

# Vitae Researcher Development Framework

## Briefing for researcher developers

### Overview

**Researchers make an important contribution to the UK economy, both in sustaining our research base and as leaders in the workforce. The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) underpins a major new approach to developing world-class researchers.**

**The framework has been developed by and for researchers working in higher education as an aid to planning, promoting and enhancing professional and career development. It articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages all researchers to realise their potential.**

**The associated Researcher Development Statement, endorsed by the UK HE Funding Bodies, Research Councils UK, Universities UK and other national organisations, provides a policy reference for researcher development strategies. Together with the full, operational framework it supports the implementation of policy related to researchers' professional development in the UK.**

**This is one of a series of briefings developed by Vitae for a range of stakeholders involved in the professional and career development of researchers.**

**For further information about the Researcher Development Framework and other briefings in this series visit: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)**

**“ It is helpful to have a national framework because it is based on wider consultation that could not be managed by a single institution and it allows us to benchmark ourselves against a national framework.”**

**Frances Hewison, Deputy Director  
of Human Resources, The University of Liverpool**

The Researcher Development Framework enables researchers to articulate their skills and take a proactive approach to their own professional development. The Researcher Development Statement replaces the Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement (2001) as the UK framework underpinning professional development for researchers at all levels.

### Using the Researcher Development Framework in your institution

Use the Researcher Development Statement as a basis for aligning your institutions strategy with relevant UK policy such as the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the QAA Code of Practice, the REF and the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award. [www.vitae.ac.uk/rds](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rds)

The Researcher Development Framework has been incorporated into a downloadable Professional Development Planner to enable researchers to identify the areas in the framework they want to develop further and to create an action plan. [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)

Inspire and empower researchers to engage with their professional development by using the Researcher Development Framework in your own institution to:

- build a strategic and operational framework for provision of formal and informal development opportunities for researchers, extending the legacy of the Joint Skills Statement to all researchers
- enable researchers to identify, articulate and evidence the transferability of their skills and make informed career choices
- encourage researchers to prepare for progress reviews, appraisals and career development conversations
- work with researchers to use the Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner to highlight personal development needs and create action plans.
- communicate researcher development and researcher capabilities to wider audiences including potential researchers, employers and the public

# Background

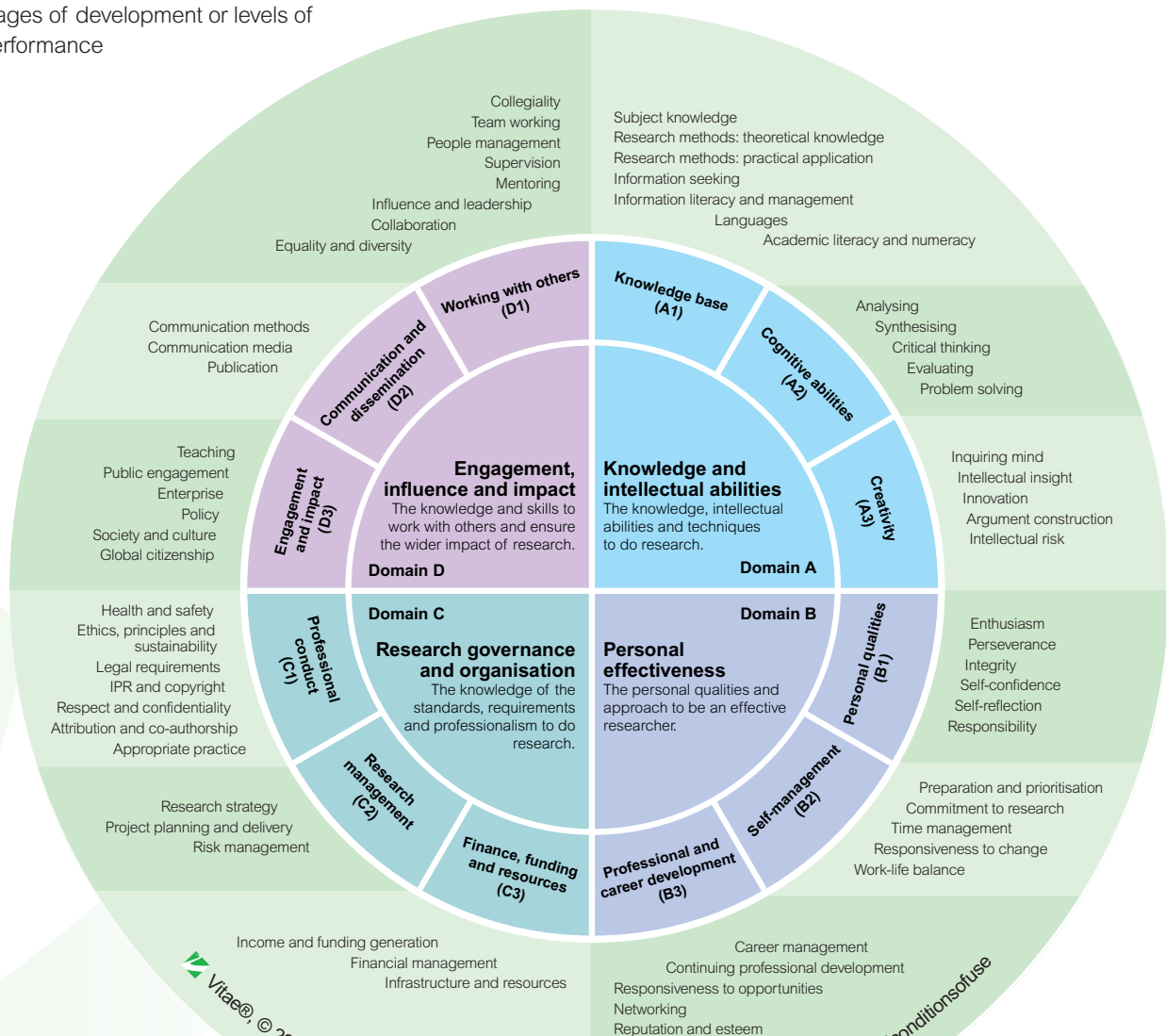
The Researcher Development Framework and Researcher Development Statement underpin policies for supporting the professional and career development of researchers. Institution-wide implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the QAA Code of Practice for research degree programmes and the Roberts recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff are enhanced and strengthened by use of the Researcher Development Framework and Statement.

