

Winter 2009

# London Researcher

Vitae London Hub



## Editorial

*Fiona Denney, London Hub Coordinator*

I find it hard to believe that I am writing an editorial for the end of the 2009 calendar year already. This year, time has certainly flown by and the autumn term has been just as busy as ever with added stresses for all of us over the current financial situation and particularly clarity as far as the future of the Roberts funding is concerned. This has obviously been a key theme in most of the discussions that I've been involved in with colleagues in the region and also nationally - it was a key theme at the Vitae Conference in September and will dominate discussions at the annual Roberts Policy Forum in January 2010. Whilst the situation is far from certain at the current time, it was with a sense of both relief and justification that I read the recent HEFCE consultation paper on the proposed Research Excellence Framework (the REF - to replace the RAE). The paper proposes that research is assessed in 3 areas - the research environment being one of these - and both training and development support for early career research staff and PhD students were explicitly noted. At the very least, this should help to focus discussions in each of our institutions at the very highest level and does provide a sense of justification that what we have been doing so far has been important, valued and noticed.

The London Hub, along with the rest of Vitae, will continue to play a role in all of the discussions on the future of the funding and we are running 2 events on 10th December which link with this: Embedding and Sustaining the Roberts Agenda in the morning, and Evaluating the Impact of the Researcher Development Training in the afternoon. Both events are being held at the Institute of Physics in London and are jointly hosted with our colleagues in the South East of England Hub. We warmly invite you to register for a place at one or both events and also to join us for lunch and networking on that day. We hope to see many familiar faces there along with anyone new who would like to find out more and contribute to the discussions.

Looking further forward, Vitae has been involved in developing the new Researcher Development Framework which is open for consultation and due to be launched in the middle of 2010. This extends and improves the Research Councils Joint Skills Statement that many of us have been using over a number of years. The primary benefit is that this framework will provide clearer guidance on skills development areas for research staff at varying stages of their careers as well as for research students. Vitae welcomes input on this framework and there are details in the London Researcher on the consultation process which is currently underway.

Other information in this issue of the London Researcher include an update following the Vitae Conference of September, THE Awards, publicity about the London Hub's newest network: SPRiG and "the alternative funding guide" for research students in arts and humanities, alongside our usual news updates.

2010 is undoubtedly going to be an other busy year for Vitae and all of us involved with the Roberts Agenda - particularly concerning the future of the funding. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a merry christmas and a happy new year and we look forward to sharing more developments with you throughout the coming academic and calendar years.



*With best wishes  
Fiona*

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Vitae London and South East Hubs present two half day workshops:

## Embedding and sustaining the Roberts Agenda and Evaluating the impact of researcher development training

10 December 2009, Institute of Physics, Regent's Park, London

These workshops are free of charge and will each run for a half day. Participants are welcome to attend either or both of the workshops. They are intended for staff supporting researcher development, supervisors, research managers, policy makers and national stakeholders. There will be an opportunity to network over lunch, which will be available to all those attending either workshop. Note: places are limited

**09.30-12.45**

### **Embedding and sustaining the Roberts Agenda**

This workshop will allow participants to hear about and share approaches for embedding and sustaining researcher development in HE institutions. There will be presentations from colleagues from institutions who have received 'Roberts' funds as well as those who have developed their training programmes with little or no central funding. There will also be an opportunity to discuss strategies for addressing any possible future changes in funding streams.

Speakers will include:

- Professor Diane Berry (University of Reading)
- Professor Edith Sim (University of Oxford)
- Dr Anne Evans (Bucks New University)

**13.45-17.00**

### **Evaluating the impact of Researcher development training**

This workshop will give colleagues an opportunity to share practice on the evaluation of researcher training and development and there will be a chance to discuss the use of the Rugby Team Impact Framework as a model for evaluation.

Speakers will include:

- Dr Tony Bromley (University of Leeds)
- Dr Lucy Lee (University of Sheffield)
- Dr Rebekah Smith McGloin and Sarah Kerr (University of Nottingham)

For full programme and to register online go to <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/londonhub>

or

<http://www.vitae.ac.uk/sehub>

## Vitae London Hub 2010 proposed events



*Preliminary plans are underway or are in the pipeline for the following:*

**How to provide networking opportunities for research staff (22 or 23 February tbc), King's College London**  
Sharing practice event - further details will be circulated and also available on the website shortly

**Importance of public engagement and the impact of research (March)**

Best practice event focusing on programmes already in place, addressing the importance of public engagement and how HEIs are meeting research Council requirements in terms of impact.

