

# Vitae Researcher Development Framework

## Briefing for research staff

### 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](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)**

**“I've always thought of myself as being quite ambitious, driven and focused on what I want, but the framework made me realise I can have much larger visions.”**

**Kristina Hultgren, Postdoctoral Researcher in Sociolinguistics, University of Copenhagen and Edge Hill University, UK.**

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.

### Using the Researcher Development Framework

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework is a guide to your development as a professional researcher, enabling you to identify the strengths you already have and prioritise for personal and career development in the context of future career opportunities.

Being a successful researcher involves many skills including communicating your work to others, being aware of its impact and being innovative and enterprising. The Researcher Development Framework can help you decide on priorities for your professional development, informing discussions with your principal investigator or research manager. The Researcher Development Framework enables you to consider the skills and experiences that will enhance your career prospects and articulate your capabilities to future employers.

The Researcher Development Framework has been incorporated into a downloadable Professional Development Planner to enable you to identify the areas in the framework you want to develop further and to create an action plan. [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)

You can use the Researcher Development Framework and Professional Development Planner on a regular basis to:

- aid self-reflection and set yourself aspirational goals
- choose the most appropriate formal and informal development opportunities provided by your institution and look for development opportunities outside of your research
- prepare for one-to-one progress reviews, appraisals and career development conversations with your principal investigator, research manager or mentor
- consider how your skills and experiences will enhance your career prospects
- highlight, articulate and evidence the transferability of your skills in your CV, in job applications and at interviews.

# Background

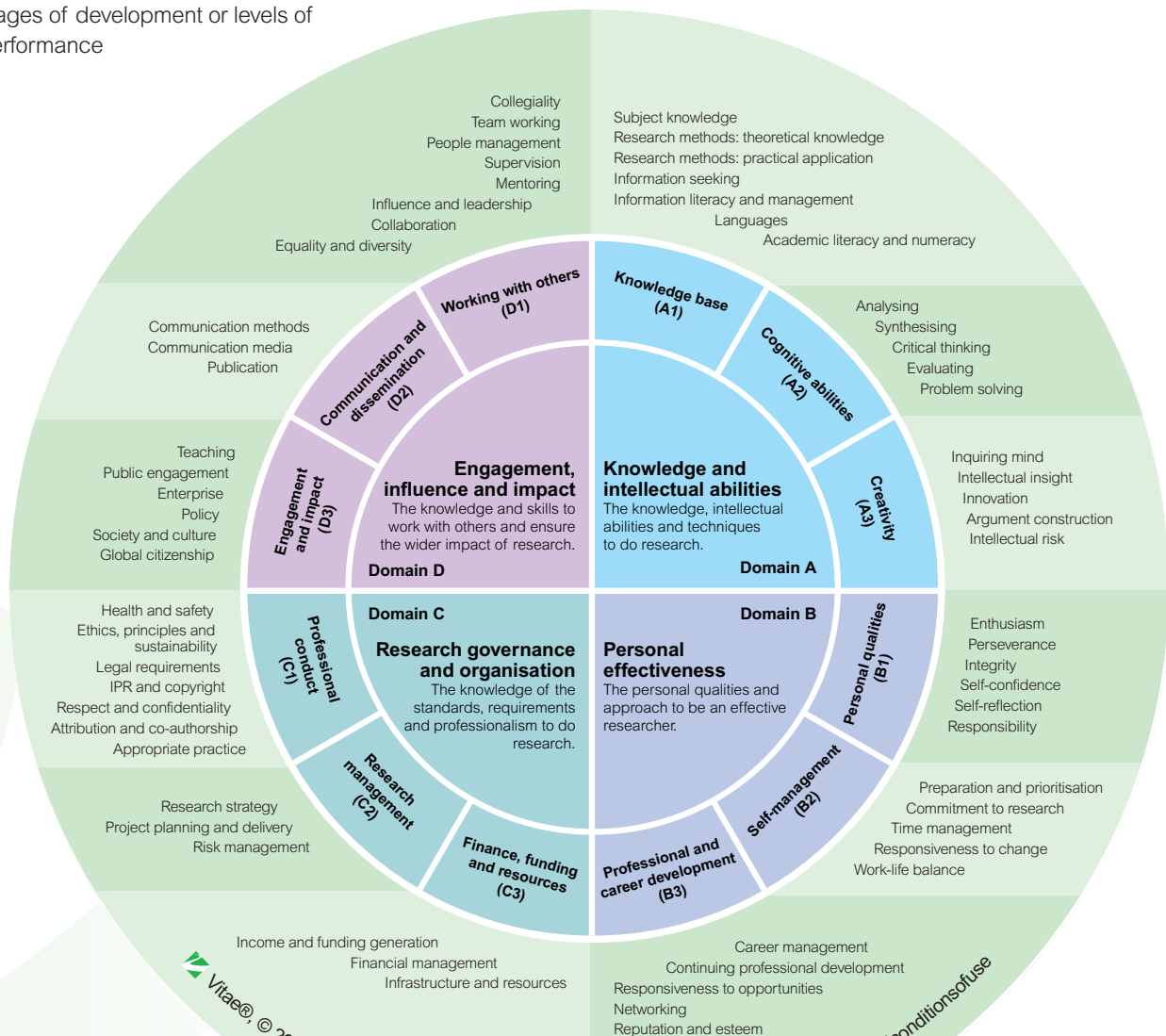
The Researcher Development Framework and Researcher Development Statement underpin policies for supporting the professional and career development of researchers. Institution-wide implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the QAA Code of Practice for research degree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



