vitae
realising
the potential
of researchers

**Researcher
Development
Framework**

Vitae Researcher Development Framework
Briefing for human resources specialists

Overview

Researchers make an important contribution to the UK economy, both in sustaining our research base and as leaders in the workforce. The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) underpins a major new approach to developing world-class researchers.

The framework has been developed by and for researchers working in higher education as an aid to planning, promoting and enhancing professional and career development. It articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers and encourages all researchers to realise their potential.

The associated Researcher Development Statement, endorsed by Research Councils UK, Universities UK and other national organisations, provides a policy reference for researcher development strategies. Together with the full, operational framework it supports the implementation of policy related to researchers' professional development in the UK.

This is one of a series of briefings developed by Vitae for a range of stakeholders involved in the professional and career development of researchers.

For further information about the Researcher Development Framework and other briefings in this series visit: www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf

> **" It is helpful to have a national framework because it is based on wider consultation that could not be managed by a single institution and it allows us to benchmark ourselves against a national framework. "**
>
> **Frances Hewison, Deputy Director of Human Resources, The University of Liverpool**

The Researcher Development Statement and the more detailed Researcher Development Framework, enable researchers to articulate their skills and take a proactive approach to their professional development. The Researcher Development Statement replaces the Research Councils' Joint Skills Statement (2001) as the UK framework underpinning professional development for researchers at all levels.

Using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework

The Researcher Development Framework is central to career management. As human resources professionals you can use the Researcher Development Framework as a basis for aligning your institutions strategy with current UK policy on career development, such as the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education for research degree programmes, the Researcher Development Framework (REF) and the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award. **www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf**

The Researcher Development Framework can be used practically on a regular basis in career development, providing a central and consistent institutional framework.

The Researcher Development Framework has been incorporated into a downloadable Professional Development Planner to enable researchers to identify the areas in the framework they wish to develop further and to create an action plan. **www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner**

Inspire and empower researchers to engage with their career development by using the Researcher Development Framework:

■ to promote the importance of personal, professional and career development for researchers

■ to reinforce the importance of ownership and researchers' responsibilities in managing personal, professional and career development (in the light of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers)

■ to support principal investigators and supervisors to use the Researcher Development Framework in the development of researchers

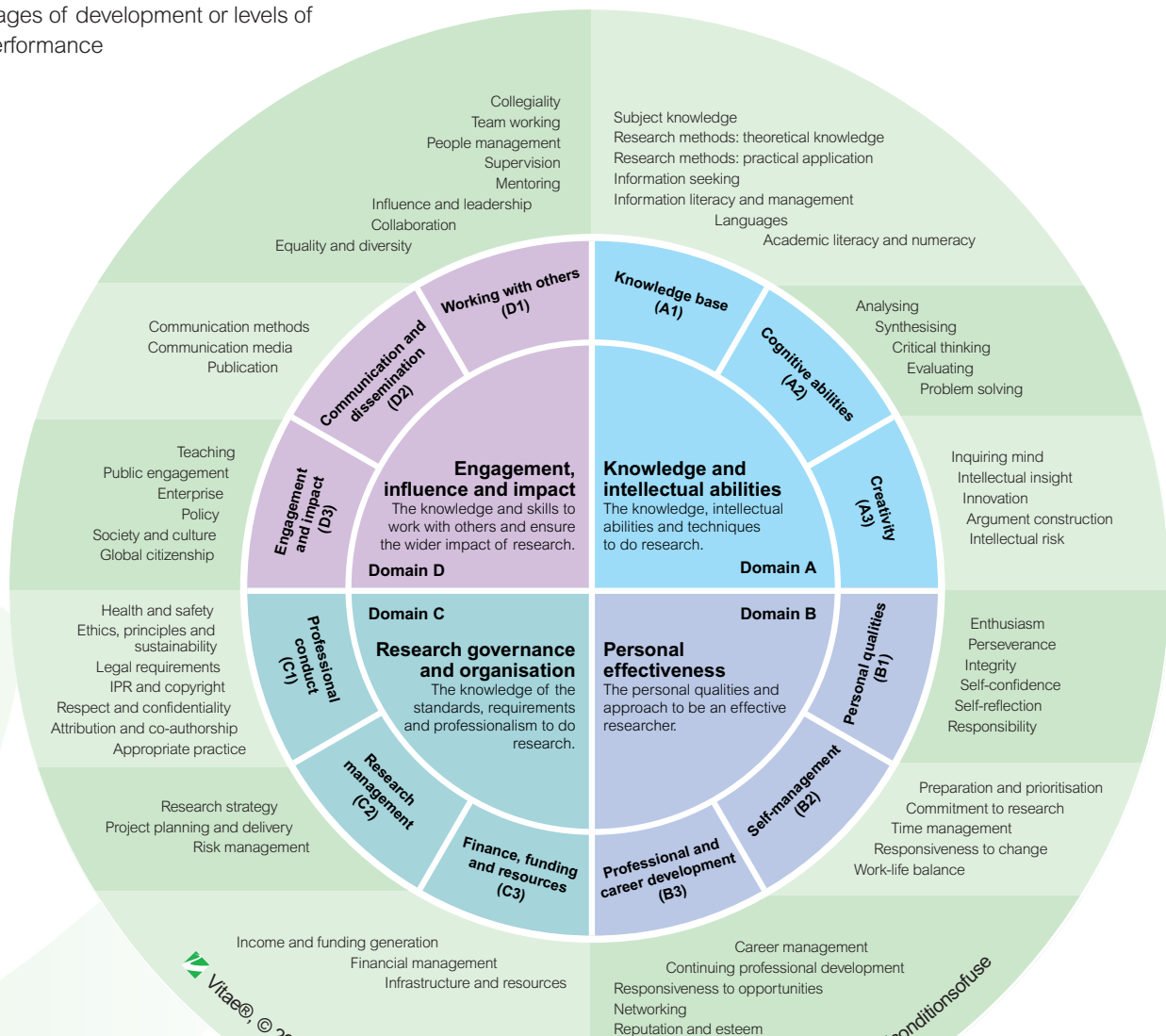■ as a framework for research leadership development.

