

## Researcher development framework: Summary of the analysis of consultation responses

### Executive summary

The UK Researcher development framework (RDF) was created during 2009 in response to a range of recommendations to create a UK development framework for postgraduate researchers and research staff in higher education institutions. The RDF supports the implementation of the QAA Code of Practice for research degree programmes, the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the continuation of the 'Roberts agenda'.

A major consultation with the HE sector, researchers and other stakeholders took place during autumn, 2009. We received, in total, 242 responses. 72 researchers responded to the researcher survey. There were 151 responses to the main survey and 19 non-proforma responses. Of these, 87 were on behalf of organisations (65 HEIs) and 74 were from individuals working in institutions or related organisations.

Overall between 60% to 80% of respondents to all questions agreed or mostly agreed that the RDF's proposed purpose, scope and structure were useful. There was strong support that the RDF will be useful for supporting the professional development of researchers. It was thought to have wide relevance and applicability, and the empirical basis was particularly valuable in providing a credible, robust framework. The predominant concerns were about the clarity of the messages around the purpose of the RDF, particularly the importance of providing a clear rationale to different stakeholder groups on the value and uses of the RDF. The concerns were primarily about the following themes:

- The expectations on HEIs: how would the RDF link to the QAA Code of Practice, the Concordat and the 'Roberts funding'?
- The focus only on research: how would the framework acknowledge other aspects of being an academic, for example teaching? How would the RDF link to other frameworks that exist to related areas?
- The RDF as a tool for personal development: should the framework be linked to appraisal and performance review?
- The stages of a research career: how do these link with locally identified progression criteria? Do the stages imply a right to promotion?
- The generic framework: how does the language and content work for all researchers?
- The tools and resources: how will an online tool for researchers work? How can the RDF best be presented to a range of stakeholders?

In response to the feedback, the RDF Advisory Group and project team<sup>1</sup> have agreed the following next steps, which build on the significant input to the consultation.

During May we will also publish:

- Information about the RDF for different stakeholder groups on the Vitae website [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)
- The Researcher development statement (RDS) which includes the domains and sub-domain descriptors. This is proposed to replace the Joint Skills Statement<sup>2</sup> and to enable HEIs and funders to consider their strategic plans for supporting researchers

<sup>1</sup> Members of the Advisory Group and project team can be found in Appendix 3

<sup>2</sup> The Joint Skills Statement, <http://vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/RCUK-Joint-Skills-Statement-2001.pdf>

During July, we will:

- Publish a revised Researcher development framework taking into account further input from employers and professional bodies and the detailed consultation feedback
- Publish a statement of expectation from RCUK and specific statements from a range of key stakeholder organisations
- Provide a range of examples illustrating how researchers could use the framework

In September:

- Publish and seek feedback on the findings of a proposal for how Vitae will support HEIs with incorporating the RDF into their CPD provision
- Publish and seek feedback on the appropriateness of developing an interactive UK CPD tool for researchers
- Provide conceptual examples of 'lenses'<sup>3</sup> on the RDF that focus on specific researcher activities, eg public engagement, teaching, intrapreneurship

At the end of the reflection period in November:

- Review any further feedback received during the 'reflection period' and finalise the framework
- Report on HEIs' initial responses and activities related to the RDF
- Confirm timescales and scope for resources for stakeholder groups, including potentially a UK CPD tool for researchers

During the reflection phase the Researcher development statement will be available for institutions to review their provision and consider how to embed the framework into local structures and practice. There will be opportunity also for further reflection and comment through the website on the full RDF as institutions explore how it inter-relates with institutional provision. The RDF will not be promoted directly to researchers in 2010 and until an online CPD tool and associated resources are developed.

The RDF Advisory Group, project team and Vitae would like to thank all individuals and organisations who provided comments and feedback during the consultation period. Your input has shaped the further development of the framework to ensure that the RDF is fit for purpose and meets the needs of the HE sector, stakeholders and researchers themselves. You are invited to continue to contribute to the development of the RDF and associated resources through the website [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf).

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<sup>3</sup> 'Lenses' are a tool to map other related areas onto the RDF

## 1. Introduction

The Researcher development framework (RDF) was created during 2009 in response to a range of recommendations to create a UK development framework for postgraduate researchers and research staff in higher education institutions.

The framework was developed from first principles using empirical data generated from a series of semi-structured interviews with researchers covering a range of experiences, institutions, disciplines and demographics<sup>4</sup>. A survey of the academic literature and relevant competency frameworks for researchers and related occupations was used to inform the development of the structure and shape of the framework. A major consultation with the HE sector, researchers and other stakeholders took place on the resultant RDF during autumn, 2009.

The key messages from the consultation were considered by the RDF project team in early February and reviewed by the RDF Advisory Group in early March. The key themes are summarised below, along with next steps. The full response to the consultation questions is included in the appendices.

### 1.1 Background to the Researcher development framework

The importance of developing highly skilled researchers and promoting the value of research careers to build our research capacity and ensure our economic and cultural prosperity has been well recognised. The 2005 launch of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment<sup>5</sup>, and the revision of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers<sup>6</sup> are evidence of a growing requirement to establish the career of 'researcher' as a valued professional occupation.

Implicit in the researcher development agenda is an understanding of the skills that researchers need to develop. For postgraduate researchers this is currently articulated in the Joint Statement of the UK Research Councils' Training Requirements for Research Students (Joint Skills Statement – JSS), which has been incorporated into the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice for research degree programmes<sup>7</sup>. For research staff there is no equivalent national statement, although a few HEIs have developed internal models. Currently, the only national reference is the Joint National Committee of Higher Educational Staff (JNCHES)<sup>8</sup> academic role profiles for research roles, which focuses on job descriptions, rather than personal and professional skills development.

The 2008 Roberts Policy Forum<sup>9</sup> and subsequent consultation by the Rugby Team<sup>10</sup> endorsed the importance of developing an '*overarching framework/model of professional learning that builds on the Joint Skills Statement*'.

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<sup>4</sup> Methodology for the development of the Researcher development framework, 2009, Vitae, [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconsultation](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconsultation)

<sup>5</sup> European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment, 2005, European Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers/pdf/am509774CEE\\_EN\\_E4.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers/pdf/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, 2008, [www.researchconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk)

<sup>7</sup> Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes, 2004, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section1/default.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section1/default.asp)

<sup>8</sup> Joint National Committee of Higher Educational Staff (JNCHES) [www.ucea.ac.uk/en/New\\_JNCHES/](http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/New_JNCHES/)

<sup>9</sup> Roberts Policy Forum report, 2008, Vitae, [www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/UK-GRAD-policy-forum-report-january-2008.pdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/UK-GRAD-policy-forum-report-january-2008.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Defining researchers' skills – developing an overarching competency framework, 2008, Rugby Team, [www.vitae.ac.uk/cms/files/RT-consultation-competency-framework-Mar-08.doc](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/cms/files/RT-consultation-competency-framework-Mar-08.doc)

## 1.2 Aims of the project

The Researcher development framework has been designed to be a tool for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers. It describes the knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities of researchers and encourages researchers to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development.

Primarily, the framework was designed for:

- researchers within higher education to evaluate and plan their own personal, professional and career development
- managers/supervisors of researchers in their role supporting the development of researchers
- trainers, developers, human resources specialists and careers advisors in the planning and provision of support for researchers' development
- institutions in making decisions about their strategic approach to development of researchers.

The framework will also be of use for:

- funders of researchers and other stakeholders with an interest in the development of researchers
- non higher education employers in identifying the benefits of employing researchers
- people interested in training as a researcher or researchers looking to move into higher education from other sectors.

## 2. Summary of main themes from the consultation responses

A number of themes emerged from the consultation feedback that are addressed below. Where appropriate we have provided a response and further actions which have been agreed with the RDF Advisory Group and project team.

