Foreword

Who would have thought that the closing plenary presentation “be prepared for the unexpected” at last year’s Vitae Researcher Development International Conference would take on the quite relevance that it did? Those closing discussions around doing things differently and adjusting perspectives to prepare for the changing world of research and work, were just the tip of the iceberg.

About us

Vitae is the global leader in supporting the professional and career development of researchers, experienced in working with institutions as they strive for research excellence, innovation and impact.

We are a non-profit programme, part of the Careers Research & Advisory Centre (CRAC) Ltd, with over 50 years' experience of enhancing the skills of researchers. We strengthen our members’ institutional provision for the professional development of researchers through research and innovation, training and resources, events, consultancy and membership.

Vitae has four aims:

In May, we ran Connections Getting to Grips as our first fully virtual adaptation of a face to face event. Following overwhelmingly positive feedback, Vitae Connections Week 2020 was developed and rolled out with the aim of increasing the online visibility of researcher development worldwide and connecting like-minded professionals. The transition to online training course delivery such as IP for researchers and La Caixa was also implemented. In such uncertain times, it is so important to demonstrate the place of current and future researcher development by supporting researchers and researcher developers through online and opportunities to share practice.

Vitae has undertaken an incredible amount of impactful evidence-based research and evaluation this past year through various commissions as well as gathering evidence from the community to inform a number of summaries and surveys. On behalf of the community, we continue to provide significant support and influence across important sectoral and policy initiatives such as the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) ‘Research Sustainability Taskforce’ and UK “Research and Development Roadmap’.

So it’s a good job that our mindsets were already being challenged to consider a different future landscape; a shift in culture, to a more connected, open and inclusive researcher development community.

Many of Vitae’s activities were already taking place online before Covid-19, but additional steps were taken to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of Vitae membership and other services.

Research and Development Roadmap, in order to recover and focus future UK research and investments from Covid-19 beyond a clear and effective policy relating to researcher development.

We know for sure that the future research culture needs to become more supportive, open and trusting to reach its full potential and it is to this end that we continue to strive playing an international role in advocating for the professional and career development of researchers.

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CRAC provides research and innovation for all those who support career development for people of all ages and in all sectors. We work in partnership with government agencies, education organisations and providers, and employers and professional bodies.

CRAC is a registered charity No 210264 established in 1964.
Vitae Researcher Development International Conference 2019

Last year nearly 400 participants attended the largest global event for those with a strategic and practical role in researcher development - the Vitae Researcher Development International Conference. Participants travelled from 18 countries to discuss strategic opportunities and challenges, sector trends and innovative practices.

Concordat update

The Vitae Researcher Development International Conference served as an effective platform for in-depth discussions to take place around international implications and components of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (also known as the Researcher Development Concordat), which had been launched by the Concordat Strategy Group four days beforehand.

As Secretariat to the Concordat Strategy Group, Vitae has mapped the former Concordat against the obligations of the Group, Vitae has identified areas that the UK can continue to engage in the HRIEs as a third country following the Brexit transition period.

Vitae has been supporting its 100 award holders to align their HRIE submissions and has held a dedicated HRIE update webinar attended by over 100 participants. A recording and slides have been made available to members.

In early January 2020 a member organisation who uses the UK process to achieve and retain the HRIE Award had to renegotiate their HRIE update member status to reflect the new obligations.

In response to feedback from members, the HRIE Award Recipients’ Network (HREiR) launched an online survey in March which Vitae managed. The European HR Excellence in Research Award (HR Excellence in Research Award) and has held a dedicated HREiR update webinar attended by over 100 participants. A recording and slides have been made available to members.

From January 2020, all member organisations who use the UK process to achieve and retain the HRIE Award have had their HRIE submissions assessed by the HRIE Award Recipients’ Network (HREiR) and have held a dedicated HRIE update webinar attended by over 100 participants. A recording and slides have been made available to members.

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Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS)

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**Informing strategy and policy**

**Vitae Member Working Groups**

The Vitae Member Working Groups consist of the Research and Wellbeing Working Group, the Researchers Careers and Professional Development Working Group, the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Research Developer Working Group and the addition earlier in the year of the Research Networks Working Group. Vitae Working Groups aim to enhance the global research environment and provide a platform for innovation, giving a greater voice to the members of the community.

