



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

# Vitae innovate

## Announcement of funded projects 2009

**Vitae innovate promotes innovative approaches and projects in the field of the personal, professional and career development of researchers. Recognising the excellent work undertaken in this area to date, especially in response to the Roberts review of 2002 and the 2008 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, we aim to encourage the introduction of new approaches to researcher development.**

To an open call for proposals, 190 bids were received in July with over 100 distinct organisations leading bids (78 HEIs, 26 other organisations). Total funding requested was in excess of £3million.

In the first round of funding a total of up to £100,000 was made available for allocation by the advisory panel. Funding was available for projects that will have a positive impact on the personal, professional and career development of researchers in the UK. Bids were invited from any individual, organisation or consortium with an interest in researcher development.

Vitae innovate will fund up to 100% of the costs of any project with no minimum level for funding requests. Project bids were split into two classifications:

- small projects (up to £10,000 in funding and up to one year in duration) and
- large projects (up to £100,000 in funding and up to two years in duration)

Bids were assessed by a selection panel:

Dr Etienne Collignon, Senior Expert - Learning, Solvay

Dr Roland Harwood, Programme Director - Open Innovation, NESTA

Dr Neil Jennings, Director, Student Switch Off

Ellen Pearce, Director, Vitae

Dr Adam Webb, Innovation Programme Manager, Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council

Professor John Wood, International Relations Adviser, Imperial College London

The projects funded from the first round of Vitae innovate are outlined inside. Further information, progress reports and information on future funding rounds will be released through [www.vitae.ac.uk/innovate](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/innovate)

## Open research: the application of e-knowledge tools in researcher careers training and development

Advancing understanding of using online access multimedia tools to support researcher development alongside face-to-face approaches.

**Led by:**  
The Open University (OU)

**Funding awarded:**  
£20,000

The Open University (OU) adopts a 'life course' approach in developing support for its researchers, meeting the specific development needs of each research career stage from postgraduate researcher to professor. This is delivered through a bimodal approach using conventional face-to-face routes alongside innovative multimedia support materials.

This project will include an evaluation of internet-based researcher career development training provision, exploring the opportunities offered by a range of technologies and how they can be best used to enhance researcher development.

It is also an opportunity to use the unique assets of the Open University in developing the capacity of individual

researchers to be active in the public engagement agenda as a means of enriching key research debates and ensuring relevant policy outcomes.

The Vitae innovate funding will be used to:

- undertake an evaluation of internet-based provision of training for researchers, using a variety of online technologies
- produce a series of guidance notes for use by the UK research community based on the evaluation
- pilot a bimodal development approach using online training materials alongside hosting a national workshop with partner organisations including other HEIs, focused on understanding and addressing models and methods of public engagement.

## Essential business skills for the low carbon economy: a bespoke programme for researchers

Researcher development that links enhancing business skills with the implications of climate change and the low carbon economy.

**Led by:**  
University of East Anglia

**Funding awarded:**  
£15,725

The implications of climate change have been recognised by scientists for some time and are now generally accepted by politicians world-wide as one of the most important issues facing the world. As noted in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills document 'The UK Low Carbon Industrial Strategy', published in July 2009: 'To meet Britain's climate change targets – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 – each unit of economic output in Britain will need to be produced using on average one tenth of the carbon dioxide emitted today. This simple but compelling fact is going to transform our whole economy.'

There is currently a lack of understanding in many business sectors about the commercial implications of climate change and the threats and opportunities that

this offers. Further, this is hindered by a serious lack of individuals with the awareness and skills to inform and to lead businesses successfully into the low-carbon economy. This project aims to equip UK postgraduate researchers and research staff with an awareness of the current climate change debate and the implications for business of international and UK policies and regulations for reducing carbon emissions. It will also raise researcher awareness of business opportunities arising from the emerging low carbon economy.

To achieve these aims, we will develop, deliver and evaluate a three-day, residential, replicable event 'Essential business skills for the low carbon economy: a bespoke programme for researchers' available to UK researchers.

## Researcher-led initiatives: generating frameworks for promoting a postgraduate researcher stake in researcher development

Explores supporting postgraduate researchers to operate as stakeholders in the intellectual culture of which they are a part; and the rationale, value and impact of supporting researcher-led initiatives.

**Led by:**  
National Union of Students

**Funding awarded:**  
£9,900

Although there is a growing body of material on supervisory practice in the UK, attention is only recently being paid to the question of the intellectual culture and how successfully to integrate postgraduate researchers into the research environment within and outside their research institutions. So far, little is known about the effects of supporting postgraduate researchers in operating as stakeholders in the intellectual culture of which they are a part.