### 2.1 Overview of consultation respondents

- There were two consultation surveys; one for individuals or organisations from HEIs or stakeholder groups and one designed for researchers. Some organisations and individuals provided non-proforma responses
- We received 151 responses to the main survey and 19 non-proforma responses. 87 of these were on behalf of organisations, and 74 were from individuals. The organisational responses<sup>11</sup> included the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), British Council, European Commission, Higher Education Academy, Institute of Physics, National Union of Students, 1994 Group, UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE), Universities and College Union
- 65 universities responded to the consultation, including 55% of Russell Group members, and 57% of 1994 Group institutions
- Of the 74 known individual respondents to the main survey, 20 were research staff and 32 were academics or staff supporting researchers in institutions
- The majority of responses to the main survey (70%) indicated they were responding with an interest in and/or responsibility for both postgraduate researchers and research staff
- The survey designed for researchers had 72 responses in which 38 HEIs were represented. The majority were from research staff (38). 18 postgraduate researchers responded of whom half were in their first year. 12 researchers who responded had roles which included research and teaching
- Of the researchers who responded, 10% were from an arts and humanities background, 23% from biomedical sciences, 10% from biological sciences, 35% from physical sciences and engineering, and 22% from a social sciences background
- There were few responses from employers (non-HE), employees working in occupations other than research in HE and professional bodies

### Response and next steps

Although the invitation to respond to the RDF consultation was sent to a range of employer organisations employer responses were low. It is important that the RDF has resonance with non-HE employers. Vitae will further seek the views of employers and professional bodies before finalising the framework in July.

### 2.2 Overview of the Researcher development framework

**Overall between 60% to 80% of respondents to all questions agreed or mostly agreed that the RDF's proposed purpose, scope and structure were useful.** There was some variance between results of different types of respondents, with researcher responses generally scoring slightly higher than organisational responses. However, there were common issues raised by the different response groups.

There was strong support that the RDF will be useful for supporting the professional development of researchers. It was thought to have wide relevance and applicability, and the empirical basis was particularly valuable in providing a credible, robust framework. Those that responded were pleased that doctoral researchers could see the full trajectory of skills and attributes needed to

<sup>11</sup> A full breakdown of organisations which responded is included in Appendix 1

further their development and that research staff could identify areas for development, compare their capabilities with others and aspire to higher levels.

8. How useful do you think this framework will be in supporting the professional development of researchers?					
	N	Very useful	Useful	Partially	Not at all
HEIs	62	35%	27%	35%	2%
Researchers	68	24%	35%	28%	13%
Individuals	67	24%	37%	33%	6%
Other orgs, international, employers	15	33%	40%	27%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>28% (59)</b>	<b>34% (72)</b>	<b>32% (67)</b>	<b>7% (14)</b>

  

17. Overall, does the Researcher development framework meet the need for a national framework for researchers and those supporting researchers in planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers? (main survey only)					
	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
HEIs	60	40%	23%	30%	7%
Researchers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Individuals	57	28%	26%	26%	19%
Other orgs, international, employers	14	29%	50%	21%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>34% (44)</b>	<b>27% (36)</b>	<b>27% (36)</b>	<b>11% (15)</b>

The predominant concerns were about the clarity of purpose/explanation of the RDF, particularly the importance of providing a clear rationale to different stakeholder groups on the value and uses of the RDF. There were major calls to simplify, streamline and improve the flexibility and language of the RDF. The responses also raised a number of important issues for further consideration, which are discussed in turn below.

### 2.3 Expectations on HEIs

The consultation asked how useful the framework will be within institutions/organisations to support the development of researchers. The main points of consensus were that the RDF will be useful to institutions; and more useful than the Joint Skills Statement (JSS)<sup>12</sup> because it covers researcher development beyond the doctoral experience. There was a strong positive message that the RDF would create consistency in researcher development within the UK HE research landscape.

There was some consensus in how those responding thought the framework will be used, primarily:

- to support career development processes already in place
- for self reflection/development and as an analysis tool
- to identify and plan development programmes and activities, including spotting gaps in provision
- to complement existing provision within institutions.

<sup>12</sup> [www.vitae.ac.uk/jss](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/jss) The Joint Skills Statement refers only to postgraduate researchers

Some respondents were concerned about the potential impact of the RDF if it is incorporated into UK policy. There were questions about how the RDF fits with the Concordat and how will it be incorporated into RCUK terms and conditions of grants. Of particular concern was whether HEIs would be required to demonstrate 'compliance' with the RDF as part of the QAA Code of Practice for research degrees. The wider coverage of the RDF compared to the JSS, was seen as placing a requirement on HEIs to extend their provision of formal development opportunities; a major concern in straightened economic climates. Although there were few concerns about the RDF replacing the JSS, a few respondents raised issues about how the 'Roberts' skills (JSS C-G) are identified within the RDF. There was also fairly strong concern with regard to the time and cost of implementation of the RDF given the economic climate.

### **Response and next steps**

An initial list of 'frequently asked questions'<sup>13</sup> has been developed to clarify the status and expectations of stakeholders and funders about the use of the RDF. These will be extended during the course of the reflection period and in response to further feedback.

It was agreed to distinguish the RDF as a reference document for policy and strategy development from a development tool for researchers by creating a self-contained 'Researcher development statement' (RDS). The RDS incorporates the skills, attributes and behaviours of researchers of the full Researcher development framework in a useful format for policymakers.

### **The Researcher development framework and the QAA Code of Practice for research degree programmes**

The QAA Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 1: Postgraduate research degree programmes is part of the Academic Infrastructure, a set of UK agreed reference points. The Joint Skills Statement is an annex within Section 1. The JSS states that 'it is not the intention of this document to provide assessment criteria for research training'. The skills and attributes may be present on commencement, explicitly taught, or developed during the course of the research<sup>14</sup>. The JSS is provided as guidance to institutions to use as appropriate. It is anticipated that the RDS would be incorporated into the code, replacing the Joint Skills Statement in a similar way<sup>15</sup>. As with the Joint Skills Statement there is no expectation that HEIs need to provide formal training opportunities for researchers for all areas identified within the RDS. A sub-group of the project team will work with the QAA to confirm how the RDS will replace the Joint Skills Statement in the QAA CoP and make it clear that the RDS is provided as a guiding framework only<sup>16</sup>.

### **The Researcher development framework and the Concordat**

The 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' (Concordat) provides a set of principles for supporting and managing research careers in the United Kingdom, outlining the responsibilities and expectations of researchers and of those who manage, employ or fund them.

The RDF is a resource that can help researchers to plan their professional development, to identify training needs, and to articulate the skills that they develop through the course of their careers. It can help both researchers and HEIs to achieve the aims of some of the principles of the Concordat, particularly principles 3 and 4 on career development and principle 5 on the responsibilities of researchers.

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<sup>13</sup> [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq)

<sup>14</sup> [www.vitae.ac.uk/jss](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/jss)

<sup>15</sup> The QAA are currently inviting discussion on the future development of the Academic Infrastructure. Until this is complete there will not be revision of any sections of the Code of Practice. Further details and a discussion paper can be found at [www.qaa.ac.uk/news/media/pressReleases/250210.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/media/pressReleases/250210.asp)

<sup>16</sup> Further details can be found at [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq)

A sub-group of the project team will work with the Concordat Implementation Coordinator to make the links between the RDF and the Concordat more explicit to all stakeholders<sup>17</sup>.

### The Researcher development framework and the ‘Roberts agenda’

The Roberts transferable skills and career development agenda for postgraduate researchers has specifically focused on sections C-G of the Joint Skills Statement<sup>18</sup>. Participants at the 2010 Vitae policy forum acknowledged that it may be time for the ‘Roberts’ agenda to be seen as a more holistic researcher development process. The RDF provides an opportunity to acknowledge the ‘JSS skills’ as an integral and transferable aspect of doing research, alongside research techniques, skills and knowledge.

The Research Councils are currently individually and collectively exploring how the RDS will be practically referenced within their training and development guidance for researchers funded through stipends, grants and fellowships<sup>19</sup>.

## 2.4 Researcher development framework compared to an ‘Academic development framework’?

13. Does the structure of the domains, sub-domains and the summary description successfully describe the main aspects of researchers' activities in higher education?

	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
HEIs	58	43%	38%	16%	4%
Researchers	63	30%	44%	21%	5%
Individuals	61	38%	31%	20%	11%
Other orgs, international, employers	11	46%	36%	18%	0%
Total	193	37% (72)	38% (73)	19% (36)	6% (12)

14. Does the framework successfully encapsulate the generic descriptions of researchers' knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities?

