

Part-Time Researcher

Programme organiser manual

Vitae resources: developing the
skills and careers of researchers

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Vitae, c/o CRAC
Sheraton House,
Castle Park,
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Part-time researcher programme

Time	Activity	Detail
09.15	Arrival and registration	Refreshments available
09.30	Welcome	Outline for day
09.35	Part-time success stories	DVD of previous researchers completing doctorates on a part-time basis
09.50	Icebreaker activities Objective session 1	Getting to know you icebreaker Introducing the learning wall
10.15	The ethos and process of part-time research	Facilitated discussion about part-time research
11.15	Tea and coffee available	
11.30	Skills workshop session 1	Skills session 1
13.00	Lunch	
13.40	Post lunch energiser	
13.45	Skills workshop session 2	Skills session 2
15.15	Tea and coffee available	
15.25	Objectives session 2	Reviewing the learning wall
15.40	Action planning	Postcards
15.50	Questions and evaluation	Evaluation forms and time for final questions and answers
16.00	Close	

Introduction

Note to programme organisers about this manual

This manual is aimed at organisers wishing to run the 'part-time researcher' programme.

The programme organiser manual is designed to provide you with all the information required to deliver the programme, including venue requirements and an indication of how long the programme will take to set up.

To run the 'part-time researcher' programme, in addition to the programme organiser manual, you will require the use of the 'part time researcher' programme manual and two of the six skills workshop manuals. Each manual is accompanied by PowerPoint slides.

Each manual uses the following template:

- Title
- (Overall session timing)
- Purpose
- Process
- Structure
- Resources
- Detail (to be used in conjunction with the relevant PowerPoint slides)

The manuals have been written in an informal style in line with the relaxed culture of the programme – the programme facilitators are encouraged to dress casually and to create a relaxed and fun environment for the participants.

The manuals are flexible enough to allow you to run the programme and skills workshops as either a stand-alone programme or integrate them into existing programmes.

How the programme works

The 'part-time researcher' programme has been developed to ensure that it has the flexibility to be delivered to researchers working in similar academic subjects or to researchers from a mixture of disciplines.

Manuals with all the information needed to organise and deliver the programme are freely available from Vitae and include:

- administration guidelines with timelines
- guidelines for facilitators to lead and debrief the programme and skills workshops.

The programme allows two skills sessions to be run and organisers should choose two sessions from the following list:

1. Academic writing styles
2. Accessing information
3. Getting the best from a part-time supervisor
4. Making progress: avoiding defeatism and self sabotage
5. Planning to manage your time
6. Structuring your thesis

The programme is also supported by access to a network of experienced external trainers who are able to deliver or support the delivery of the programme on your behalf. For details of external trainers able to deliver the programme please visit: www.vitae.ac.uk/resources

Background to the programme¹

The Vitae Midlands Hub, and its member institutions, had acknowledged that supporting the development of part-time researchers was a complex challenge²; with little possibility for one type of provision providing a successful outcome in all cases. Furthermore, the costs of providing a diverse range of development opportunities through numerous channels and at all times of the day are extremely prohibitive.

Often, because of not being able to offer unlimited flexibility in accessing these opportunities, part-time researchers can be disadvantaged in engaging with and helping to shape the research community in which they hope to belong in comparison to full-time researchers who are more likely to be able to access these opportunities. Therefore, after much debate about the experiences of part-time researchers and the barriers they face in accessing an academic career, the Vitae Midlands Hub concluded that action by individual institutions was insufficient. Furthermore, when part-time researchers access provision they are often alone amongst well supported full-time researchers with whom they struggle to connect. It was decided to redress this balance with something new, innovative, collaborative and 'just for part-time researchers'.

Collaboration between the 19 Vitae Midlands Hub institutions enabled the development of a flexible training framework to recognise the diversity of part-time researchers from a range of institutions. A series of workshops, geographically spread across the region so that any part-time researcher from any university could attend were designed alongside a dedicated online group using Facebook³ to provide a mechanism for attendees to interact and offer each other support and hence build a community.