Background

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework and Researcher Development Statement underpin policies for supporting the professional and career development of researchers. Institution-wide implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the QAA Code of Practice for research degree programmes and the Roberts recommendations for postgraduate researchers and research staff are enhanced and strengthened by use of the Researcher Development Framework and Statement.

Structure

- The Researcher Development Framework and Statement were created through interviews with researchers and empirical data, leading to the identification of the characteristics of excellent researchers

- Characteristics, expressed in the framework as 'descriptors', are structured into four domains and twelve sub-domains, encompassing the knowledge, intellectual abilities, techniques and professional standards to do research, as well as the personal qualities, knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research

- Three to five phases for each descriptor present stages of development or levels of performance

Who is the Researcher Development Framework for?

- Researchers – to evaluate and plan their professional development

- Principal investigators and supervisors of researchers – in their role supporting the development of researchers

- Researcher developers, trainers, human resources specialists, careers advisors, senior managers and others – in planning and providing support to researchers

- Policy makers, funders and other organisations – to inform and reinforce policy and strategy relating to researchers

- Employers – to provide insight into the unique blend of researchers' skills and to enable exploration of researchers' potential benefits to the company as employees

Collegiality
Team working
People management
Supervision
Mentoring
Influence and leadership
Collaboration
Equality and diversity

Subject knowledge
Research methods: theoretical knowledge
Research methods: practical application
Information seeking
Information literacy and management
Languages
Academic literacy and numeracy

Communication methods
Communication media
Publication

Analysing
Synthesising
Critical thinking
Evaluating
Problem solving

Teaching
Public engagement
Enterprise
Policy
Society and culture
Global citizenship

Inquiring mind
Intellectual insight
Innovation
Argument construction
Intellectual risk

Health and safety
Ethics, principles and sustainability
Legal requirements
IPR and copyright
Respect and confidentiality
Attribution and co-authorship
Appropriate practice

Enthusiasm
Perseverance
Integrity
Self-confidence
Self-reflection
Responsibility

Research strategy
Project planning and delivery
Risk management

Preparation and prioritisation
Commitment to research
Time management
Responsiveness to change
Work-life balance

Working with others (D1)

Knowledge base (A1)

Cognitive abilities (A2)

Communication and dissemination (D2)

Creativity (A3)

Engagement and impact (D3)

Engagement, influence and impact
The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research.
Domain D

Knowledge and intellectual abilities
The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research.
Domain A

Professional conduct (C1)

Domain C
Research governance and organisation
The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research.

Domain B
Personal effectiveness
The personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher.