# Structure

- The Researcher Development Framework and Statement were created through interviews with researchers and empirical data leading to the identification of the characteristics of excellent researchers
- Characteristics, expressed in the framework as 'descriptors', are structured into four domains and twelve sub-domains, encompassing the knowledge, intellectual abilities, techniques and professional standards to do research, as well as the personal qualities, knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research
- Three to five phases for each descriptor present stages of development or levels of performance

# Who is the Researcher Development Framework for?

- Researchers – to evaluate and plan their professional development
- Principal investigators and supervisors of researchers – in their role supporting the development of researchers
- Researcher developers, trainers, human resources specialists, careers advisors, senior managers and others – in planning and providing support to researchers
- Policy makers, funders and other organisations – to inform and reinforce policy and strategy relating to researchers
- Employers – to provide insight into the unique blend of researchers' skills and to enable exploration of researchers' potential benefits to the company as employees



# Stakeholders say:

**“ We are delighted to endorse the Researcher Development Statement. It is vital that we continue to support the career development of researchers to ensure that the impact they have on the economic and social wellbeing of the UK is truly felt. RCUK encourage research organisations to use the new Researcher Development Statement to underpin their professional development programmes for students.”**

**Professor Rick Rylance, RCUK Champion for Research Careers**

**“ The Researcher Development Statement offers a valuable framework of knowledge and skills that research staff will need to meet a variety of career challenges. It assists institutions in their implementation of the principles of the Concordat and will help them continue to develop their research staff at all levels.”**

**Professor Sir Ivor Crewe, Chair, Concordat Strategy Group**

**“ The Researcher Development Framework provides institutions with a comprehensive strategy to underpin training and development activities. At Newcastle University we are planning to embed the Researcher Development Framework into our postgraduate researcher development programme for the forthcoming year. It is a useful mechanism to make sure that activities are aligned with current UK policy and provides a framework to communicate with researchers.”**

**Professor Ella Ritchie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Newcastle University**

The Researcher Development Framework

**“ ...identified areas for me that I needed to hone and really made me think about my career development. I've highlighted things now that I know I need to do.”**

**Lynn McCallum, Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow, School of Pharmacy, Queen's University Belfast**

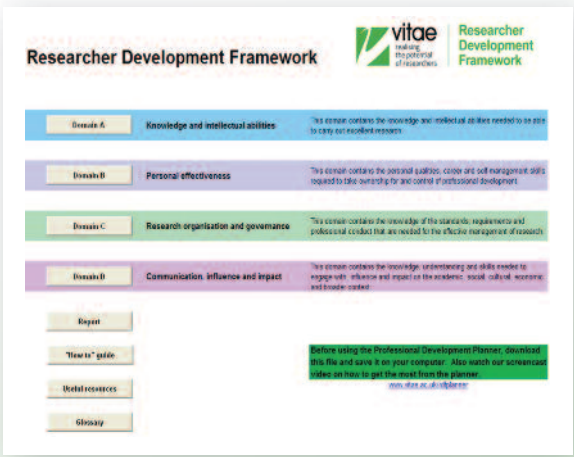
**“ The Researcher Development Framework will encourage me to be more proactive about my career development as it provides me with a framework (list of milestones) so that I can judge my current progress in relation to what I want to achieve with my career.”**