**Cross cultural issues and type of training for supervisors and resources managers (May)**

Best practice event looking at emerging questions

**Assessment of skills gap analysis for researchers (June)**

This best practice workshop will look at what HEIs do in terms of Training Needs Analysis and how to engage supervisors

**Concordat progress (June)**

Joint with the EE Hub, following on from the 2009 joint event.

We will keep you informed as soon as dates and programme details are known. In the meantime keep an eye on the London Hub page at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/londonhub>



## Review on postgraduate provision in the UK

*Vitae welcomes the review on postgraduate provision in the UK led by Professor Adrian Smith*

The review will consider the attractiveness of postgraduate study in the UK compared with other countries, the benefits of the postgraduate to the economy and society and whether the needs of businesses and the academy are being met.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has issued a call for evidence on this subject. For further information go to <http://www.bis.gov.uk/pgreview> where it is possible to submit comments on key areas of postgraduate provision that should be considered by the review.

During the event the report **Promoting the UK Doctorate**, authored by Vitae was recognised as providing a strong basis on which the recently announced postgraduate review by BIS (see above) can be built on. 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. Dr Metcalfe said

*'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'*

*'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.'*

The full report can be downloaded at

[http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/research\\_report\\_doctorate.pdf](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/research_report_doctorate.pdf)

## Promoting the UK doctorate

*Vitae authored report is to provide a strong basis for the recently announced postgraduate review*

Universities UK report on **Promoting the 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).



*Professor Steve Smith, Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP, Dr Janet Metcalfe*



## Consultation: new UK Researcher development framework

*Open until 11 December*

The 'Researcher development framework' has been created as a tool for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education. It describes the knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities of researchers and encourages researchers to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development. It will be of value to anyone conducting research in higher education, whether this is their main role or part of a wider remit.

All individuals and organisations with an interest in the personal, professional and career development of researchers are invited to respond to this consultation. This can be through the full consultation or a survey designed for individual researchers to respond directly.

The consultation is open until  
**Friday 11 December 2009**

Further information about the framework and consultation can be found at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconsultation>

## Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy

*BIS, Department for Business Innovation and Skills - Release in November 2009*

The higher education blueprint, Higher Ambitions, sets out a course for how universities can remain world class, providing the nation with the high level skills needed to remain competitive, while continuing to attract the brightest students and researchers.

Executive summary and full report are available at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-ambitions>

*Rachel Blanc reports*

## The outputs and outcomes collection project

The big challenge for funding bodies in the current climate is to prove the impact of the research they fund on the economy and more generally its impact for the UK population.

The Outputs and Outcomes Collection (OOCs) Project has been developed to meet this need. The novelty of the project is that by developing an ongoing dialogue with researchers, it aims to collect evidence both during the timescale of a grant and after it is finished.

To avoid an additional heavy workload and to encourage researchers to report back, a standard data collection procedure has been developed in consultation with the Research Councils and other organisations such as the Association of Research Managers and Administrators.

It has been agreed that wherever possible the first source of collection would be research organisations and universities rather than researchers themselves.

To implement the project, Research Councils will work closely with HEFCE and the research community. Indeed, one of the big advantages OOCs project is that it will fit into the REF. A lot of questions remain regarding how the data will be used and who will actually use it. Discussion will be needed to clarify some of the issues and to ensure that the research community clearly understand the need for such a project. If implementation goes ahead, the pilot will be in the summer of 2011.

*The full article was originally published in Research Global and was written by Simon Kerridge, Head of the Graduate Research Support Group at the University of Sunderland and Alan Green, Project Manager within the Science & Technology Facilities Council. To read the article, go to*

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/oocp/OOCsArticle.pdf>



## Vitae researcher development conference 2009

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 <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/cros> and <http://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 <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitaeconference09>



Photo from the plenary session at the Vitae conference 2009

## Vitae innovate

Vitae's £100,000 fund for innovative projects relating to the personal, professional and career development of researchers was launched in June. 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. Further information on the next call for proposals will be available shortly. In the meantime, thank you again to all bidders and congratulations to those who were successful. We are looking forward to the outcome of these projects.