Personal qualities (B1)

Research management (C2)

Self-management (B2)

Finance, funding and resources (C3)

Professional and career development (B3)

Income and funding generation
Financial management
Infrastructure and resources

Career management
Continuing professional development
Responsiveness to opportunities
Networking
Reputation and esteem

Human resources specialists using the Researcher Development Framework say:

> "The Researcher Development Framework provides a fantastic way for research staff to consider their professional and career development alongside other performance criteria. Individual research staff will find using the framework to review strengths and priorities really useful as preparation for conversations about career opportunities"
>
> **Guy Gregory, HR Director, University of Bristol, Universities Human Resources (UHR)**

> "We warmly welcome the Researcher Development Framework, which is an excellent model designed to be applied at every level:
> - nationally – we now have a benchmark for researcher development that embodies the principles of the Concordat
> - institutionally – it can be used to develop strategy and policy that best meets institutional and national research priorities
> - school/faculty/department – its structure facilitates the embedding of current best practice – where it matters
> - indvidually – we now have a framework that enables every individual researcher to plan and shape their career development at all stages of their career."
>
> **Sheila Gupta, Director of Human Resources, University of Edinburgh**

The Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner

> "The Reading Researcher Development Programme was inspired by, and is fully aligned with, the Researcher Development Framework. The framework covers a broad range of important areas that will help researchers to develop as individuals and to work and communicate effectively with others, as well as to become better researchers. It is flexible and easy to adapt to individual and institutional needs."
>
> **Professor Dianne Berry, Pro Vice-Chancelor, Univeristy of Reading and Chair, REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Group**

Relevant organisations say:

> "The Vitae Researcher Development Framework provides a valuable mechanism to increase institutions' capabilities to develop world-class researchers. It provides a strong basis for the delivery of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the QAA Code of Practice for research degree programmes."
>
> **Professor April McMahon, Vice Chancellor and Chair, External Advisory Group, Researcher Development Framework**

> "The Researcher Development Statement offers a valuable framework of knowledge and skills that research staff will need to meet a variety of career challenges. It assists institutions in their implementation of the principles of the Concordat and will help them continue to develop their research staff at all levels."
>
> **Professor Sir Ivor Crewe, Chair, Concordat Strategy Group**

> "The UKRSA promote the RDF Professional Development Planner as a useful tool to help focus researchers on their career development. UKRSA encourage local research staff associations in organising sessions for researchers to share their own experiences using the Professional Development Planner. It provides an excellent basis for identifying shared needs for careers and professional development whilst providing the basis for seeking additional support."
>
> **The UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA)**

Research Councils UK have fully endorsed the Researcher Development Statement.

In their Statement of Expectation, the **Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)** indicate that researchers are expected:

> "to develop the higher-level capabilities as outlined in the Researcher Development Statement."

The **Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)** acknowledges the Researcher Development Statement in their Doctoral Training Partnerships:

> "BBSRC also supports the development by Vitae of the Researcher Development Statement, as an outline of the areas of professional development that research organisations should be addressing in their training programmes."

> "The Researcher Development Framework provides researchers with a tool to use to help identify their transferable skills, strengths and capabilities and how to develop them. All of which are relevant to a range of careers and extremely valued by employers."
>
> **Jackie Wilbraham, R&D Science Policy Director, AstraZeneca**

Practical actions for human resources specialists:

- Review human resources and related institutional policies to create new opportunities to support researchers, using the Researcher Development Framework

- Promote the Researcher Development Framework to supervisors and principal investigators as a way to support researcher development

- Position the Researcher Development Framework as a development tool for research leaders and staff

- Implement practices to support researchers to take ownership of their development

- Raise awareness amongst research staff of the institutional commitment to their personal and professional development

- Identify and develop leadership and research management skills using the Research Development Framework as a Framework

- Use the Researcher Development Framework to support principal investigators, staff and researchers in preparation for appraisal, progress reviews, and career development conversations

- Use the Researcher Development Framework to inform job descriptions, recruitment/selection processes and training

- Use the Researcher Development Framework to highlight the importance of providing institutional and individual leadership in equality and diversity.
  www.vitae.ac.uk/everyresearchercounts

Useful links

The Researcher Development Framework

- Researcher Development Framework: **www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf**
- Researcher Development Framework researcher profiles: **www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfprofiles**
- Researcher Development Framework Professional Development Planner: **www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner**
- Contact: **rdf@vitae.ac.uk**

Other Vitae resources

- Vitae website: **www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice**
- Careers information: **www.vitae.ac.uk/careers**
- 'What do researchers do?': **www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd**
- Researcher career profiles: **www.vitae.ac.uk/careerprofiles**

Conditions of use

The Researcher Development Framework was produced by Vitae in conjunction with colleagues from the UK higher education sector. Conditions of use, including requirements for acknowledgement, can be found at: **www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconditionsofuse**.

About Vitae

Vitae is the UK organisation championing the professional and career development of postgraduate researchers and research staff in UK higher education institutions and research institutes. We play a major role in the drive for high-level skills and innovation and in meeting the UK's goal to produce world-class researchers.

Vitae works with institutions to embed professional and career development for researchers into the research environment. It plays a leading role in innovating, sharing practice and enhancing the capability of the higher education sector to provide support for researchers in this area.

For further information about Vitae visit: **www.vitae.ac.uk**

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