The workshops had two aims:

- to give part-time researchers the time and space to share and discuss, with peers and academics from outside their supervisory arrangements, what research is and how its quality is assessed
- to get some succinct training in a range of key areas⁴ for part-time researchers; each workshop had two parallel sessions.

Further information about the background to this programme and the part-time researcher experience can be found in the Vitae publication 'Understanding the part-time researcher experience' (May 2009) www.vitae.ac.uk/publications

¹ Extract from the publication 'Understanding the part-time researcher experience' (May 2009), Vitae

² Views expressed at the Hub's Good Practice event focusing on part-time support (May 2005). Event write up retrieved 30 March 2009 from www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Part-time%20provision%20in%20the%20Midlands.%20Good%20Practice%20Takeaway%20May%202006.pdf

³ Facebook (2009). Retrieved 21 April 2009 from www.facebook.com/

⁴ Structuring the thesis, getting the best from your supervisor, accessing information, planning to manage time more effectively, understanding academic writing styles, making progress

DVD – part-time success stories

Included with the programme materials is a DVD. This DVD contains interviews with nine researchers who have successfully completed a doctorate part-time. They are all different and have undertaken their doctorate at different points in their life and with different motivations. We hope that the researchers that you are working with will be able to identify with some or all of the researchers on the DVD.

The DVD has been edited into a series of themed sections. Each section is around 5 – 10 minutes in length and we would suggest that in a training situation you only show one or two sections over the course of the day. You may wish to give researchers the opportunity to choose which sections that they are most interested in. Alternatively you may decide to select the sections that fit most closely with the way that you have structured the training day. Each section provides a variety of voices and highlights different experiences. These resources are designed to be used as a stimulus for thinking and discussion and it is important to stress that this is the experience of individuals rather than the answer to any particular problem.

There is a 15 minute time slot scheduled in the programme to use stories from the DVD although you may prefer to intersperse them during the day. As a guide you might like to use the introduction question, what tips would you give to others undertaking a part-time doctorate question and then select one of the other questions as you feel appropriate.

DVD contents

1. Introduction (2m 30s)
2. Why did you decide to do a part-time doctorate? (5m 08s)
3. What were your expectations of a part-time doctorate? (2m 53s)
4. How long did it take you to complete your part-time doctorate? (2m 38s)
5. What have been the most rewarding things about your part-time doctorate? (5m 09s)
6. What have been the most challenging things about your part-time doctorate? (7m 51s)
7. How did you overcome the challenges you faced in your part-time doctorate? (4m 46s)
8. Who has supported you in your part-time doctorate? (5m 56s)
9. What has been your experience of entering the research community? (4m 40s)
10. What skills have you needed for your part-time doctorate? (5m 01s)
11. How did you organise your time during your part-time doctorate? (6m 07s)
12. What tips would you give to others undertaking a part-time doctorate? (7m 45s)
13. What opportunities has your part-time doctorate led to? (7m 54s)

Researchers should be directed to the 'Part-time researcher' web pages (www.vitae.ac.uk/part-time_researcher) where they will be able to access all of the stories online via You Tube.

Programme and skills workshops materials required

Programme materials

The information below lists the materials required for the programme. (Please note that the introduction and icebreaker are recommended for each time the programme is run.)

- DVD
- Programme and skills workshop PowerPoint slides
- Ball of string
- Bag of sweets
- Ballpoint pens
- Flip chart paper
- Flip chart pens
- Sticky notes
- White tac
- Postcards
- Envelopes
- Evaluation forms

Skills workshop materials

The information below lists the materials required for each skills workshop. Handouts for each skills workshop are contained in the appropriate workshop facilitator manual.

