vitae
realising the potential of researchers

Researcher Development Framework

Vitae Researcher Development Framework

Briefing for senior managers

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

> **"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.

The Researcher Development Statement can be used:

- as the framework for researcher development in support of UK goals to maintain global competitiveness and produce world-class researchers
- to inform strategies for supporting the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the QAA Code of Practice for research degree programmes
- 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.

The Research Councils UK Statement of Expectations expects research organisations to fully embed researcher development into normal processes within the research and training environment. More generally, research organisations are also being asked to give good account of their researcher development policy and practice.

The Researcher Development Framework supports the delivery of institutional strategic aims by:

- providing access to career progression opportunities through a programme of researcher development
- giving structure to implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- demonstrating excellence in the research environment for the Research Excellence Framework (REF)
- providing benchmarks for institutional audit in relation to the QAA Code of Practice to demonstrate efficacy of research degree programmes
- articulating researcher development provision to international audiences and potential researchers
- achieving the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award
- contributing to research excellence and impact
- meeting research grant criteria for funders expectations of training and development support for their funded researchers.

Background

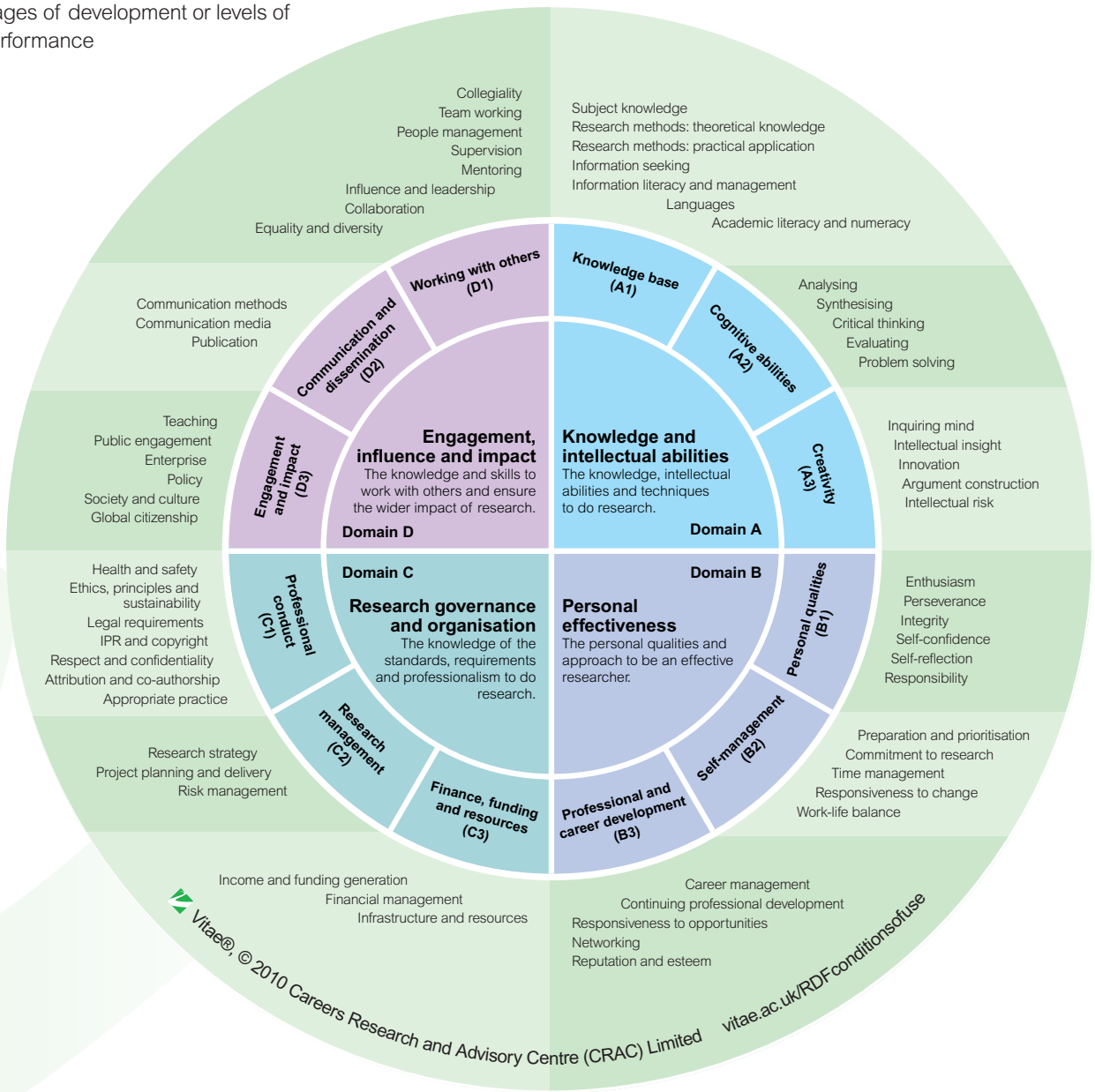
The Researcher Development Framework and Researcher Development Statement underpin policies for supporting the professional and career development of researchers. Institution-wide implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the QAA Code of Practice for research degree 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