Responsibilities of the Working Groups include:

- **Research and Innovation Networked Globally (RINs)** - to work towards a global network of networks across different subject areas.
- **Educational Researcher Networks (ERNs)** - to provide a Platform for Innovations, giving a greater voice to the members of the community.
- **Drop in sessions** - to provide drop in sessions to researchers and gather the evidence on the impact of Covid-19 to inform effective policy making.

**Working in collaboration with other networks and initiatives to**

- **Informing strategy and policy**
  - **Partnership with Vitae**
    - **Working in collaboration with**
      - **Vitae has gathered evidence to**
        - **Understand the impact of Covid-19 on researchers and the UK research base**
  - **Survey collaboration**
    - **Vitae was also commissioned to**
      - **undertake a variety of surveys relating to**
        - **Key areas**
          - Impact of Covid-19 on researchers and their research activities for IRRS
          - Survey for Research Integrity: a study on the effects of incentives in the research system, conducted in the context of research integrity, commissioned by Vitae Researcher Network (SMaRteN)/with The Student Mental Health Research Network (SMaRteN) with the Health and the Arts South- East England (CHASE) have conducted the following studies:
            - Review of the impact of Covid-19 on doctoral and early career researchers in the UK in collaboration with The Student Mental Health Research Network (SMaRteN)
            - ESRC-RECC Research Sustainability Taught Programme Impact of Covid-19 on researchers and the UK research base
            - Doctoral candidates working at Vitae on funded placements from the Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts South-East England (CHASE) have evaluated the following studies:
              - Understanding the experience of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) using the EU Framework for Research Development Framework (RDF) at 44 UK Universities
              - The supervisor’s voice: perspectives on the values and boundaries of the supervisory role.

**Taskforce**

**The supervisor’s voice: perspectives on the values and boundaries of the supervisory role.**

**Survey collaboration**

- **Survey for Research Integrity: a study on the effects of incentives in the research system, conducted in the context of research integrity, commissioned by Vitae Researcher Network (SMaRteN)/with The Student Mental Health Research Network (SMaRteN) with the Health and the Arts South- East England (CHASE) have conducted the following studies:**
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**Informing strategy and policy**

**Research and evaluation activity**
- CRAC provides research, evaluation and innovation services in areas such as transitions to postgraduate study, graduate and postgraduate career tracking, STEMM and research careers and evaluation and impact studies, to those working to support career development. Much of CRAC’s research feeds into Vitae’s activities and helps influence policy. In the past year the following projects have been undertaken:
  - Evaluation of a range of multi-stakeholder research support programmes for funders including Royal Society, Royal Academy of Engineering, Wellcome, Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).
  - Longer-term evaluations of thematic funding programmes (improving outcomes for local graduates and development of common metrics in data science and artificial intelligence both in the Office for Students, and doctoral student mental health and wellbeing for Research England).
  - Career tracking studies based on research with survey research funders and a project tracking the careers of graduates of the six schools comprising the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama including a novel means to assess graduate satisfaction.
  - A variety of work on diversity and inclusion including a focused study on barriers to progression of disabled people working to support career development. Much of CRAC’s research feeds into Vitae’s activities and helps influence policy. In the past year the following projects have been undertaken:
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**Vitae’s media**
Vitae has continued to gain global media coverage over the last year through its engagement activity and influence in the sector.

**Enhancing provision**
Vitae membership enhances researcher development, and helps strengthen provision for the professional development of researchers in a connected world.

**Serving with purpose**
While many of Vitae’s member and community interactions were already taking place digitally, at the onset of the pandemic, additional steps were taken to continue to deliver high quality and effectiveness of the membership and other services.

**Mental health and career care**
Mental health and career care when working remotely was published online (see blog shortly after lockdown) followed by a series of further Twitterlist advising on the nine mental health by working from home as a researcher developer.

During Mental Health Awareness Week, Vitae ran another Twitter Chat and rundowns on wellbeing and mental health and tips packed with resources (many from Catalyst Funded projects) for researchers and researcher developers. In collaboration with the University of Portsmouth, wellbeing and mental health resources on the RDF were also produced. 1,300 more Twitter followers have joined the Vitae Twitter community, and a further 4,150 registered users added to the existing series, titled ‘Research Integrity: a landscape study’ gracias to catalyst funded projects.