Academic writing styles

- Academic writing style PowerPoint slides
- The structure of your argument handout
- Assessing readability of texts handout
- Analysis scheme for academic texts handout
- Flip chart paper and pens
- Data projector

Accessing information

- Accessing information PowerPoint slides
- Pro-forma 1 handout
- Pro-forma 2 handout
- Flipchart paper and pens
- Examples of support services available at home universities
- Networked computer
- Data projector

Getting the best from part-time supervisor

- Getting the best from a part-time supervisor slides
- Flipchart paper and pens per group
- Pro-forma 1: improving supervision handout
- Pro-forma 2: supervisor meeting handout
- Data projector

Making progress: avoiding defeatism and self-sabotage

- Making progress: avoiding defeatism and self-sabotage slides
- Flipchart
- Flipchart pens
- Data projector

Planning to manage your time

- Planning to manage your time PowerPoint slides
- Coloured pens or highlighters or wall planner stickers
- Flipchart paper and pens
- Week timetable pro-forma handout
- Ideal wheel of life handout
- Planning and time management handout
- Action plan sheet handout
- Data projector

Structure your thesis

- Structuring your thesis PowerPoint slides
- Print out of structure cards (PowerPoint slides) (You will probably need four or five sets assuming a group of 20)
- One or two examples of completed theses
- Flipchart paper
- Flipchart pens
- Sticky notes
- Structuring guide handout
- Data projector

Planning schedule

The table below provides information about recommendations on the timescales for activities required in delivering the part-time researcher workshops.

Time	Action
As soon a possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book programme leader • Book venue – one large room to accommodate up to forty participants. The room should be laid out in cabaret style (8 tables of 5 chairs) • Ensure that catering facilities are near to the main room so that the programme remains on time • The room will require a projector and projector stand, flip chart stands and flipchart pads and audio visual facilities
3 – 4 months before the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree skills workshop sessions • Set up booking form – include dietary requirements and additional requirements information • Advertise course and begin to take bookings • Book programme facilitators • Source four academics (each from different subject disciplines) to run Q&A session • Order Vitae promotional materials from local Hub • Book accommodation for facilitators if required
1 month before the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out reminder to facilitators and academics (you should have all facilitators confirmed by this point) • Re-confirm accommodation requirements • Send out programme manual and skills workshop manuals to facilitators • Check course bookings and re-advertise if necessary • Confirm catering times and menu requirements. Tea and coffee and lunch for number of participants booked. Provide venue with programme timetable to ensure catering is delivered on time
2 weeks before programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that each facilitator is clear about the content of the manuals and answer any queries • Prepare and collate materials. To include participant handouts, participant list, badges, pens etc
10 days before the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out a participant reminder and copy-in the programme facilitators • Confirm venue booking and access times
1 week before the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bookings close • Send pre-course instructions to participants (copy to facilitators and academics) • Collate participant list with a breakdown of participants by subject area • Final materials check, including: participant handouts, facilitator manuals, activities, general materials, evaluation forms, postcards etc

Time	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request induction booklets from universities (the course requires participants to have access to their home institutions induction materials, request these from the graduate schools of the participants attending) • Arrange delivery of materials to the venue
Day before the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise catering numbers • Final material check • Deliver materials to venue
On the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive at least half an hour before the course to set up materials • Register participants • Ensure participants complete evaluations forms • Pack up and stock check materials as the programme progresses
After the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate evaluation form information and send copies to the programme facilitators • Book a review meeting with programme leader to consider future improvements to the programme • Post action planning postcards

Example publicity material

'Part time researchers' programme for postgraduate researchers

'Every year large numbers of people successfully complete doctorates through part-time study. They combine their research with work, family and other commitments and go on to develop new skills and make a contribution to the knowledge base of their disciplines.'

Despite the positive experience of those part-time researchers who complete doctorates, it is clear that part-time study poses a number of challenges⁵.

This interactive one-day programme offers you the opportunity to:

- take some time and space to share and discuss, with peers and academics from outside your supervisory arrangements, what research is and how its quality is assessed
- get some succinct training in a range of key areas.

Who should attend?

The programme is suitable for part-time researchers.