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vitae.ac.uk/RDFconditionsofuse

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

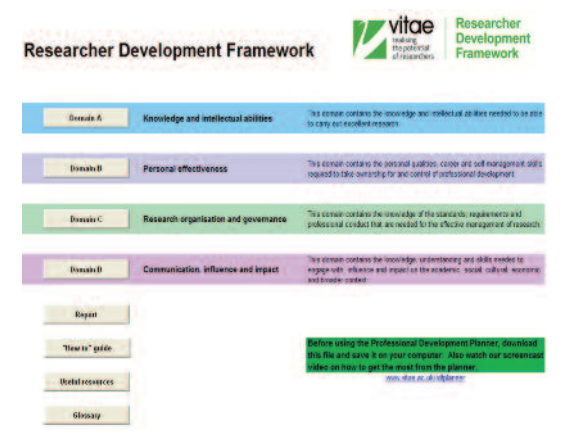
"We see great benefit in the Researcher Development Framework providing a cross-institutional language and benchmark for researcher development in the UK and supporting the aims of the Concordat. Many UK institutions are embedding the framework in their institutional strategy and practices for researchers. The framework can also assist institutions to communicate how they develop their researchers to prospective researchers from the UK and overseas."

Universities UK

"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 Professional Development Planner



"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

Research Councils UK have fully endorsed the Researcher Development Statement.

In their Statement of Expectation, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) have referred to the Researcher Development Statement: Researchers will be expected.

"to develop the higher-level capabilities as outlined in the Researcher Development Statement."

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) acknowledge the Researcher Development Statement in their Doctoral Training Partnerships call for proposals:

"BBSRC also supports the development by Vitae of the 'Researcher Development Statement', which outlines the areas of professional development that research organisations should be addressing in their training programmes."

"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

"We feel that use of the Researcher Development Framework can assist institutions with the implementation of the Concordat as it provides an accessible tool for career planning and helps researchers to recognise their personal responsibility for pro-actively engaging in their career development and lifelong learning."

The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Research Staff task Group

Practical actions for senior managers

- 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
- Provide the Researcher Development Statement and briefings to key stakeholders and institutional committees to facilitate strategic planning for researcher development, including the human resources, staff development, researcher development and careers functions
- Recommend and champion the Researcher Development Framework in your institution as a comprehensive framework to inform training and development plans and activities in order to align them with your overall institutional strategy. www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf
- Be a personal champion within your institution, encouraging your researchers to use the Researcher Development Framework and the Professional Development Planner in their professional and career development. www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner

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**
- Researcher Development Statement: **www.vitae.ac.uk/rds**
- Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner: **www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner**
- Contact: **rdf@vitae.ac.uk**

Examples of other Vitae resources

- Information on UK and European policy: **www.vitae.ac.uk/policy**
- HR Excellence in Research Award: **www.vitae.ac.uk/hrexcellencebadge**
- The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: **www.researchconcordat.ac.uk**

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**

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**

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