The project will bring together a clearer picture of the kinds of provision for researcher-led initiatives that are available and generate research findings into the rationale and value of providing funding for researcher-led initiatives and the circumstances under which they have a valuable impact on postgraduate researcher development. Context-appropriate frameworks for supporting researcher-led initiatives at the institutional level will be developed through pilot projects, designed by the NUS in collaboration with up to five carefully-selected institutions.

## Building impact into social science research

Providing practical training for social scientists to enable them to engage effectively with the impact agenda from the beginning of their research careers.

**Led by:**  
University of Leeds

**Funding awarded:**  
£9,750

This project will develop a module to be integrated into postgraduate training programmes containing both concepts and practical tools aimed at helping researchers understand and connect with aspects related to the impact of social science research.

This proposal is predicated on the belief that the capacity to understand the relevance agenda needs to be built into the researcher development curriculum at the beginning of a research career, rather than 'bolted on' towards the end of a programme of study in a manner that suggests a linear view of

knowledge transfer, one where knowledge is produced then implemented.

The programme will take the form of a two-day workshop. The overall rationale will be one where implementing research in relation to a range of stakeholders will facilitate and enhance any subsequent efforts to realise benefits from that research.

The outputs from this project will be a range of resources that can be used by any tutor or organisation involved in the training of postgraduate social science researchers.

## The research impact agenda and early career development for historians: a pilot study

Using virtual spaces, this project will develop the skills of postgraduate and early career researchers to enhance and demonstrate the impact of historical research in Wales and can serve as a model for researchers elsewhere and in other disciplines.

**Led by:**  
History Research Wales

**Funding awarded:**  
£8,516

History Research Wales (HRW) was recently established to represent the interests of the academic history profession, including archaeologists, in Wales. This project brings together two of the group's key aims in an online environment: the continuing development of research culture in Wales; and engagement with the public, policy-makers, and the broader historical profession (in the heritage industry, museums, galleries, schools, libraries and history societies).

At present there is no systematic training for postgraduate and early career researchers in the development and evaluation of the impact of their research. This project is conceived as a pilot study in the training of researchers in this key element of their transition to a full academic career. On its completion, it is intended that the methodologies and conclusions of the project will be ready to roll out widely across the UK.

The project will create a sustainable, interactive online model for researcher development which can be used for other virtual development projects in other disciplines and across the UK.

## Facilitating research as a creative process

This project will investigate the role played by creativity in the work of early career researchers and the process of how originality is fostered and developed.

**Led by:**  
Imperial College London

**Funding awarded:**  
£7,160

This project will investigate the role played by creativity in the work of early career researchers. Creativity is established as a core element of doctoral research, ie candidates must make a substantial and original contribution to their discipline in order to gain their degrees. Then, for those who remain in academia, it is necessary to establish a strong record of publications, for which further original contributions are essential. Creative endeavour is an essential element of researcher development, and yet the process of how this originality is fostered is little understood.

This project will be a qualitative research study by means of interviews followed by data analysis.

Participants will include doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, supervisors and principal investigators. Participants will be volunteers from a range of science, engineering and medical disciplines. The outputs from the project will inform training design for all levels of researchers.

The research questions are:

- what is the role of creativity in research as perceived by early career researchers, supervisors and principal investigators?
- can we identify specific factors that support the development of creativity?

## Win-Win: developing the transferable skills of research staff through mentoring

Developing the transferable skills of research staff through being mentors for postgraduate researchers.

**Led by:**  
The University of Sussex

**Funding awarded:**  
£4,500

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (principle 3) stresses the importance of researchers being 'equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment'. This programme aims to ensure that researchers develop the transferable skills required to stay competitive in internal and external job markets, while ensuring that useful experience and tacit knowledge is conveyed to current postgraduate researchers.

Organised through the Sussex Doctoral School, the scheme will provide an opportunity for research staff to

gain experience and expertise in providing support for postgraduate researchers, other than in a teaching role which may not be offered or open to them. The scheme will not only seek to formalise and build upon relationships which are sometimes already in place but help to make explicit those transferable skills which research staff gain from the process.

The learning from this project will be disseminated by:

- producing case studies of mentors and mentees
- publishing a guide to setting up a similar scheme
- delivering presentations to appropriate audiences.



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

Vitae builds on previous work by the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD. Vitae is supported by Research Councils UK (RCUK), managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation and delivered in partnership with regional Hub host universities.

The role of Vitae is to work 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 professional development and training of researchers.

Our vision is for the UK to be world-class in supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers.

To achieve our vision we have four aims:

- 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.

For further information about the range of Vitae activities go to [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk) or contact [enquiries@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@vitae.ac.uk)

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**CRAC**