

News

Winter 2009/2010



Vitae North West Hub

www.vitae.ac.uk/nwhub

Winter Wonderland

Is it going to be a white Christmas this year? Having read the recent weather forecast it might actually happen. 2009 has flown by for the hub, with the highlight being our programme of events for all our major stakeholders: postgraduate researchers, research staff, supervisors and staff supporting researcher development. As always, the Vitae NW Hub team always welcome your ideas, feedback or thoughts about our activities so please get in touch with us at nwhub@vitae.ac.uk or 0161 275 1462. The Hub team would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a:

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Don't forget, the Vitae NW Hub have both a Twitter account and a blog on which you can follow the latest news, developments and events:



Twitter: [vitae_nwhub](https://twitter.com/vitae_nwhub)

Blog: http://vitae_nwhub.posterous.com/



Please note Vitae is aimed at a wide ranging audience so we have colour-coded the sections of this newsletter and our website to clarify the areas relevant for you:

- Orange sections are for researchers (postgraduate students and research staff)
- Blue sections are for staff supporting researcher development
- Green sections are of general interest

Cross cultural issues in PhD supervision

University of Manchester
14 January 2010

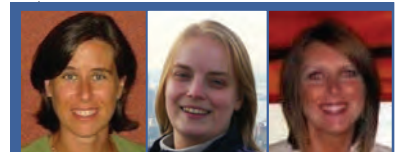
A full day workshop for supervisors and research managers covering general cross-cultural communication issues and practical solutions to potential problems in supervising postgraduate students from another culture.

International students by reason of their numbers and growing economic and educational importance are crucial to:

- The higher education sector
- The competitive edge of UK universities
- Profitability and cost-effectiveness

Supervisors are being faced with guiding international researchers through their research degrees and occasionally a clash of cultures can lead to higher drop out figures and lower completion rates. Dr Mona Chung and Professor Richard Ingleby have firsthand experience of dealing with these cross cultural issues across western and eastern cultures, and have a range of tools and examples for dealing with these issues in a student/supervisor relationship.

We have a limited number of spare places on this free workshop. For further details and to book, visit www.vitae.ac.uk/nwhub or contact nwhub@vitae.ac.uk.



Judy Williams Emma Gillaspay Tracey McLoughlin

Vitae NW Hub Team

In this edition

PAGE 1

- Cross cultural issues in PhD supervision

PAGE 2

- 6th annual PRISM conference
- The creative researcher

PAGE 3

- Unlocking the power of the voluntary sector for postgraduate funding

PAGE 4

- National Union of Students: Postgraduate campaign

PAGE 5

- Vitae launch research staff blog
- Vitae research staff conference

PAGE 6

- Dates for your diary (researchers)

PAGE 7

- Vitae report provides strong basis for PGR review

PAGE 8

- Vitae researcher development conference 2009
- Vitae innovate

PAGE 9

- Improvement seen in support for research staff
- NESTA Crucible programme

PAGE 10

- THE award winner 2009
- Intrapreneurship project update

PAGE 11

- Dates for your diary (staff supporting researchers)



6th annual PRISM conference

University of Manchester

30 October 2009

The University of Manchester hosted the 6th annual PRISM conference for Postgraduate Researchers in Science Medicine. The conference was attended by over 150 postgraduate students, with 64 presenting their own research via either a spoken or poster presentation. Congratulations to the students who won a Vitae sponsored prize for the best spoken or poster presentation in their session.

Spoken presentation winners:

- Seonaid Murray: Early stage pancreatic cancer serum protein biomarkers (University of Liverpool)
- Ahmad Madarati: UK Endodontists experience using ultrasonics for removal of intra-canal separated instruments (University of Manchester)
- Christine Kennedy: The challenge of embracing a wider epistemology (Liverpool John Moores University)
- Andrea Ditchfield: Raised maternal body mass index (BMI) is associated with altered activity of placental nutrient transporters (University of Manchester)
- Theresa Barnes: Systemic sclerosis serum increases endothelial cell apoptosis and activation in neutrophil-endothelial cell co-cultures: a role for interleukin 6 (University of Liverpool)
- Amelia Markey: Development of an integrated miniaturised real time polymerase chain reactor (University of Manchester)