# Research staff who have used the Researcher Development Framework say:

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

**“As a researcher it's easy to get stuck into only thinking about the knowledge and skills that are specific to your research field. The Researcher Development Framework is great for broadening your horizons and identifying your strengths and the skills that you want to develop to become a better researcher”**

Dr Daniel Weekes, Research Associate, Kings College,  
University of London

**“Embrace the opportunity; it really does make you think. It may take some time but it really will aid you and help you create, if nothing else, a mental map of where you are and where you want to go.”**

Russell Bennett, Senior Lecturer and Postgraduate Researcher,  
School of the Built Environment, Liverpool John Moores University

## The Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner

**Researcher Development Framework** **Researcher Development Framework**

**Domain A: Knowledge and intellectual abilities** This domain contains the knowledge and intellectual abilities needed to be able to carry out excellent research.

**Domain B: Personal effectiveness** This domain contains the personal qualities, career and self-management skills required to take ownership for and control professional development.

**Domain C: Research organisation and governance** This domain contains the knowledge of the standards, requirements and professional conduct that are needed for the effective management of research.

**Domain B: Communication, influence and impact** This domain contains the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to engage with, influence and report to the academic, social, cultural, economic and broader context.

Overview  
"How to" guide  
Useful resources  
Group

Before using the Professional Development Planner, download the file and save it on your computer. Also watch our screencast video on how to get the most from the planner.  
[www.rdf.ac.uk/rdp/rdp](http://www.rdf.ac.uk/rdp/rdp)

**“The Researcher Development Framework provides an excellent resource both for managing my own career development and for helping my staff identify particular training needs at key points in their research careers.”**

Patrick Hadoke, Tenure-tracked Senior Academic Fellow  
in Pharmacology, University of Edinburgh

## Relevant organisations say:

**“The UKRSA promote the Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner as a useful tool to help focus researchers on their career development. UKRSA encourage local research staff associations in organising sessions for researchers to share their own experiences using the Professional Development Planner. It provides an excellent basis for identifying shared needs for careers and professional development whilst providing the basis for seeking additional support.”**

The UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA)

**“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

**“As researchers move on in their careers, whether they remain in academia or move into other employment areas, they need to be able to analyse the experience they have gained in order to consider their career direction and to work towards achieving their goals. This self knowledge can help them in a number of different ways: it can provide a focus for guidance discussions with a careers adviser, provide material for effective written applications and assist in interview preparation.”**

The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services  
Research Staff task Group

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 a fantastic way for research staff to consider their professional and career development alongside other performance criteria. Individual research staff will find using the framework to review strengths and priorities really useful as preparation for conversations about career opportunities.”**

Guy Gregory, HR Director,  
University of Bristol, Universities Human Resources (UHR)

**“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

# Using the Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner:

## Top ten tips from other researchers:

- Use the Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner to select individual areas for development
- You can choose to use the Researcher Development Framework for short term as well as long term development
- Prioritise development on those areas which are most relevant to you
- Draw on experiences outside of your daily research to evidence, reflect on and develop your capabilities
- Progression to the highest phase in a descriptor may not always be relevant to your career plans
- Talk to others to get their views about your strengths and capabilities
- To move from one phase to the next why not explore attending courses
- Some phases may only be reached through experience and practice
- Create a realistic action plan with measurable goals in specific time frames
- Review your progress against your action plan and go through the cycle again regularly

“the Researcher Development Framework screencast is really useful to give you an idea of how to use the Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner.”

Emma Coonan, Information Librarian,  
University of Cambridge

For more information about the Researcher Development Framework tailored to postgraduate researchers, and to download the Professional Development Planner see [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfresearchers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfresearchers)

## Useful links

Your institution will provide a range of support and development opportunities. This can include training and development opportunities and careers advice.

To complement institutional provision, Vitae has many resources for research staff.

### For the Researcher Development Framework:

- Researcher Development Framework: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)
- Researcher Development Framework researcher profiles: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfprofiles](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfprofiles)
- Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)
- Contact: [rdf@vitae.ac.uk](mailto:rdf@vitae.ac.uk)

### Other Vitae resources

- General advice and information for research staff: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rs](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rs)
- Research staff blog: [www.vitae.ac.uk/rsblog](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rsblog)
- The researcher booklets: [www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets)
- Careers information: [www.vitae.ac.uk/careers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careers)
- 'What do researchers do?': [www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd)
- Researcher career profiles: [www.vitae.ac.uk/careerprofiles](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careerprofiles)

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

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