**Joe Viana, Postgraduate Researcher in the School of Management, University of Southampton**

**“ The Researcher Development Framework is more than a convenient framework for planning and classifying training and development programmes for researchers; it can be an extremely helpful tool for self-reflection and ultimate achievement of career goals. Used carefully, whether in workshops or in one to one guidance, it may lead to improved self-awareness and informed career choice within academia or other employment areas.”**

**The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Research Staff task Group**

# The Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner



**“ The Researcher Development Framework provides an excellent resource both for managing my own career development and for helping my staff identify particular training needs at key points in their research careers.”**

**Patrick Hadoke, Tenure-tracked Senior Academic Fellow in Pharmacology, University of Edinburgh**

**“ The Vitae Researcher Development Framework provides a valuable mechanism to increase institutions' capabilities to develop world-class researchers. It provides a strong basis for the delivery of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the QAA Code of Practice for postgraduate research degrees.”**

**Professor April McMahon, Vice-Chancellor and Chair, External Advisory Group, Researcher Development Framework**

**“ HEFCE recognises the importance of developing researchers and endorses the Researcher Development Statement as an enabling framework for both the QAA Code of Practice and the Concordat.”**

**Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)**

**“ The Researcher Development Framework provides a fantastic way for research staff to consider their professional and career development alongside other performance criteria. Individual research staff will find using the framework to review strengths and priorities really useful as preparation for conversations about career opportunities.”**

**Guy Gregory, HR Director, University of Bristol, Universities Human Resources (UHR)**

**“ The Researcher Development Framework provides researchers with a tool to use to help identify their transferable skills, strengths and capabilities and how to develop them. All of which are relevant to a range of careers and extremely valued by employers.”**

**Jackie Wilbraham, R&D Science Policy Director, AstraZeneca**

# Practical ways to use the Researcher Development Framework in your institution

- Provide the Researcher Development Statement and briefings to key stakeholders and institutional committees to facilitate strategic planning for researcher development. [www.vitae.ac.uk/rds](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rds)
- Use the Researcher Development Statement to inform future training and development strategy within research degrees
- Map your institutional provision to the Researcher Development Statement and Framework; identify opportunities to build on existing training and development activities. [www.vitae.ac.uk/resources](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/resources)
- Use the Vitae Database of Practice and Database of Resources which are already mapped to the Researcher Development Framework for ideas and benchmarking. [www.vitae.ac.uk/resources](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/resources)
- Promote the Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner to researchers, through induction events, development activities and to researcher organisations and networks. [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)
- Encourage colleagues with line management or supervisory responsibility for researchers to use the Researcher Development Framework in developing researchers. [www.vitae.ac.uk/pi](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/pi) and [www.vitae.ac.uk/supervisors](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/supervisors)
- Use the Researcher Development Framework as a way of communicating and raising awareness about researcher skills to researchers themselves and employers. [www.vitae.ac.uk/employers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/employers)

The Researcher Development Framework sets out the knowledge, skills and attributes for personal and professional development of researchers for the wide variety of career paths followed by researchers. During that journey, researchers may wish to understand and group key knowledge, skills and attributes for particular development focus. A range of Vitae 'lenses' on the Researcher Development Framework will enable researchers to identify and focus on a particular aspect. These include public engagement, enterprise, intrapreneurship, leadership, teaching, and information literacy, developed in collaboration and mapping to other relevant frameworks.

## Useful links

### For the Researcher Development Framework:

- Researcher Development Framework: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)
- Researcher Development Statement: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rds](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rds)
- Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)
- Contact: [rdf@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:rdf@vitae.ac.uk)

### Examples of other Vitae resources

- Database of Practice: [www.vitae.ac.uk/dop](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/dop)
- Database of resources: [www.vitae.ac.uk/resources](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/resources)
- Database of trainers and developers: [www.vitae.ac.uk/resources](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/resources)

Vitae work with a large network of institutions across the UK to share practice and resources. Join the network through your regional Hub: [www.vitae.ac.uk/hubs](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/hubs)

### Resources for your researchers:

- The researcher booklets: [www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets)
- Careers information: [www.vitae.ac.uk/careers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careers)
- 'What do researchers do?': [www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd)
- Researcher career profiles: [www.vitae.ac.uk/careerprofiles](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careerprofiles)

## Conditions of use

The Researcher Development Framework was produced by Vitae in conjunction with colleagues from the UK higher education sector. Conditions of use, including requirements for acknowledgement, can be found at [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconditionsofuse](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconditionsofuse)

## About Vitae

Vitae is the UK organisation championing the professional and career development of postgraduate researchers and research staff in UK higher education institutions and research institutes. We play a major role in the drive for high-level skills and innovation and in meeting the UK's goal to produce world class researchers.

Vitae works with institutions to embed professional and career development for researchers into the research environment. It plays a leading role in innovating, sharing practice and enhancing the capability of the higher education sector to provide support for researchers in this area.

For further information about Vitae visit [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)

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