Poster presentation winners:

- Khimara Naidoo: YY1 is a prognostic marker in Follicular Lymphoma (University of Manchester)
- Nadeem Choudhry: Next generation screen printed electrochemical platforms: Non-enzymatic sensing of carbohydrates using copper(II) (Manchester Metropolitan University)
- Adeline Salim: Screening NF- κ B inhibitors for effects on neuroblastoma cell fate (University of Liverpool)
- Kate Roberts: Regulation of neutrophil action in inflammatory disease (University of Liverpool)

"It's a great opportunity to get re-enthused!"

For further details of PRISM 2009, visit www.vitae.ac.uk/prism2009.

The 7th annual PRISM conference will be hosted by Lancaster University in September 2010. To be informed when the call for abstract submissions is announced, please email nwhub@vitae.ac.uk.



"An excellent, non-threatening, environment. I now feel better prepared for my next conference"

The creative researcher - order your copy today

Vitae has recently launched the second title in its series of practical researcher booklets. **'The creative researcher'** provides practical advice and tips to postgraduate researchers and research staff about creativity in a research environment, drawing examples from the experience of researchers. This booklet follows the release of the first in the series, titled 'The balanced researcher'.

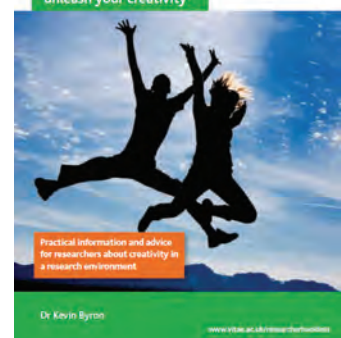
To view the booklets online in pdf format, visit www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets.

If you would like to receive a printed copy of either booklet, please contact nwhub@vitae.ac.uk.

The creative researcher



Tools and techniques to unleash your creativity





Unlocking the power of the voluntary sector for postgraduate funding

By Shuzhi Zhou

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? I ask Luke Blaxill, main author of the *Alternative Guide*. Luke 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 trial 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 was published three months ago, and 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 <http://www.gradfunding.co.uk>, email enquiries@gradfunding.co.uk, or phone 0207-564-8172.



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 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.

Postgraduate employment survey

NUS is delighted the launch its first major piece of research for the new Postgraduate Campaign in collaboration with UCU: a **Postgraduate Employment Survey**.

You can access the survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/BRYX8QQ

The Postgraduate Employment Survey seeks to find out:

- what kinds of higher education employment roles postgraduate research students undertake within and outside their institutions
- the quality of the postgraduate higher education employment experience in terms of information and support
- how postgraduates' experience of being employed in a teaching role compares to their experience of other kinds of paid work in higher education

The results of the survey will be used to inform and update the NUS/UCU Postgraduate Employment Charter and produce a Guide to the Charter for the use of unions, scheduled to be released in early 2010.

Submission to the BIS postgraduate review

NUS is using the BIS Postgraduate Review (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 <http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/NUS%20Submission%20to%20Postgraduate%20Review.pdf>.

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



Vitae launch research staff blog

www.vitae.ac.uk/rsblog

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.

Vitae 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 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.

To view the conference outcomes and report, visit www.vitae.ac.uk/researchstaffconference





Dates for your diary:

Upcoming conferences, events and training opportunities

For further details on any of these events, go to
www.vitae.ac.uk/events

January 2010

- 14 Cross cultural issues in PhD supervision (for supervisors and research staff with supervisory responsibilities), Manchester

February 2010

- 1 National postgraduate training days - English (19th - 21st Century), London
- 9 National postgraduate training days - History (Medieval - 18th Century), London
- 25 8th Annual Postgraduate Conference - Access, Employer Needs and Competitiveness, London

March 2010

- 2-5 National GRADschool, Windermere
- 15 Digital researcher - Managing your networks and building your profile, London
- 24 UKRC for SET Women / Vitae NW Hub networking event, Manchester
- 29 National postgraduate training days - Modern Foreign Languages, London
- 29 Advancing academia, Manchester
- 30 Careers in focus: Careers in academia, Manchester

Coming up later in 2010...