Jeffrey Defries, Chief executive CRAC: The Career Development Organisation introduced the evening session on 8 September announcing the successful Vitae innovate bids





## Business Plan Competition invites researchers to indulge their entrepreneurial side

Research Councils UK (RCUK) today launches the fourth RCUK Business Plan Competition. This hugely popular competition offers a prize of £25,000 to the researchers who present the most commercially viable business plan to a panel of experts. Participants receive training throughout the competition which equips them with the necessary skills to find successful routes to market.

Last year's winners were Blackford Analysis with their 'real-time' MRI scanner. Dr Ben Panter, who led the team at Blackford Analysis, said: "The competition gave us the training to prepare a top quality business plan which has been invaluable to us in our search for investment and the prize means that we are in a stronger equity position than would otherwise have been the case."

The RCUK Business Plan Competition is an ideal opportunity for researchers who think that their research has commercial potential but are not sure what to do next and want to learn more about routes to market for their research.

Professor Dave Delpy, RCUK's Impact Champion, is excited about the coming round: "Last year's RCUK Business Plan Competition produced outstanding finalists and I'm looking forward to seeing an equally

impressive set of entries this time round. RCUK is delighted to support some of the most innovative research coming out of the UK and this competition is just one of the many ways we encourage researchers to bring their research to market."

For the first time the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) will be leading the delivery of the RCUK Business Plan Competition on behalf of all the Research Councils. Professor Rick Rylance, Chief Executive of AHRC, said: "This is an excellent opportunity for researchers from all disciplines to learn about the business planning process, make key contacts and take positive steps to commercialise the outcomes of their research in line with Research Councils' missions. The AHRC is proud to be leading this year's competition and we look forward with all the Research Councils to seeing new business ideas and entrepreneurial flair coming through from the UK's vibrant knowledge base."

An application form and further details on how to take part in the competition can be found at:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/fundingkt/bpc/default.htm>

The closing date for entries is 4 December 2009.

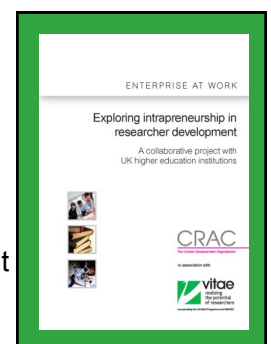
## Exploring intrapreneurship in researcher development

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 <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/intrapreneurship>.

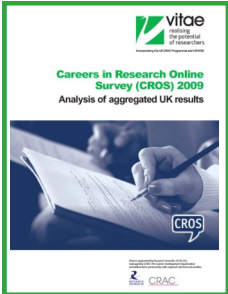


If you have an interest in joining discussions on the topic of intrapreneurship in researcher development then you might like to join the project's JISCMail list. To do this you need to email: [listserv@JISCMail.ac.uk](mailto:listserv@JISCMail.ac.uk) with the following message: 'Subscribe [INTRAPRENEURSHIP-RESEARCHER-DEV@JISCMail.ac.uk](mailto:INTRAPRENEURSHIP-RESEARCHER-DEV@JISCMail.ac.uk) [include your name].'



## Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS)

*More research staff actively managing their careers than ever before*



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.

Janet Metcalfe, Chair and Head of Vitae and co-author of the report said:

*'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'*

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 personal copy of the CROS 2009 report at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CROS>

**CROS 2010** will run from 1st March to 31st May. To register interest and get more information contact [survey-help@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:survey-help@bristol.ac.uk)

## THE Award 2009 for outstanding support for researchers

*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>



### 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 specifically 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.

We will disseminate the conference outcomes on our website soon. The conference report will be available in mid-December. For more information and future updates, visit <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/>

### Vitae launched a multi-author blog for research staff

[www.vitae.ac.uk/rsblog](http://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.

### 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. Nationally, the NUS are championing the Higher Education Academy's postgraduate experience surveys, working with Vitae on a researcher-led initiative project and carrying out their own research into postgraduate finance and postgraduate research students' experiences of employment (in partnership with UCU).

Most crucially, NUS will make a strong submission to the government's current Postgraduate Review.

For more information about the work of NUS Postgraduate Campaign email:

[postgraduates@nus.org.uk](mailto:postgraduates@nus.org.uk)

### The creative workshop and Publication



On 7 December Vitae is holding a workshop which will explore creativity in the context of doing research. It will be an opportunity for the participants to acquire and practice the use of 'tools and techniques' that nurture our innate creative skills. It will also be an opportunity to reflect on and further develop the behavior that leads to a more creative approach in all aspects of research activity.