**Vitae roundtable discussions**
A series of Vitae roundtable events was initiated in June around strategies emerging from Covid-19. The popularity of these very useful and effective networking events led to a further set being rolled out during July. Summaries for each are available for members.

"It has been great to bring together the community. I so miss being able to get together with external colleagues. The sharing and idea generation is really inspiring at a time when motivation is quite hard to come by. But also it is really helpful to have your peers around you when working remotely is quite hard to come by that often it is really helpful to have your mental health and wellbeing web pages have remained the most popular Vitae web pages, gaining around 400,000 views per annum. Publications such as the Research Integrity in Research study, have been made available in the Vitae website amongst a host of other downloadable resources. Vitae members have continued to benefit from the range of off-the-shelf training manuals.

In collaboration with Taylor & Francis, a further researcher podcast was launched to the existing series, titled ‘You can be a researcher developer.’

**Connections: Getting to Grips**
One of Vitae’s flagship events, Connections: Getting to Grips, for those new to researcher development, was our first event to be officially adapted to a virtual format. The innovation of clips, sofa session format and easy online accessibility resulted in the event being a sell-out.

**A fantastic example of (still online of course) my favourite part of the sessions were the smaller group sessions that we could open up and talk in smaller groups**

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Coaching Participant, La Caixa Junior Leader Programme

Online career and professional development training from Vitae

Vitae’s online training programme provides free online training for researchers at all career stages, from postgraduates in the first year of PhD to highly experienced leaders in leadership roles. In the current climate, online delivery has become more important than ever. We have been committed to supporting Vitae members and the wider sector to support their research and professional development through these difficult times, helping ensure a genuinely interactive and experiential learning experience.

La Caixa

The La Caixa Junior Leader Programme has now reached its third Cohort, who have completed their residential training in October which received very positive feedback. The programme consists of 30 workshops on five different themes for 170 Fellows held over a two year period. Training topics included personal effectiveness, working with others, management, communications and Intellectual Property. There were also two networking events. 86% of respondents rated the La Caixa workshops excellent or good, with the workshop receiving the most positive responses. 93% rated the trainers as excellent or good. ‘Very professional, well prepared and skilful facilitation’

CIRCLE extension

CIRCLE’s training programme for PhDs, 2019, included a funding scheme by the National Science Centre, Poland, consisting of 15 workshops on four different themes. For 2012 Fellows held over a two year period. Training topics included personal effectiveness, working with others, management, communications and Intellectual Property. There were also two networking events. 86% of respondents rated the CIRCLE workshops excellent or good, with 98% of workshop receiving the most positive responses. 91% rated the trainers as excellent or good.

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Poland

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The path to research leadership in Africa

Following the commissioning of Vitae, by the Wellcome and Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) to explore the landscape of research leadership in Africa, and to support the knowledge community in ways to build sustainability, social and cultural development in Ghana.

Enhancing provision

Vitae ran a series of virtual workshops training a local team to create a community of practice and trust online as the event became the most popular online training for researchers in the world, attracting a total of 250,000+ views and 400,000+ interactions. The legacy of the project is way beyond the programme which can be accessed from the EURAXESS website.

Vitae’s international extension

Vitae has continued supporting the four-year programme in the past year through webinars and career development training for early career researchers and leadership training for co-investigators which have been converted online. The initiative was funded by Research Councils UK (RCUK), now UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

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Enabling individuals

Vitae enables researchers and researchers to develop talent and potential through professional development.

Professional recognitions

Following the Professional Recognition of Researchers Developers Pilot last year, Vitae also dedicated professional recognition for researchers developers session during the Vitae Connections: Getting to Grips event in May. This gave participants the opportunity to engage with Careers Framework for Researchers Developers (CFRD) and progress their Continuous Professional Development.

Academic apprenticeships

The Level 7 Academic Professional Apprenticeship standard (L7 APA) has been created to develop early career academics into full professional competence, following either a teaching or research specialist route. The apprenticeship standard is aligned to both the UK Professional Standards Framework and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), and typically lasts between 18 and 24 months. The final three months of the L7 APA (Level 7 Academic Professional Apprentice) is the End-Point Assessment (EPA), which is what ultimately determines an apprentice's professional competence.