	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
HEIs	61	49%	33%	15%	3%
Researchers	63	45%	41%	11%	3%
Individuals	57	40%	35%	14%	11%
Other orgs, international, employers	13	54%	31%	15%	0%
Total	194	45% (88)	36% (70)	13% (26)	5% (10)

Broadly, most respondents felt that the framework captured the key aspects of being a researcher in HE. Some institutional responses said that it mapped closely with existing local frameworks which added credibility to both the RDF and to local practice. Many comments emphasised that the diverse range of activity associated with researchers was covered, and it was an effective evolution of the Joint Skills Statement with the inclusion of areas such as public engagement.

However, a consistent theme from respondents was that the RDF only covered the research aspect of an academic career and to be most useful/helpful it should be extended to cover all

<sup>17</sup> Further details can be found at [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq)

<sup>18</sup> Personal effectiveness, communication, networking and team working, and career management skills.

<sup>19</sup> Further details can be found at [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf-faq)

aspects of working in academia. There were strong calls to link the RDF to the HEA Professional Standards Framework<sup>20</sup>.

### **Response and next steps**

The advisory group and project team agreed the RDF should remain within its original remit (ie relating to research only) and that the framework should not be expanded to include the other aspects of working in academia where there are already dedicated frameworks. The RDF will acknowledge more clearly that researchers in HE are involved in other activities, including teaching, and the HEA Professional Standards Framework will be referenced in the RDF.

### **2.5 Moving in and out of higher education**

The RDF was designed as a framework for researchers in higher education, but, as with the Joint Skills Statement, it was intended that by identifying and developing a range of skills and attributes, researchers will be better able to identify and transfer these to a range of employment settings.

A common concern was that the RDF promoted the idea of an academic career as the expected career route. There were also concerns that it portrayed the 'perfect researcher' and would raise unrealistic expectations of the chances of an academic career and false hopes of promotion.

Respondents wanted the RDF to highlight the range of opportunities open to researchers and to be more explicit about moving in and out of HE. These comments were consistent with calls to either include more 'transferable' skills or make the transferability of skills, experiences, etc more apparent.

### **Response and next steps**

The advisory group and project team agreed that highlighting the transferability of skills was important and it should be clearer that a researcher can 'enter' [and 'leave'] the framework at any point. It was felt that the language used in the framework should resonate with researchers and therefore this should not be significantly changed.

We will provide a range of examples to illustrate how researchers will use the framework and to demonstrate the transferability of the skills identified in the RDF to a range of careers.

### **2.6 Should the RDF be for personal development planning or linked to performance measures and appraisal?**

Many responses commented on how the RDF will be used by HEIs. There were strong calls for it to primarily be a self-reflection tool for researchers; many of these respondents stressed the importance of keeping the RDF separate from human resources (HR) processes, such as appraisal, performance management and job descriptions. Conversely, several respondents highlighted the usefulness of doing just this, pointing out it is more likely to be adopted by HEIs if incorporated into HR processes.

### **Response and next steps**

The advisory group and project team confirmed that the RDF is primarily a tool for individual self-reflection and it was not intended to be linked to performance management. The framework was designed to provide a structure for personal development planning, not to replace locally agreed progression criteria or job requirements.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/rewardandrecog/ProfessionalStandardsFramework.pdf>

The RDF team agreed that in some cases the RDF could be useful in appraisal processes, particularly around personal development. Where appraisal is related directly to the function of the job the use of the RDF is inappropriate.

## 2.7 Stages of research career

9. The Researcher development framework is based on five stages of a research career. Are these stages appropriate and are they expressed clearly?					
Key statistics					
Q9	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
HEIs	61	34%	43%	16%	7%
Researchers	66	42%	35%	15%	8%
Individuals	61	30%	41%	16%	13%
Other orgs, international, employers	15	33%	27%	33%	7%
Total	203	35% (72)	39% (78)	17% (35)	9% (18)

Despite the fact that 75% of respondents agreed, fully or mostly, that the five career stages [new researcher, researcher, established researcher, advanced researcher and eminent researcher] were appropriate, this aspect of the RDF created the most variation in responses. Views expressed varied from finding the stages ‘very useful to researchers’, to recommending removing them entirely. There were a variety of alternative suggestions on how to describe the stages of a research career within HE in the context of the RDF, including combining stages 4 and 5 [advanced and eminent researcher], removing them completely, adding a stage between 1 and 2 [new researcher and researcher], and between 2 and 3 [researcher and established researcher].

Of particular concern was that linking the RDF to career stages within academia could imply that progressing through the phases of development for all the descriptors would ensure promotion. This does not sufficiently recognise that opportunities for progression in academia are hugely competitive and subject to many external factors, often out of the control of the individual.

### Responses and next steps

The RDF project team decided that linking the RDF with the stages of a career in higher education added an unnecessary level of complexity and the potential for misunderstanding the primary purpose of the RDF, which is to support researchers to become better researchers. The language in the RDF should not give any sense of entitlement to promotion. A range of suggestions were explored, including to provide guidance notes that recommend researchers review their skills against the framework and then review their institution’s promotion criteria.

However, the RDF team agreed that it would be useful to recognise the stages of development as a researcher, such as in training, being an independent researcher and being a research leader to provide context for the RDF. A range of researcher profiles will provide examples of this.

The project team agreed that, while it is likely that the majority of researchers using the RDF will be in the early stages of their careers, it could still be of value to more experienced researchers. Increasingly institutions are exploring support for all employees and leadership programmes for experienced academics. Whilst an individual’s ability to progress at this level is dependent on a range of circumstances (for example different structures at HEIs, funding decisions etc), there may be value in being able to identify their development needs.

## 2.8 Appropriateness of content: recognising diversity and flexibility

13. Does the structure of the domains, sub-domains and the summary description successfully describe the main aspects of researchers' activities in higher education?

### Key statistics

	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
HEIs	59	44%	37%	15%	3%
Researchers	63	30%	44%	21%	5%
Individuals	61	38%	31%	20%	11%
Other orgs, international, employers	10	40%	40%	20%	0%
Total	193	37% (72)	38% (73)	19% (36)	6% (12)

The majority of responses (75%) confirmed that '*the structure of the framework successfully describes the diverse areas of activity associated with researchers*'. The overall structure of the domains was generally endorsed by respondents.

However, there were also concerns that the RDF doesn't recognise the diversity of researchers' experiences, and particularly that the language was too science focused and did not cater for arts and humanities, social sciences, allied health and engineers! A few respondents were concerned about the relevance of the RDF to part-time, disabled, practice-based and international researchers, and whether it recognised prior experience, industrial research experience and the existence of portfolio careers.

There were comments that the RDF needed to be more flexible, less prescriptive and more comprehensive. Some respondents highlighted that researchers may not have or need all descriptors. There was a request that researchers should be able to add their own descriptors.

In terms of specific comments on the content of the descriptors and associated phases, there was a range of constructive and helpful suggestions. There was general support for how the RDF builds on the JSS. Domain 1 (Research Organisation and Governance) and 4 (Impact and Influence) received the most comments: the increased focus on impact and influence was both well received and raised concerns. Adding teaching descriptors to the RDF was a recurring theme, including a suggestion that teaching should form an additional domain. Several respondents mentioned prioritising or weighting the descriptors based on their importance to an academic career.

There were comments on the usefulness of the phases of development and whether a development 'continuum' was more appropriate. Some responses suggested reducing the development phases from five to three. The matrix structure of the RDF also raised concern for some respondents. They highlighted that the use of 'columns' could imply that researchers need to progress from one column to another for the whole of the RDF, rather than focusing on progression across a 'row' for one or more descriptors at a time.

### Response and next steps

The RDF project team will review the language of the framework to ensure that it is objective and sufficiently generic to be appropriate for all researchers. This will include asking for expert input, for example from the Equality Challenge Unit. The original interviewees will be asked to map themselves against the RDF to both validate the framework and highlight any issues of

language<sup>21</sup>. Additional feedback will be sought from researchers with a range of different study/work/demographic profiles to test the inclusiveness of the RDF.

All comments relating to the structure and content of the RDF are being reviewed in detail to identify consistency of responses, suggestions of omissions, deletions and changes for the descriptors and development phases. Relevant stakeholder organisations will be consulted further on specific aspects of the RDF, such as public engagement and the links to teaching in HE.