- Apr Broadening horizons career development programme for research staff
- May Developing the Effective Research Communicator GRADschool, Manchester
- Jun Salford Postgraduate Annual Research conference, Salford
- Jun Pathways: Career options for PhDs and Research Staff, Manchester
- Jun Postgraduate Researchers in Arts, Social sciences and Humanities (PRASH) conference, Ormskirk
- Jul & Nov The engaged researcher (Vitae NW Hub and Manchester Beacon), Manchester
- Sep 7th annual Postgraduate Researcher in Science Medicine (PRISM) conference, Lancaster
- Oct & Nov National GRADschool, Windermere



Vitae report provides strong basis for PGR review

The UUK report on *Promoting UK Doctorate* was 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 and 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 to provide a strong basis on which the recently announced postgraduate review by BIS can be built on (to be undertaken by Professor Adrian Smith). 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 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 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.'*

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 published by Universities UK and authored by Dr Faye Emery and Dr Janet Metcalfe of Vitae at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/research_report_doctorate.pdf





Vitae researcher development conference 2009

www.vitae.ac.uk/vitaeconference09

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 will be available shortly. In the meantime, you can read about [highlights and outcomes](#) of the conference, watch the plenary speakers online, view presentation slides from the speakers and workshops facilitators, and use the blog for any conversations you'd like to continue by visiting at www.vitae.ac.uk/vitaeconference09.

Vitae innovate

Vitae's £100,000 fund for innovative projects relating to the personal, professional and career development of researchers was launched in June 2009. 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 for 2010 with a call for proposals to be announced by April and a closing date for applications in June. Thank you again to all bidders and congratulations to those who were successful. We are looking forward to the outcome of these projects.



Improvement seen in support for research staff

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.

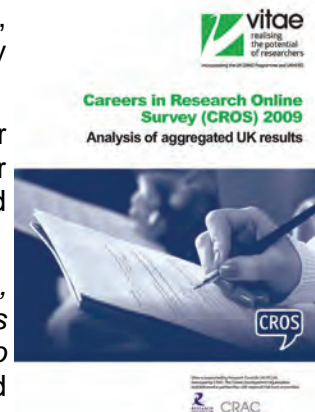
'There has been marked improvement in the uptake of processes like induction, appraisal and training opportunities among research staff, compared with previous surveys, which demonstrates progress in achieving the aims of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers,' said Janet Metcalfe, 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 copy of the CROS 2009 report at www.vitae.ac.uk/CROS. CROS 2010 will run from 1st March to 31st May. You can register your interest or get more information at survey-help@bristol.ac.uk



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 postdocs 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)



THE award winner 2009

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.'*

Read the RCUK press release 'Outstanding support and unexpected discoveries win RCUK accolades' <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/news/091016.htm>



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].'





Dates for your diary:

Upcoming conferences, events and training opportunities

For further details on any of these events, go to
www.vitae.ac.uk/events

January 2010

- 6-7 Vitae Policy Forum, Edinburgh
- 14 Cross cultural issues in PhD supervision, Manchester
- 20-22 An Introduction to Higher Education A Programme for New Managers and Administrators, Coventry

February 2010

- 12 Broadening Horizons taster session, Manchester
- 15 UKCGE Winter Conference 2010 - The Future of the Research Degree: Diversity, Convergence, Comparability, London
- 24 Vitae SWW Hub Annual Good Practice Conference, Cardiff
- 25 8th Annual Postgraduate Conference - Access, Employer Needs and Competitiveness, London
- 26 Midlands Hub Good Practice Takeaway. Impact and Evaluation,. Warwick

March 2010

- 8 Mentoring schemes for Research Staff, Loughborough
- 23 YNE Hub Trainer & Developers' Forum - Research Ethics and Integrity, Middlesbrough

Coming up later in 2010...

- 27 May Vitae NW Hub good practice workshop: Integrating technology into researcher training
- 6-7 Sep Vitae researcher development conference, Manchester

Do you want to join the Vitae North West Hub network mailing list?

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