**For more information on the workshop and to book a place please visit <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/creativity>**

Coinciding with the workshop, Vitae will launch the next title in its series of practical 'researcher booklets'. '**The creative researcher**' which will follow the release of the first booklet in the series titled 'The balanced researcher' will provide practical advice and tips to postgraduate researchers and research staff about creativity in a research environment, drawing from examples from the experience of researchers themselves.



## Unlocking the power of the voluntary sector of post-graduate funding



*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 web-*

*sites. 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 trail 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](mailto:enquiries@gradfunding.co.uk),  
 or  
 telephone 0207-564-8172.

*Shuzhi Zhou*

### 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](mailto:rachel.brazil@nesta.org.uk))



Rachel Blanc reports

## SciTech Europe09 Innovation across Europe

SciTech Europe09 was the first meeting of a series organised by Public Service events (<http://www.publicserviceevents.co.uk/>) on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2009. The event was held in Brussels and sponsored by the Danish Agency for Science Technology and Innovation (DASTI). The aim of the event was to address key questions in the field of innovation across Europe. The focus was on finding ways to create a cohesive, collaborative framework for successful European science innovations and technologies and to increase the impact of its science base.

Professor John Wood (Imperial College) highlighted that it is crucial in the current context to think ahead and develop ambitious strategies such as developing entrepreneurship involving high risk activities, encouraging industries to be more open and make knowledge freely available, allowing failure for researchers without splitting their career. He also proposed to ensure a better distribution of funding by opening national research and development funding to European competition to create a “win/win” situation. He concluded by explaining that public engagement is crucial. According to him the main issues are inertia and the need for cultural change.

In the morning session, Pf Marja Makarow, the Chief executive of the European Science Foundation, reasoned that high quality research is the basis for innovation and that independence in research is important. She also highlighted how hard it is to find statistics on how much of the research budget is going into EU collaborative projects.

Asger Kej, from DASTI, is following projects from basic research until they reach the market. Some of the

main challenges faced by the DASTI are to the need to engage more with knowledge and to take it on board, as well as to develop projects with universities and ensure cohesion and non duplication of research.

During the afternoon session, Manuel Hallen, Head of Medical and Public Health Research, highlighted the increasing cost and appeal for new drug discovery in Europe. To address this, an increase of investment in research is necessary and policy should be more efficient and selective. DASTI's experience proved that as result of the simplification of the legal and financial rules for grant applications, there is increasing active participation from SMEs.

According to Andreu Mas-Colell, the Secretary-General of the European Research Council (ERC), the components of innovation are ideas, money and entrepreneurship. The ERC mission is to reduce the big gap that exists between the EU and US in terms of the outcomes of research. European research is of a high standard but there is a need to push forward the outcomes and to develop patents and commercialise products.

Pf Foray chairman of the Knowledge for Growth Group highlighted that Europe has failed to create world class clusters of ideas. There is no vision in term of positioning and strategies among the EU countries. Centres of excellence should be identified in order to have better economic returns and avoid fragmentation.

Although the personal and professional development of researchers was not on the agenda there was an interesting although short debate around the autonomy of universities and the fact that perhaps it would be good to value researchers and try and develop a feeling that they have a real career.

Talking with speakers and exhibitors, it would seem that the UK is far ahead in terms of the career development of researchers.

## How to be an effective researcher courses

If you are interested in running one of the Vitae Effective Researcher courses for either staff or students but do not feel this would be viable because of numbers of researchers within your institution please contact the London Hub and we will be happy to put you in touch with other institutions in a similar position so that you may possibly collaborate in running a joint course. Please e-mail Rachel or Kay at [londonhub@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:londonhub@vitae.ac.uk). (Further details of these courses are also available from the Hub)



Rachel Blanc reports

## International comparative performance of the UK research base

Research Councils UK (RCUK) welcomes 'International comparative performance of the UK research base' which finds that UK research remains the most productive and efficient in the G8. RCUK's commitment to funding independent, world-class research ensures that the UK remains renowned for the excellence of its research.