In the longer term, the presentation of the RDF will be developed to make it more user friendly and flexible.

## 2.9 RDF tools and resources

There were consistent messages about the importance of developing an interactive online RDF 'tool' and resources for researchers. Alongside this were calls for resources for those supporting researchers, for example activities/materials/sessions about progressing in academia and describing your skills to non-HE employers. Several respondents mentioned the value of having a range of examples illustrating how researchers have used the framework.

Very few researcher respondents reported currently using personal development tools.

### Response and next steps

It was acknowledged that different stakeholders will use the RDF for different purposes, which will require different presentations of the RDF. For example:

- researchers, and those having conversations with researchers, using the RDF for professional development will want to explore the full range of content of the RDF within a continuing professional development tool
- trainers and careers advisors may want to use a version of the framework to reflect on their researcher development provision and supporting materials
- RCUK, HEI management and other stakeholders who want to use the RDF to reflect on their strategic approach to researcher development will find the Researcher development statement most useful.

It was recognised that some institutions will want to revise existing personal development planning or continuing professional development tools to incorporate the RDF. Institutions may also value a self-standing simple tool that encourages PIs and researchers to have conversations about professional development. To avoid duplication of effort and additional costs, it is important to be clear about future national developments of the RDF.

A sub-group has been set up to specify the scope and timescales and appropriateness of developing a CPD tool for researchers, taking into account HEI views. This will be scoped during 2010, with opportunity of sector input at the Vitae researcher development conference.

## 2.10 Future developments

Respondents suggested that the RDF would need time to become embedded and worked into processes and systems for supporting researcher development. Several mentioned that it would be appropriate to consider evaluating the RDF after three years. Suggestions for development included: making it more holistic, ie including teaching and administration; mapping the RDF onto

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<sup>21</sup> The original interviews were conducted with researchers across a range of disciplines, current and prior experience. RDF methodology paper: <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/167281-167231/Methodology.html>

the professional bodies' frameworks; and creating disciplinary specific versions of the RDF, ie developing 'lenses'<sup>22</sup>.

Several mentioned the development of a sophisticated online tool which would allow users to benchmark themselves with peers.

### **Response and next steps**

The RDF team will identify an evaluation process to explore how the framework is working and gather evidence about how it is being used. Possibilities for doing this include using the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS)<sup>23</sup> and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)<sup>24</sup> to gather evidence on the use of CPD tools and PDPs.

Further consideration will also be given to the idea of stakeholder groups developing 'lenses' through which to use the framework in specific environments.

### **3. Summary and next steps**

The RDF received positive feedback via the consultation on the aims, scope and structure of the framework. The content and language will be reviewed further in response to feedback. Further developments, including resources for stakeholders, more sophisticated online tools, a range of examples of how researchers have used the framework and an evaluation of the RDF have been integrated into the project plan.

In response to the feedback, the RDF Advisory Group and project team have agreed the following next steps which build on the significant input to the consultation.

During May we will also publish:

- Information about the RDF for different stakeholder groups on the Vitae website [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)
- The Researcher development statement (RDS) which includes the domains and sub-domain descriptors. This is proposed to replace the Joint Skills Statement<sup>25</sup> and to enable HEIs and funders to consider their strategic plans for supporting researchers

During July, we will:

- Publish a revised Researcher development framework taking into account further input from employers and professional bodies and the detailed consultation feedback
- Publish a statement of expectation from RCUK and specific statements from a range of key stakeholder organisations
- Provide a range of examples illustrating how researchers could use the framework

In September:

- Publish and seek feedback on the findings of a proposal for how Vitae will support HEIs with incorporating the RDF into their CPD provision
- Publish and seek feedback on the appropriateness of developing an interactive UK CPD tool for researchers
- Provide conceptual examples of 'lenses'<sup>26</sup> on the RDF that focus on specific researcher activities, eg public engagement, teaching, intrapreneurship

<sup>22</sup> 'Lenses' are a tool to map other related areas onto the RDF

<sup>23</sup> Careers in Research Online Survey, [www.cros.ac.uk/](http://www.cros.ac.uk/)

<sup>24</sup> Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, [www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduatework](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduatework)

<sup>25</sup> The Joint Skills Statement, <http://vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/RCUK-Joint-Skills-Statement-2001.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> 'Lenses' are a tool to map other related areas onto the RDF

At the end of the reflection period in November:

- Review any further feedback received during the 'reflection period' and finalise the framework
- Report on HEIs' initial responses and activities related to the RDF
- Confirm timescales and scope for resources for stakeholder groups, including potentially a UK CPD tool for researchers

During the reflection phase the Researcher development statement will be available for institutions to review their provision and consider how to embed the framework into local structures and practice. There will be opportunity also for further reflection and comment through the website on the full RDF as institutions explore how it inter-relates with institutional provision. The RDF will not be promoted directly to researchers in 2010 and until an online CPD tool and associated resources are developed.

The RDF Advisory Group, project team and Vitae would like to thank all individuals and organisations who provided comments and feedback during the consultation period. Your input has shaped the further development of the framework to ensure that the RDF is fit for purpose and meets the needs of the HE sector, stakeholders and researchers themselves.

## Appendix 1: consultation responses

### Main survey (151 total responses)

77 on behalf of groups or organisations:

- 10 organisations [Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), British Council, British Educational Research Association (BERA), GuildHE, National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), NUS, Rolls Royce, Scottish Researcher Career Development Forum, Universities Scotland Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), University and College Union (UCU)]
- 2 international, including Eurodoc
- 1 research institute (Institute of Cancer Research - ICR)
- 63 HEIs (including duplicates ~5)
- 1 unknown

20 of 30 largest research active higher education institutes (HEIs) provided organisational responses; 55% Russell Group, 57% 1994 Group.

74 individuals:

- 20 research staff (RS) (17)/postgraduate researcher (PGR) (3)
- 18 unknown
- 3 international
- 1 company (QinetiQ/the Inter-Company Academic Relations Group - ICARG)
- 32 academics and staff supporting researchers

Overall 70% with responsibilities/interest in both PGR & RS; 13% PGR only, 17% RS only.

### Non-proforma responses

19 responses:

- 10 organisations; British Heart Foundation, Europe Unit, Equality Challenge Unit, Institute of Physics, Intrapreneurship project team, Research Information Network (RIN) (5 orgs), the Higher Education Academy, 1994 Group, European Commission, UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)
- 9 HEIs (including 2 duplicates)
- 2 Vitae Hub collaborative responses (16 HEIs)

### Researcher survey

72 total responses:

- 18 PGR (9 in first year of PhD), including a group response from 6 PGR
- 38 RS, including 2 group responses of more than 10 RS
- 12 research & teaching
- 2 teaching only
- 2 unknowns

38 HEIs represented.

### Disciplinary split:

10% arts and humanities (A&H)

23% biomedical

10% biological

35% physical sciences and engineering (PS&E)

22% social sciences (SS)

**Under-representation: employers, employees in other sectors, people coming into HE, professional bodies**

## Appendix 2: summary of consultation responses<sup>27</sup>

**Q8. How useful do you think this framework will be in supporting the professional development of researchers?**

### Key statistics

Q8	N	Very useful	Useful	Partially	Not at all
	212	(59)	(72)	(67)	(14)
HEIs	62	35%	27%	35%	2%
Researchers	68	24%	35%	28%	13%
Individuals	67	24%	37%	33%	6%
Other orgs, international, employers	15	33%	40%	27%	0%
Total	212	28%	34%	32%	7%

62% of respondents either found the framework very useful or useful in supporting the professional development of researchers. **[125 comments]**

**Q9. The Researcher development framework is based on five stages of a research career<sup>28</sup>. Are these stages appropriate and are they expressed clearly?**

### Key statistics

Q9	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	203	(71)	(78)	(35)	(18)
HEIs	61	34%	43%	16%	7%
Researchers	66	42%	35%	15%	8%
Individuals	61	30%	41%	16%	13%
Other orgs, international, employers	15	33%	27%	33%	7%
Total	203	35%	39%	17%	9%

73% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that the five stages were appropriate and expressed clearly.

