



# Researcher development and cohort doctoral training

Dr Katie Wheat, Vitae  
Lou Sumner, University of Oxford

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

---

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

Vitae, © The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited

# Theme

‘How can we, together, support researchers, ensuring an equality of professional development provision for all, in light of the changing structures for doctoral education, such as doctoral training centres?’



# Definitions

- ❑ Cohort training models:
  - ❑ Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT)
  - ❑ Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP)
  - ❑ Marie Curie Initial Training Networks (ITN)
  - ❑ 'Doctoral Programme'
  
- ❑ Research Council Common Terminology for Postgraduate Training, RCUK  
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/skills/RCUKCommonTerminologyforPostgraduateTraining2013.pdf>

# Outcomes and actions

- ✔ We need to understand whether CDTs create inherent inequality of experience and what the (dis)advantages might be
- ✔ We need to better understand the values of good practice in cohort development so we can apply to the wider doctoral community
- ✔ Doctoral candidates need support to develop a range of competences that will match employers' needs
- ✔ We need to encourage and facilitate better communication between employers and universities
- ✔ Doctoral candidates need a realistic view of the role of academics
- ✔ Training of supervisors should happen from the start and continue throughout their career

# Outcomes and actions

- ✔ Supervisors and doctoral candidates should discuss and create a training plan together, in order to manage expectations
- ✔ We should provide realistic and clear information about training and careers to prospective doctoral candidates
- ✔ Doctoral candidates should understand why they are doing public engagement and have opportunities to put the learning into practice
- ✔ Researcher developers need better clarity of roles, position and influence, such as, by standardising job titles and other language
- ✔ Vitae should continue to support and promote the professionalisation and professional image of doctoral studies

# Context: Cohorts

## What are features of good practice in cohorts?

For the student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Opportunity to build peer group</li><li>Development of own identity as a researcher</li><li>Networking: subject specific / interdisciplinary</li><li>Opportunities to explore problems in depth and “just in time” learning</li><li>Enabling independent thinking and engaged learning</li><li>Relationship-building skills</li><li>(and when might these not be the most important factors...)</li></ul>
For the cohort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Creation of a group identity</li><li>Learning through teaching</li><li>Evolving through stages of developing, widening, challenging and sustaining</li></ul>
For the institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Developing innovative learning methods / courses that can be translated into other areas</li><li>Opportunities to engage industry and business</li><li>Tension between requirements for tailored provision and need to tap into existing programmes</li></ul>

# Context: Collaborations

## Who are we working with?

Internationally

Initial Training Networks

Multiple countries

Horizon 2020

Nationally

Multiple institutions

Researcher developer networks (Vitae)

Locally

Within institutions

Within and across departments

Between academic and support staff

Inter-disciplinary doctorates

Within the sector

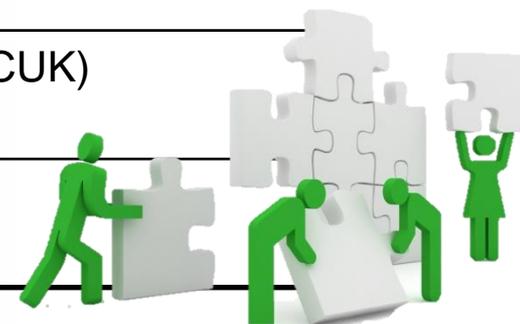
Funders (expectations of RCUK)

Policy makers

Outside of the sector

Employers

Research Institutes



# What next?

## Timings:

- ✔ Discussion 1 (20 mins)
- ✔ Plenary 1 (5 mins)
- ✔ Discussion 2 (20 mins)
- ✔ Plenary 2 (5 mins)
- ✔ Final thoughts and burning questions

## Reporting back:

- ✔ Key challenge
- ✔ Barriers to engagement
- ✔ Shaping policy vs. implementing practice
- ✔ What do you need help with?
- ✔ What input or action for stakeholders?

# 1. What do cohorts mean for the way we work?

- ✔ What are the features of really successful cohorts?
- ✔ What are the successes and challenges inherent in implementing cohort based training?
- ✔ How does cohort training evolve throughout the doctoral experience?
- ✔ How do we bring the valuable transferrable skills innate in doctoral programmes to all studying for a doctorate?



# Context: Collaborations

## Who are we working with?

Internationally

Initial Training Networks  
Multiple countries  
Horizon 2020

Nationally

Multiple institutions  
Researcher developer networks (Vitae)

Locally

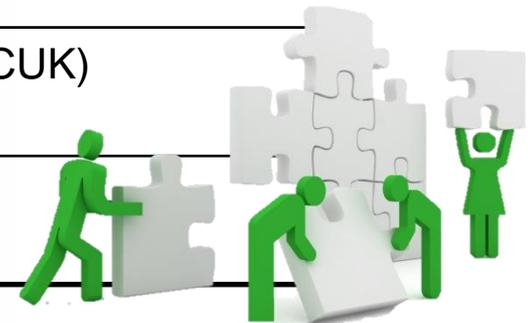
Within institutions  
Within and across departments  
Between academic and support staff  
Inter-disciplinary doctorates

Within the sector

Funders (expectations of RCUK)  
Policy makers

Outside of the sector

Employers  
Research Institutes



## 2. How do we navigate the complex collaborative landscape?

- ✔ What - and how - can business/industry/employers contribute to doctoral training?
- ✔ What do we put in place to ensure CDT good practice is shared as widely as it can be?
- ✔ How can we manage the complexity of leadership in collaborations?
- ✔ How do we manage the quality of the doctoral experience when training and supervision are distributed across different institutions/partners?

