported by Research Councils UK (RCUK) and managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation. Vitae's vision is for the UK to be world class in supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers.

- Championing the development and implementation of effective policy
- Enhancing higher education provision through sharing practice and resources
- Providing access to development opportunities and resources
- Building an evidence base to support the researcher development agenda

Vitae's work with higher education institutions

Vitae works with UK higher education institutions (HEIs) to embed professional and career development in the research environment. Vitae plays a major role in innovating, sharing practice and enhancing the capability of the higher education sector to provide world-class professional development and training of researchers. We do this both through national projects and through Hub activities.

The programme develops resources for use by trainers and others working with researchers, and provides opportunities for HEIs to share information and practice; develop ideas and approaches; and work collaboratively.

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