**Q10. Is it clear that researchers at similar stages of their career will have a diversity of knowledge, experiences and attributes and may be at different phases for different descriptors?**

### Key statistics

Q10	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	204	(90)	(60)	(40)	(14)
HEIs	60	32%	33%	25%	10%
Researchers	66	52%	35%	9%	4%
Individuals	64	47%	20%	27%	6%
Other orgs, international, employers	14	50%	29%	20%	7%
Total	204	44%	29%	20%	7%

<sup>27</sup> This appendix presents the statistics only for the responses to the two online surveys for organisations and researchers. Non-proforma responses have been taken into account in the comments in this appendix and the body of the report.

<sup>28</sup> The five stages are: new researcher, researcher, established researcher, advanced researcher and eminent researcher.

74% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that it is clear that researchers at similar stages of their career will have a diversity of knowledge, experiences and attributes and may be at different phases for different descriptors:

*'It is entirely proper that the framework acknowledges this diversity of knowledge, experience and attributes: these are highly dependent on the group, institution, work experience etc'*

*'I myself could identify with various phases of the descriptors'*

### Suggestions:

- Clearer without link between phases and career stages
- Needs to have more explicit statements repeated in the framework as well as in documentation (not everyone will read documentation or they may need reminders)
- Needs a guide on use (like Concordat briefing)<sup>29</sup>
- Needs to be absolutely clear that it is not a checklist or prescriptive or a linear progression
- Note needed that there are subject or discipline variations, consistency of experience is not expected of every researcher at every phase, and that external influences and opportunities will influence progress
- Some suggestions about how to implement the RDF and support development to institutions would be welcomed

### Q11. Is it clear that researchers will have different career aspirations and individual priorities for developing particular descriptors?

#### Key statistics

Q11	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	196	(75)	(50)	(41)	(30)
HEIs	59	32%	22%	24%	22%
Researchers	67	42%	34%	15%	9%
Individuals	56	41%	20%	21%	18%
Other orgs, international, employers	14	36%	21%	36%	7%
Total	196	38%	26%	21%	15%

64% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that it is clear that researchers will have different career aspirations and individual priorities for developing particular descriptors:

*'Yes - we agree that researchers will undoubtedly have different aspirations and priorities for development. "Is it clear" - yes, the document states this fact clearly.'*

### Suggestions:

- Need to acknowledge or underline that the RDF is about research and not all the other aspects of a role, and is designed for HEIs in the first instance
- Individual variation and variation between disciplines needs to be highlighted; as do exemplar

<sup>29</sup> The Concordat, launched in June 2008, is an agreement between the funders and employers of researchers in the UK. '[Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/56351/Concordat-briefings-to-engage-stakeholder-groups-.html)' This agreement represents a significant development in national policy to support good management of researchers and their careers and through the implementation of its principles it aims to enhance the researcher workforce and thereby sustain research excellence bringing benefits to the health, economy and well-being of the UK. Vitae has developed a series of briefings for higher education professionals involved in implementing the principles of the 2008 <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/56351/Concordat-briefings-to-engage-stakeholder-groups-.html>

progression routes and information on how it can be used in practice

- Visual presentations and case studies would assist clarity, and real life examples
- An explicit statement (in the framework) on career variation and diversity would be helpful
- Need to provide a lens<sup>30</sup> for different disciplines

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<sup>30</sup> Lenses are a tool to map other related areas onto the RDF, eg public engagement, teaching, intrapreneurship

**Q12. Is it clear how researchers can use the framework to identify and describe their skills, attributes, experience and qualities to prospective employers, within and beyond HE?**

**Key statistics**

Q12	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	204	(67)	(56)	(55)	(26)
HEIs	61	25%	31%	28%	16%
Researchers	67	36%	25%	27%	12%
Individuals	60	38%	28%	22%	12%
Other orgs, international, employers	16	31%	19%	44%	6%
Total	204	33%	27%	27%	13%

60% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that it is clear how researchers can use the framework to identify and describe their skills, attributes, experience and qualities to prospective employers, within and beyond higher education:

*'This framework does provide a large number of useful descriptive phrases to select from. But the researcher will need to make their own selections with care, rather than simply relying on choosing a career phase.'*

*'Despite some caveats expressed above, the framework generally provides a useful tool for demonstrating researcher development and capability/capacity building. This is an important issue for the sector in terms of responding to government skills and economic development policies, and the RDF must be set against that context.'*

**Suggestions:**

- Need to show how skills could be evidenced
- Need to state that the RDF is only a general framework for those researching outside HE
- A fuller explanation as to why it is not suitable for job evaluation etc would be useful
- Some guidance needed for researchers on making realistic self-evaluation
- Web based tool and guidance, complementary tools will be essential
- A considerable degree of individual support will be required
- Some way of articulating 'squishy' qualities would help
- Needs simple examples, support docs, etc

**Q13. Does the structure of the domains, sub-domains<sup>31</sup> and the summary description successfully describe the main aspects of researchers' activities in higher education?**

**Key statistics**

Q13	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	193	(72)	(73)	(36)	(12)
HEIs	59	44%	37%	15%	3%
Researchers	63	30%	44%	21%	5%
Individuals	61	38%	31%	20%	11%
Other orgs, international, employers	10	40%	40%	20%	0%
Total	193	37%	38%	19%	6%

<sup>31</sup> The RDF consists of four domains (professional and intellectual attributes, personal effectiveness, research organisation and governance, impact and influence) which are further divided into sub-domains. Each sub-domain incorporates groups of descriptors.

75% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that the structure of the domains, sub-domains and the summary description successfully describe the main aspects of researchers' activities in higher education. Only 12 respondents from a total of 222 said it did not:

*'The structure of the framework successfully describes the diverse areas of activity associated with researchers.'*

*'Very much indeed, read like a description of myself!'*

*'Yes, an excellent representation.'*

### Suggestions:

- I think scholarship versus verbal communication need to be separated and more implicit in Domain 4.1. They are very different skill sets and should be considered as such. The importance of writing (papers, books etc) to a researcher's success should not be underestimated
- The aspect of communication is so essential in research that it should probably be a full domain
- There is very little concerning two important aspects: 1) intellectual property: patenting, transfer of IP, sharing and other aspects 2) commercialising research: start ups, selling IP to commercial enterprises
- Domain 4 is underdeveloped
- Teaching, publishing and publications record, organisational management, leadership and people development/supervision (mentoring/coaching) should have more emphasis
- Would be good to complement with career scenarios
- Clarity is needed on all the descriptors that fall under 'Relating to the Broader Context'
- How it links to the Concordat: the proper management of researchers and adherence to fundamental HR processes does not have sufficient prominence or clarity in the current structure of the RDF

### Q14. Does the framework successfully encapsulate the generic descriptors of researchers' knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities?

#### Key statistics

Q14	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	194	(88)	(70)	(26)	(10)
HEIs	61	49%	33%	15%	3%
Researchers	63	44%	41%	11%	3%
Individuals	57	40%	35%	14%	11%
Other orgs, international, employers	13	54%	31%	15%	0%
Total	194	45%	36%	13%	5%

81% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that the framework successfully encapsulates the generic descriptors of researchers' knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities.

*'This builds nicely on the JSS<sup>32</sup> and brings new demands on researchers such as public engagement etc'*

<sup>32</sup> The Joint Skills Statement (JSS) sets out a joint statement of the skills that postgraduate researchers funded by the Research Councils would be expected to develop during their research training.

<http://vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/RCUK-Joint-Skills-Statement-2001.pdf>

### Suggestions:

- Vitae should ensure input from subject specific learned societies. More reference should be made to the HEA Professional Standards Framework<sup>33</sup>
- A stronger emphasis should be on the professional and intellectual attributes relating to the communication/presentation of research and its outcomes, especially for the future with the importance of ‘impact’
- Stronger domain descriptors could be provided – ie single statement following domain title

### Q15. Are there any descriptors that should be added/removed? Please specify

#### Key statistics

Q15	N	Yes (38)	Partially (31)	No (153)
HEIs	64	30%	20%	50%
Researchers	71	8%	11%	80%
Individuals	69	9%	11%	80%
Other orgs, international, employers	18	39%	11%	50%
Total	222	17%	14%	69%

38 respondents (17%) proposed specific changes to content, whilst the majority (69%) did not suggest making any changes at this time.