The benchmarking study, commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, compares how UK research performs in an international context. The UK performs well across the board and ranks first among G8 nations on the number of citations in relation to public R&D spend, described by the report as 'an exceptionally high level of output productivity'. Professor Alan Thorpe, Chair of RCUK, said:

*'RCUK funded research is a driving force in ensuring that the UK is a world leader in a global market. This study demonstrates how our commitment to funding excellent research with impact strengthens the UK's position. We welcome evidence that UK output from PhDs and our international collaborations are increasing, as RCUK believes strongly that substantial investment in the next generation of researchers today will favourably position the UK to seize future opportunities and maintain its world leading status.'*

The report is available at [http://www.dius.gov.uk/science/science\\_funding/science\\_budget/~media/publications//](http://www.dius.gov.uk/science/science_funding/science_budget/~media/publications//)

## Promoting science: European Union contest for young scientists

During the Vitae conference that was held at Warwick University on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of September, a couple of new themes were discussed. Among these, the need to promote research among the young emerged. Indeed, in Europe, young people don't seem to be attracted to research and therefore don't consider it as a career option. The European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) has been around for 21 years now and still represents an ambitious way to promote research and create vocation among the 14 – 21 year old European population.

The concept is quite simple and very clever. Young people, aged 14 to 21, who win a prize for a scientific project in their own country are entitled to enter the EUCYS. This event runs over one week and is held in a different European city each year.

To understand the concept behind EUCYS, here are few rules extracted from [http://ec.europa.eu/research/leaflets/young-scientists/page\\_02\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/leaflets/young-scientists/page_02_en.html):

- Entries from both individuals and small teams of up to 3 people are allowed.
- Each participating team is allocated a stand in an exhibition area to display its findings to the jury and other visitors.
- The jury members visit the stands and quiz the entrants on their research, their findings and their conclusions in English.

EUCYS not only helps participants to see the benefit

of promoting their research to a non specialist audience (the visitors) but it also gives them confidence that their work can make a difference and contribute to advancing the knowledge in certain fields.

The questions from the jury can be quite precise and hard to answer. It is important to highlight that the event takes place in a pleasant atmosphere and allows participants to develop a valuable network as they have the opportunity to meet with experienced researchers.

The contest would not be a real challenge if there was no prize to award to the winners. In 2008, the core prizes were worth from €3500 to €7000. In addition to the core prizes, there were a number of special donated prizes, such as a trip to the Stockholm International Youth Science Seminar, which included attendance at the Nobel Prize ceremonies and a week-long stay at some of Europe's leading research centres such as the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL).

You can find a list of the 2008 winners and the description of their work at [http://ec.europa.eu/research/youngscientists/2008/pdf/eucys\\_2008\\_winners\\_ip\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/youngscientists/2008/pdf/eucys_2008_winners_ip_en.pdf)

The 21st EUCYS will take place in Paris

Rachel Blanc  
London Hub Manager



# Diary Dates:

Upcoming conferences, events and training opportunities

See <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/events> for further information and more event details

## What's on...?

### December

- 8 **Voicing it better: new approaches to presentation skills training**, London  
Further information at <http://www.missendencecentre.co.uk/s4htm>
- 8-10 **SRHE Annual conference**, Celtic Manor, Nr. Newport
- 10 **Embedding and sustaining the Roberts Agenda**, London and SE Hubs, Institute of Physics, London
- 10 **Evaluating and sustaining the Roberts Agenda**, London and SE Hubs, Institute of Physics, London
- 11 **Creating future-proof graduates exhibition**, Birmingham
- 13-15 **Beyond teaching and research: inclusive understandings of academic practice**, University of Oxford
- 15 **Moving on up—social mobility and social research**, SOAS University of London
- 16 Vitae East of England Hub good practice takeaway: **Supporting and developing researchers transferable skills and employability**, University of Hertfordshire.  
Please visit the event section on the EE Hub web page for more information  
<http://www.vitae.ac.uk:80/ee-hub-good-practice-takeaway-december-09>

### January 2010

- 6-7 **Vitae Policy Forum 2010** (*invitation only*) Edinburgh

### February

- 1 **National postgraduate training days - English (19 -21 century)**, British Library
- 9 **National postgraduate training days - History (medieval-18 century)**, British Library
- 15 **UKCGE Winter Conference 2010 - The future of the research degree: diversity, convergence, comparability**, The British Library, London
- Tbc (22 or 23) Vitae London Hub: **How to provide networking opportunities for research staff**

### March

- 29 **National postgraduate training days - Modern foreign languages**, British Library
- tbc Vitae London Hub: **Importance of public engagement and the impact of research**

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

Would you like to contribute an article for *London Hub London Researcher*?

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