Programme date

[Insert relevant information]

How to book

[Insert relevant information]

Researchers' views of the 'part-time researcher' programme

'I feel great. This is a good opportunity for me to talk to people who are part-time researchers and who have the same situation as me. We can discuss and share the problems and how to make them right.'

'Very good! Made some really useful contacts. Some great insights.'

'Good. Met lots of interesting people and feel better that they seem to have similar problems to the ones I'm experiencing.'

⁵ 'Understanding the part-time researcher experience', Vitae, 2009

Example booking information/reminder

Participant booking confirmation

Dear participant,

I am pleased to confirm that a place has been reserved for you at the forthcoming 'part-time researcher' programme on [insert programme dates].

This is a one-day, interactive programme that will offer you the opportunity to:

- take some time and space to share and discuss, with peers and academics from outside your supervisory arrangements, what research is and how its quality is assessed
- get some succinct training in a range of key areas.

[insert details of skills workshops covered if appropriate]

Participant feedback from previous programmes

'I feel great. This is a good opportunity for me to talk to people who are part-time researchers and who have the same situation as me. We can discuss and share the problems and how to make them right.'

'Very good! Made some really useful contacts. Some great insights.'

'Good. Met lots of interesting people and feel better that they seem to have similar problems to the ones I'm experiencing.'

Information for participants

Date of programme: [insert programme date]

Start time: 09.15

Finish time: 16.00

Location: (www.*****.ac.uk)

FAQs

1. Are refreshments provided?
2. Is there a charge for this programme?
3. How do I get to the venue?
4. Is transport provided to the venue?
5. Is parking available at the venue?

Kind regards

A N Other

Example evaluation questionnaire

It is recommended that an evaluation questionnaire is used at the end of the programme in order to help inform specific improvements to future programmes. An example evaluation questionnaire is included below, however you may prefer to use your own institution's standard questionnaire.

Programme evaluation questionnaire – 'part-time researcher' programme

Date:

Please take a few minutes to complete this programme evaluation questionnaire and either leave it with programme staff at the end of the session or send it in the internal mail to:

[insert address]

The responses we get from you are very important. We will use the information you provide to modify and improve the content, style and organisation of programme.

Name: _____ **Year of PhD:** _____

Overall reaction

1. Strengths

What, for you, were the strengths of the programme?

2. Weaknesses

What, for you, were its weaknesses?

3. Improvements

How do you think the programme could be improved?

4. Programme content

	Very good				Poor
4.1 How would you rate the overall quality of the programme?	5	4	3	2	1
4.2 How would you rate the skills workshop 1	5	4	3	2	1
4.3 How would you rate the skills workshop 2	5	4	3	2	1

Please explain your answers:

	Strongly agree			Strongly disagree	
4.4 The programme will help me to work more effectively as a researcher.	5	4	3	2	1
4.5 The programme will help me to work more effectively with others.	5	4	3	2	1

4.6 Please comment on the content and style of the programme. What did you like most and/or find most useful?

4.7 Please comment on the content and style of the programme. What did you like least and/or find least useful?

5. Programme organisation

	Strongly agree			Strongly disagree	
5.1 Pre-course arrangements (enquiries, bookings, reminders) were organised efficiently.	5	4	3	2	1
5.2 The learning environment (venue, atmosphere etc) was appropriate.	5	4	3	2	1

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation questionnaire.



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

About Vitae

Vitae is supported by Research Councils UK (RCUK) and managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation. Vitae's vision is for the UK to be world class in supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers.

- Championing the development and implementation of effective policy
- Enhancing higher education provision through sharing practice and resources
- Providing access to development opportunities and resources
- Building an evidence base to support the researcher development agenda

Vitae's work with higher education institutions

Vitae works with UK higher education institutions (HEIs) to embed professional and career development in the research environment. Vitae plays a major role in innovating, sharing practice and enhancing the capability of the higher education sector to provide world-class professional development and training of researchers. We do this both through national projects and through Hub activities.

The programme develops resources for use by trainers and others working with researchers, and provides opportunities for HEIs to share information and practice; develop ideas and approaches; and work collaboratively.

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