*‘With such a thorough and comprehensive piece of work, some descriptors will inevitably be perceived by some as having value and by others as, for example, stating the obvious, being verbose or thin (eg the literacy and numeracy descriptors) or hard to verify. Overall, however it seems to be both accessible and, for the most part, specific enough to be useful regardless of discipline.’*

### Suggestions:

- A second round of interviews with researchers may establish problem areas
- Add cultural intelligence, pedagogic skill, inspiration, research supervision, people management skills
- I would like to see an explicit mention of understanding of texts
- I think something is missing in terms of work-life balance, successful researchers do seem to get this right
- Knowledge transfer/knowledge exchange and research translation skills, not only in STEM areas but also encompassing cultural engagement, community outreach and public sector impact
- Although mentoring is mentioned in this part of the framework, I think it is important to emphasise the value of mentoring in a research career
- Knowledge exchange, commercialisation, policy and social impact could also be more fully included; these are important for current, future and transferable skills in researcher development
- Commercial awareness and decision making is required
- Subject knowledge could be split into specific and broad
- Suggested removal: - Literacy, numeracy, languages (necessary skills, but not actually helpful as part of framework); Environmental – physical awareness (relates to personal ethics, not research); Global citizenship (relates to personal ethics, not research); Teaching (too

<sup>33</sup> [www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/rewardandrecog/ProfessionalStandardsFramework.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/rewardandrecog/ProfessionalStandardsFramework.pdf)

lightweight to be useful, not research). All of 4.4. Could usefully be revised in line with HEFCE's developing view of impact in the REF consultation<sup>34</sup>, which is I think more developed in characterizing "effect beyond the academy" than the RDF consultation

- We feel that a more interactive interface to the framework would be helpful and would engage the research community more effectively

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<sup>34</sup> [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_38/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_38/)

### Q16. Does the framework clearly show the progression between phases within a descriptor?

#### Key statistics

Q16	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	195	(68)	(78)	(33)	(16)
HEIs	58	34%	36%	24%	5%
Researchers	66	33%	44%	12%	11%
Individuals	56	38%	39%	16%	7%
Other orgs, international, employers	15	33%	40%	13%	13%
Total	195	35%	40%	17%	8%

75% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that the framework clearly shows the progression between phases within a descriptor.

*'The framework successfully shows the progression between phases within a descriptor and is also an extremely useful analysis of how developing skills and ability fit with the demands of a research activity at different career phases/levels.'*

#### Suggestions:

- To reiterate: the gap between phases 2 and 3 seems large, whilst the descriptors suggest that the gap between 4 and 5 is fairly small (and this isn't the case)
- Please do consider movement across fields
- There was a preference amongst research staff to see the word 'aspirational' used rather than 'excellent' as it felt more developmental
- I favour the boxing across phases when there is little tangible change between phases, rather than forcing the case to find a subtle difference
- Especially at later stages, progression through phases seems artificial – this will have a negative impact on the utility of the tool
- Can people add their own descriptors – it will make the RDF more powerful
- It might benefit from giving examples of HOW to progress from one phase to another
- The descriptors between the phases are good, but we question whether new researchers might be given the impression that this is a 'career structure' whereas the current funding structure rarely enables individuals to make such a progression. It should be emphasised that these are skills that should be 'aspired to' and that the higher phases coincide with the skill requirements for a permanent academic post or equivalent level posts outside academia
- May need to explain transitions 'between pure research positions (ie temporary research positions) and permanent lecturing positions'

**Q17. Overall, does the Researcher development framework meet the need for a national framework for researchers and those supporting researchers in planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers? (main survey only)**

Q17	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	131	(44)	(36)	(36)	(15)
HEIs	60	40%	23%	30%	7%
Researchers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Individuals	57	28%	26%	26%	19%
Other orgs, international, employers	14	29%	50%	21%	0%
Total	131	34%	27%	27%	11%

66% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that the framework meets the need for a national framework for researchers and those supporting researchers in planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers.

**Q18. How useful will this framework be within your institution/organisation in supporting the development of researchers? How do you anticipate this framework being used within your organisation? (main survey only)**

**How useful will this framework be within your institution/organisation?**

Main consensus points are:

- The majority of respondents felt that this will be useful in some way, however there is a minority (all individual respondents) that feel it will not be useful at all (too lengthy, complex)
- Generally felt that the RDF will be more useful than the JSS as it covers later researcher development (not just PGR) and it articulates the relationship between the JSS and more sophisticated behaviours
- Strong positive response that it will create consistency across the sector
- General concern is that its usage needs careful explanation and supporting documentation to make the practical uses clear, especially for senior staff
- Very strong consensus that it is too complex in its current form for individual use and it will be difficult to get people to engage with it. Simplify structure and language

**How do you anticipate it will be used?**

Main consensus points are:

- To support career development processes in place already, appraisals, grading inc careers guidance
- For self reflection/development/analysis tool
- For identifying and planning development programmes and activities, including spotting gaps in provision
- To complement existing documentation within institutions
- Concern around how it might conflict with existing frameworks, how it links with internal HR processes and how it could be used for purposes for which it is not intended, eg appraisals, performance management, promotion, job descriptions. Needs implementation advice

**Q19. Does your organisation have any existing frameworks/requirements for researcher development (please provide example and/or url)? (main survey only)**

**Consensus points:**

- Institutions will often use one or more frameworks in their provision and many have developed their own frameworks to be used within their HEI
- Around 30% use internal frameworks
- Around 20% of respondents use the JSS directly either for PGRs or for research staff
- Around 15% do not use an existing framework
- Around 8% are currently developing their own frameworks
- Around 6% use some form of appraisal, performance review or progress monitoring forms
- Around 4% use the Concordat as a basis for provision

**National frameworks in use**

- HERA – research staff, QAA, AHRC Research training framework, Academics and SSR - UK Professional Standards Framework, Research students: Expanded RSS feeds: [www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/training/gtu/students/courses/](http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/training/gtu/students/courses/), Concordat to inform research staff provision, Research Career Builder <http://gmpcrs.group.shef.ac.uk/rcb.html>

**(Researcher survey only) Q12 – Do you currently use any tools, ie professional development tool, personal development plan, development portfolio, to support your professional development?**

**Key statistics**

Q12	N	Regularly	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
Researchers	67	13%	19%	34%	33%

33% of respondents regularly or sometimes use a personal development tool. 67% occasionally or never use a personal development tool.

**Consensus points:**

- Although 67 respondents gave a quantitative response, only 18 of these gave further comment
- Of these 18 (27% of total), 5 (7% of total) regularly or sometimes use them, and 12 (18% of total) occasionally or never use them
- The comments show that those who do regularly or sometimes use professional development tools tend to use them for annual reviews at the employer or universities' instigation or where they need to gain a chartered status in their discipline
- Similarly those who occasionally use tools are doing so as part of their annual appraisals
- Comments from those who have never used a personal development tool show that they were either unaware that these tools exist or that they have never had a performance review

**(Researcher survey only)**

**Q13. What tools and resources would improve the usefulness of the RDF in supporting your professional development?**

**Consensus points**

**Tools and resources:**

- Online resources, suggestions include:
  - online tool that asks questions and gives advice about areas for development/links to how skills could be developed and links to relevant case histories to illustrate development of skills/(top level descriptors could be clicked into to give more detail?). This should also have a way of recording and saving your results to return to at a later stage
  - online version of the RDF as paper version not accessible
  - online resources for personal development training courses
  - online development tool and portfolio such as operated by the CIPD
- Tools to get clearer career pathway choices and information from HR/career development units at the places where researchers are employed
- Links to training programmes/courses/effective resources which relate to the skills and competencies which specifically help with the career development of researchers/staff
- Forum for researchers to share experiences of using the RDF, will also help staff development centres find out what researchers want
- Integrated approach to training: 'appraisals should be done using the Concordat, training should be assigned based on the appraisal, training should be designed catering for the needs of researchers (not to tick boxes requested by the funding bodies, job performance improvement properly recognized by promotion)'
- More concise and targeted briefing document/associated information
- Advice on what you need to do if you're stuck for prolonged periods in one phase (typically postdoc contract based work)
- Advice on how to make the jump between phase 2 and 3 which seems large (the step to independence)
- Access to confidential and trustworthy supportive facility (possibly involving humans) with whom to discuss and address in full confidentiality any privacy issues or problems occurring and possibly hampering work or career perspectives
- A dedicated training 'camp' for research staff for whom [non-HE] is a chosen career choice rather than because they couldn't get an academic position