The statement gives guidance to providers and End-Point Assessment organisations and will inform future reviews and placement of the initiative.

"We are delighted to achieve the go-ahead from QAA to be the first in the sector approved to deliver end-point assessment for the Level 7 Academic Professional Apprenticeship" - Oluwashina Akinsanmi, Advance HE's Head of Professional Development.

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Public Engagement Leadership (PEL) Lens

The PEL Lens (link) is part of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and has been developed with the Wellcome Trust, the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and other key stakeholders from the research and public engagement sector. It has been designed to help researchers and research leaders tell others and their institutions in planning, developing, enhancing and delivering high quality public engagement.

Technician's Lens on the RDF

Vitae has been working closely with the Science Council on the development of the Technician's Commitment. The Commitment aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research across all disciplines. To date, over 80 organisations have become signatories.

In conjunction with the University of Edinburgh and the Science Council, a stakeholder workshop was held to develop the draft of the commitment. The draft commitment now in draft will be formally considered by the RDF signatories in order to draft a final version of the RDF for technicians when planning their professional development, with further validation through a wider consultation. The draft will be launched at Vitae Connections Week 2020.

"The supervisor's voice: perspectives on the values and boundaries of the supervisory role" - Dr Nicola Watchman Smith, Advance HE's Head of Academic Professional Apprenticeships and Excellence Awards.

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To echo Astrid’s insightful foreword to this report, we must continue to be prepared for the unexpected.

Goals and priorities

Governments and policies change. Sometimes pandemics come along and sweep us off our feet (or into our home offices). What we as a community and as an organisation must do is to keep moving towards achieving common goals. Although, even identifying the appropriate goals to work towards can be a challenge in these uncertain and rapidly changing times.

However, we have several ways of identifying and channelling our efforts towards shared ambitions. For example, the UK Government’s recent Research and Development Roadmap overlaps with the Principles of the Researcher Development Concordat and Technicians Commitment. We also know more than ever about the interconnectedness of the global research ecosystem and research culture, thanks to reports such as Vitae’s Research integrity: a landscape study and Wellcome’s What do researchers think about the culture they work in, among other reports and surveys, including those evaluating the impact of Covid-19.

Evidence of impact

Building on the evidence base will be a focus for 2020/21. Having a confident understanding of the state of play in the researcher, mentor and development of researchers, and particularly the many impacts of Covid-19, is vital in order to move forward in the right direction. An evidence base through our series of Member roundtables, demonstrating the impact of researcher development will continue to be an important challenge, as tightened budgets continue, as the breadth of what is encompassed within researcher development continues to grow.

Building on the knowledge and approaches developed through our What do researchers do series, we will continue to stimulate collaboration in this area. In the year ahead, roundtables, working groups, online events and other opportunities for engagement, listening and sharing practice will be central to how we work with the community.

Collaboration

We also know that tracking the flow of researchers in their careers across institutions, employment sectors and internationally is essential if we are to inform researcher development practice and policy. However, with evidence of impact, this is a challenge requiring the information, expertise and engagement of multiple stakeholder groups.

Building on the knowledge and approaches developed through our What do researchers do series, we will continue to stimulate collaboration in this area. In the year ahead, roundtables, working groups, online events and other opportunities for engagement, listening and sharing practice will be central to how we work with the community.

Conversation and reflection

There has never been a better time to make progress on some of the most enduring challenges we face, including improving research culture, and wellbeing and mental health. Covid-19 has shed a spotlight on the cracks in the research system that can no longer go unnoticed. This year so far has already been one of outstanding achievements in embedding home working, fostering community spirit, and changing attitudes towards the environment. Our ambition for 2020/21 is to harness this time of possibilities to create new broad and deep conversations that reach across the many stakeholders in researcher development internationally. We look forward to taking new perspectives to look at old problems and experimenting with creative solutions together.
We are a non-profit programme, part of the Careers Research & Advisory Centre (CRAC) Ltd with over 50 years' experience of enhancing the skills and careers of researchers.