**Suggestions:**

- Inclusion of 'worked examples' of both researchers at different stages of their career and individuals outside of HEIs to demonstrate how they map on to the framework
- The descriptors in phases 4 and 5 don't appear to be significantly different, but the difference between a well respected researcher and someone truly inspirational are more dramatic than the descriptors suggest
- More focus on middle ranking skills that might not be related to 'traditional' academic progression
- Better emphasis on the steps toward career progression, eg from fixed to permanent term employment, from researcher to professor
- Graphical representation of the framework and how they 'score' in each domain. One researcher suggested a 'fingerprint' with a 'bar' for each domain, which they could then overlay on other researchers' fingerprints to see how they compared
- Use no more than 3 phases – start, midpoint and excellence in order for it to be useable

**Q20. Does the framework offer a suitable replacement for the Joint Skills Statement (JSS) for doctoral researchers?**

**Key statistics**

Q20	N	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
	102	(52)	(14)	(23)	(13)
HEIs	55	53%	11%	20%	16%
Individuals	39	41%	21%	31%	8%
Other orgs, international, employers, Research institutes	7	100%	0%	0%	13%
Total	102	51%	14%	23%	12%

65% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that the framework offers a suitable replacement to the Joint Skills Statement for doctoral researchers. 9% of respondents did not know what the JSS was.

There was strong support from HEIs that the RDF has a wider/more cohesive set of knowledge, skills, behaviour descriptors, empirical data than the JSS and it shows progress/evolution from the JSS.

**Suggestions:**

- Overwhelming need for simplification
- Need to highlight transferable skills – concept of transferable skills has been subsumed
- Need for thinking about how to represent the ways that skills and knowledge work together – describing skills places them in isolation
- Create supporting material and practical tools that show wealth of detail and examples
- Remove phases 4 and 5 from summary

**Q21. Does the framework provide sufficient linkages to Joint Skills Statement to support an effective transition within your organisation? (main survey only)**

**Key statistics**

Q21	N	Yes (53)	Mostly (16)	Partially (14)	No (7)
HEIs	54	61%	19%	11%	9%
Individuals	29	48%	17%	28%	7%
Other orgs, international, employers	7	86%	14%	0%	0%
Total	90	59%	18%	16%	7%

77% of respondents either agreed fully or mostly that the framework provides sufficient linkages to the Joint Skills Statement to support an effective transition within their organisation.

However, these figures disagree with qualitative data. An analysis of the qualitative data suggests over half feel there are clear links between the JSS and RDF and also that the links are not a significant barrier to effective transition to RDF. However, just under half feel that the links between the RDF and JSS are not clear. This represents a more even split than 77%, 23% as per the table above.

**Suggestions:**

- Shorten and make more accessible by summarising key messages
- Further guidance on linkages would be good
- Compelling reasons for replacement need to be communicated clearly/persuasively
- More careful definition and elaboration by Vitae regarding the purpose and the audience(s) of the RDF. How will RDF be regarded and used by eminent researchers and academics
- Support work on transition from Vitae welcomed
- Linkages will need to be highlighted in output from university when providing information to researchers on content of development opportunities

**Q22. What are the opportunities and challenges in adopting this framework? What would help you to make a smooth transition to the framework?**

**Consensus points**

**Main challenges:**

- Resources – both financial and time, especially in current climate
- Buy-in from PIs/supervisors/line-managers
- Buy-in/engaging full researcher population/convincing researchers of benefits from researchers and research population
- Engagement due to size/complexity
- How the framework might sit with staff performance and development review arrangements/inform research staff induction arrangements
- Culture change

**Lesser challenges:**

- Negative reaction of academics faced with complex system which doesn't recognise subject differences or pay attention to publishing
- Linear relationship between an identified training need and specific skill may become blurred as development opportunities encompass many domains and sub domains
- Ensuring adoption UK wide to allow mobility
- Length and language ('transfer of corporate jargon to the academy')

**Opportunities:**

- Consistency across UK HEIs allows mobility
- More joined up approach to postgraduate researchers and research staff skills development provision
- Positive resource for research planning
- Helping researchers identify skills beyond subject knowledge, develop career plans
- Effective exchange of good practice
- Streamlining of development of researchers from doctoral level through to later stages
- Train and develop researchers with broader set of transferable skills
- Seeing a continuum in researcher training in the context of the doctoral school which has responsibility for doctoral researchers and research staff is a welcome opportunity

**What would help smooth transition?**

- Development of web-based interactive tools, simple, quick to use and visual
- Guides including:
  - quick start guide for line managers, PIs and researchers
  - worked examples of how people would use
  - guide on how activities/provision could be delivered against the domains, similar to Concordat briefings
  - clear implementation guide
- Ability to record level of attainment
- Endorsement from RC's
- Different versions for different audiences
- Linkages to the Concordat would clarify commonality and differences between the RDF and JSS

### **Suggestions:**

- Focus on transferable skills
- Make it shorter, three pages max, user friendly version for researchers
- Supporting documentation (inc guides mentioned above), worked examples/case studies of how people would use helpful/provision of guidance for specific purposes
- Discussions on usage with Hubs, good practice workshops, early sharing of good practice essential
- Pilot next phase with range of institutions and researchers
- Support and guidance from Vitae
- Clear well explained summary of how differs from the JSS and how brings new value to measuring impact
- Needs to be embedded into a PDPR process for researchers

**Q23. The Researcher development framework aims to anticipate the skills that will be valued in researchers in future years. How well does it do this? Please reference any work/visioning that you think would be helpful to inform this aspect of the framework. (main survey only)**

### **How well does the framework anticipate skills for the future?**

The major proportion of respondents felt that the RDF does anticipate the skills that will be valued in the future either well or sufficiently (generally with suggestions for other areas that could be worked on). However, there is a proportion that felt it is difficult to say or that it does not do this well as anticipating future skills is inherently problematic.

### **Work/visioning that would be helpful to inform framework**

#### **Consensus suggestions:**

- Consideration of which stakeholders should inform the visions especially with regard to employability, ensure input from employers and industry
- Mechanism/strategy for review and flexibility to change and adapt dependent on changes in market place/government policies etc, eg horizon scan/ask funding bodies re future intentions/information technology specialists who have glimpse into future skills
- More work to incorporate interdisciplinarity (since much research shows that the best discoveries are being made at the inter-face between disciplines)
- More emphasis on IT skills/digital competency/emerging technology/e-research methods as will be needed in future (virtual working/networking)/scholarly communication
- Broaden 'Dissemination' to include new avenues such as digital technologies
- More work needed to fully reflect the current gaps for researchers outside academia - entrepreneurialism; internationalisation; intrapreneurship, public engagement, environmental engagement, social responsibility, mobility

#### **Also suggested:**

- Useful to make more links to HERA/HAY<sup>35</sup> descriptors so that role/skills, attitudes and behaviours and development programmes can be linked together in a comprehensive career development framework, but subjective views of their peers matter far more than their capacity to satisfy HERA/HAY role descriptors
- Work needs doing on fitting all disciplines (more geared to science based)
  - 'The initial question the RDF group should be asking is: What do our engineering

<sup>35</sup> HERA (Higher Education Role Analysis) is a tool used to analyse roles found in Higher Education institutions. [www.hera.ac.uk/products/page.php?page=1](http://www.hera.ac.uk/products/page.php?page=1) HAY Job Evaluation System [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/The\\_Hay\\_Job\\_Evaluation\\_System](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/The_Hay_Job_Evaluation_System)

doctorates and post-docs need in order to become professional engineers? Asking similar questions across the disciplines, particularly with reference to professional/industrial skills agencies would provide a list from which to extrapolate anticipated future research skills.'

- A European research accreditation scheme – to help researchers build up and evidence skills
- Highlighting need for creative/innovative thinking techniques, appreciation of open innovation models, horizon scanning skills useful
- The university is a member of the League of European Research Universities (LERU) who are currently developing codes of practice and a skills agenda for researchers as part of a broader career support package. There is also the SGHRM statement of researcher competencies in development. It will be important (and potentially problematical) for us to be able to work with all these national frameworks and guidance documents. It is imperative that there are collaborations at a national level as these initiatives develop
- Fundraising needs to be mentioned – essential skill especially in these times
- Leadership/people management skills need to be more explicit in descriptors

#### **Q24. How would you want to see the framework developing in the future?**

##### **Consensus points:**

Top responses:

- Further development and review needed after initial launch and implementation phase:
  - Cyclical review and improvement
  - User feedback essential
  - Gain consensus in views via events such as Vitae conference
  - Include more leading researchers in development
- Online tool development needed:
  - Enhanced usability
  - Options for personalisation
  - Flexibility
  - User-led interface
- Simplification/clarification needed:
  - Clear purpose statement
  - Optional nature of sub domains should be stressed
  - Needs to be more useable/lighter/simpler/concise/less repetition
- Share examples of application:
  - Case studies
  - Support materials/user guides
  - Workshops for staff supporting researcher development
  - Workshops for staff in institutions to run with their researchers

##### **Suggestions:**

- Should include more discipline specific information/too science based/more for practice based doctorates
- Highlight common exit points
- More focus on teaching and associated skills (mentoring, assessing, administration, programme development, interplay between research and teaching)
- Do not add the negative statements
- Need support/expertise for implementation

**Suggestions for how it will be used:**

- Used at the HEI level to relate to promotions criteria/appraisal
- Used at the HEI level for monitoring and conforming to standards
- Link with professional bodies frameworks

**Q25. What tools and resources would improve the usefulness of the framework in supporting the professional development of researchers?**

**Consensus points:**

Top responses:

- Online tool
  - Personalised
  - PDP
  - Self assessment
  - Produce reports/portfolios
- Support identification of sources of development in each skill area
  - Courses
  - Web resources
  - Materials
  - External links
  - Consultant/helpline/advice
- Supporting materials
  - Training resources
  - Templates
  - Overview documents for specific audiences eg similar to Concordat briefings
- Case studies
  - Discipline specific
  - Level specific
  - Outside HE

**Suggestions:**

- Highlight use of the RDF in appraisal
- Allow institutions/individuals to develop their own tools and resources
- Workshops needed
  - Staff supporting researcher development need training to use the RDF
  - For staff supporting researcher to share practice
  - Researcher practice sharing
- Support and engagement with PIs/research managers
- Highly visible campaign by Vitae
- Consider integration with their existing PDP practices
- Be explicit about the motivational strategies that can be brought to bear to encourage researchers to participate in this journey of self-development. Make it clearer how participation is being rewarded by university managers
- More focus on middle ranking skills that might not be related to 'traditional' academic progression

**Q26. Please add any further observations relating to the Researcher development framework that are not covered in the questions above.**

**Consensus points**

Strong support that the RDF will be useful for supporting the professional development of researchers. The range of degree of usefulness from 'very useful' to 'partially useful' arises from concerns about the content, format, clarity of purpose/explanation and language.

Respondents appreciated:

- the wider scope of the RDF from that possible through the Joint Skills Statement and QAA Code of Practice
- that the framework is more chronological than the JSS so more useful to postgraduate researchers
- an integrated framework for students and staff will be very useful in supporting career development - and should enhance mobility of research staff if adopted across the sector
- it is well researched. Based on evidence
- that the proposed framework aligns with our own work on a framework, will inform that work and allow us to benchmark ourselves
- it is especially good for departments with few researchers who potentially have little contact with more senior researchers
- that in general the domains covered are appropriate (with the exception of the teaching domain which limits this activity) and the descriptors are generally easy to follow and understand. The greater emphasis on knowledge exchange, entrepreneurship and creativity are particularly welcome as well as giving emphasis to areas such as creativity and leadership.

**Suggestions:**

- The RDF should better take into account the future context of higher education and many of the messages in the recently published Higher Ambitions document from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS)<sup>36</sup> and the consequences for higher skills referenced in the Skills for Growth White paper
- There needs to be consideration of a balance between detail and direction
- There's a danger of presenting a picture of a single pathway towards the 'perfectly formed researcher', which is unrealistic. Needs recognition of other possible careers:
  - would be useful to be clearer about how the framework relates to REF and the principles of the researcher Concordat
  - presented as a one-dimensional table, as it has been for the consultation, encourages it to be seen as a linear management tool, rather than a resource for personal development. Developing it in this level of detail and presenting it in this way is appropriate at this stage of the consultation. We would advise that significant development work is done to develop a more user-friendly interface, and crucially a range of linked support materials and training resources
- It would be useful to have a short (one or two page) document that can be incorporated into annual review processes, handbooks or course manuals etc and which points people to the more in depth document if they desire it. This longer document is likely to be most useful for particular cohorts of researchers, such as those engaged in supported personal development programmes (eg the NESTA Crucible)<sup>37</sup> but not useful for the 'wider' audience of researchers
- Generally it would be preferred if the document were divided into sections – one for PGs, one for early career researchers, and a separate section for aspiring academics:
  - The proposed interactive online 'framework' in particular strikes us as an invaluable

<sup>36</sup> [www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/shape-and-structure/higher-ambitions](http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/shape-and-structure/higher-ambitions)

<sup>37</sup> [www.nesta.org.uk/crucible](http://www.nesta.org.uk/crucible)

tool; potential users will require more guidance and tools to help them to understand the framework and how it can be used

- All participants felt they had benefitted from reading the RDF, but would have been unlikely to do so without the incentive of taking part in a focus group, because of its length and complexity. They would have appreciated more guidance as to where they 'should be' in the framework and felt it should be clearly linked with guidance on how to develop the skills they were lacking. Case histories and examples of how other researchers had developed or demonstrated these skills would have been useful
- Needs to be embraced by the research community and supported with the right tools and institutionally
- It would be helpful to have some advice on how to map information to relevant courses/subject areas
- The suggestion of including negative examples was felt to take the document to be longer still, and to be less well received by the staff developers – perhaps a cause for concern if individuals are noting these traits in themselves/their research leaders. Risk that description of traits as they stand could in fact be turned around in dispute/grievance or B&H allegations
- How the framework should be used in parallel with institutional practices of appraisal and promotion needs to be carefully considered. May create expectations of progression which would have to be managed. The RDF raises expectations of researchers that the university will provide training courses to meet the framework
- It should not be used for the purposes of staff appraisal and performance review as distinct from its primary and only function as a staff development and capacity-building tool
- There is also a need to have a look at the disciplinary differences. Providing different documents with narrower foci than this one will make it more user friendly

## Appendix 3

### RDF advisory group members

Name	Organisation
Janet Bohrer	Quality Assurance Agency
Sophie Duncan	National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement
Marie Garnett	Lifelong Learning UK
Clare Jones	University of Nottingham, AGCAS
Sue Law	Higher Education Academy
Julie McLaren	ESRC
April McMahon	University of Edinburgh (Chair)
Janet Metcalfe	Vitae, CROS, PRES, Impact and evaluation group <sup>38</sup>
Tom Papworth	Concordat, Universities UK
Jane Thompson	UCU

### RDF project group

Name	Organisation
Rob Daley	Heriot Watt University, Impact and evaluation group, Vitae Research Staff Development Advisory Group
Terri Delahunty	Cardiff University, Vitae South West and Wales Hub
Pam Denicolo	University of Reading, UKCGE, Impact and evaluation group
Clare Jones	University of Nottingham, AGCAS, Impact and evaluation group
Anne Lee	University of Surrey
Janet Metcalfe	Vitae, CROS, PRES, Impact and evaluation group
Alison Mitchell	University of Strathclyde
Maria Nevada	University of Manchester
Ellen Pearce	Vitae, Impact and evaluation group, Vitae Research Staff Development Advisory Group
Imelda Race	University of East Anglia
Kate Reading	Research Councils UK, Impact and evaluation group
Julie Reeves	University of Southampton
Jonathan Roberts	Vitae
Bonnie Steves	Glasgow Caledonian University
Calum Webster	Glasgow Caledonian University
Sara Williams	Cardiff University, Vitae Research Staff Development Advisory Group
Andy Wilson	Loughborough University, CROS Steering Group

<sup>38</sup> Impact and evaluation group was formally known as the 'Rugby Team'.