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# The career-wise researcher



Develop your career management skills  
and get the right job for you...



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## Introduction

### The career-wise researcher

**There is little doubt that economic, technological, political and social changes have transformed the world of work. Whether you consider yourself as ambitious with clear career goals or someone who sees what life brings, thinking about your career and what you want out of it is something you should make time for.**

Career opportunities for researchers cover a wide range of sectors including HE; manufacturing; finance; business and IT, health and public administration. Recent trends demonstrate that over half of researchers on completion of their doctorate will go on to pursue a career outside academic research or teaching<sup>1</sup>. Funders of research both nationally<sup>2</sup> and in Europe<sup>3</sup> recognise this trend, and the importance of ensuring all researchers are supported by their institution in their professional and career development, whilst still taking responsibility for this themselves.

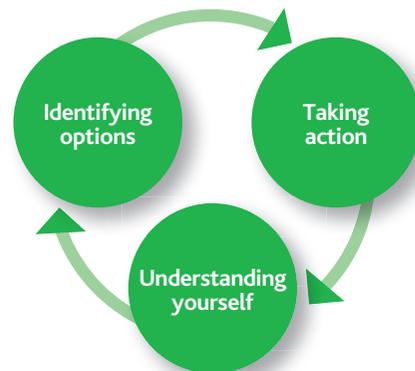
In difficult times when career patterns are less predictable, you may come across the term 'career resilience'. Managing your career today is less about having a determined plan, and more about taking a broad and organic approach to employability: leaving the door open for you to grasp opportunities (and sometimes creating them), taking planned risks, coping effectively with unexpected changes, and crucially adapting your ideas to your evolving interests and experiences.<sup>4</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> 'What Do Researchers Do? First Destinations of Graduates By Subject', Vitae 2009
- <sup>2</sup> The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (2010), signed by the funders, has been widely accepted and implemented by institutions in the UK. This includes Principle 5 that as an individual researcher you share in the responsibility and proactively engage in your own personal career development, and lifelong learning. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and will replace the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) by 2014. It includes a reference to the Concordat.
- <sup>3</sup> The European Charter for Researchers (2005) is a set of general principles and requirements which specify the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as funders and/or employers of researchers. This includes reference to the career development of researchers, and pays tribute to all forms of mobility as a means for enhancing the professional development of researchers.
- <sup>4</sup> Career Edge - June 2009, Careers NZ, [www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)

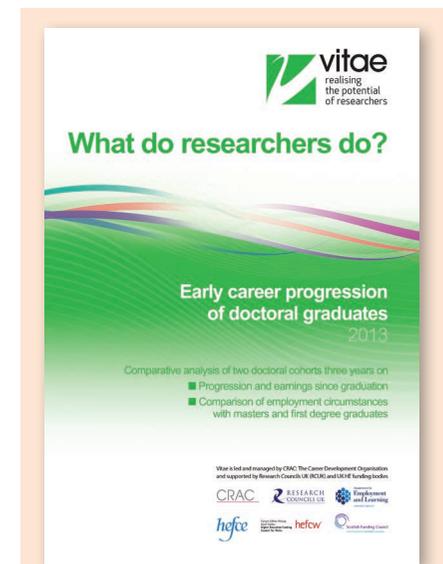
We can rarely predict when jobs or opportunities will arise. Taking steps to understand yourself and what motivates you and actively engaging in your continued professional development (CPD) will help ensure you can be responsive and seize the moment, or be as prepared as you can be when a contract comes to an end or the next job opportunity presents itself. Ultimately, unless you're self-employed, you will need to present yourself to a future employer. Getting to this stage is a bit like tackling a three dimensional puzzle. The first step is to set out all the pieces and understand how they might fit together. The pieces can be defined as:

- **Yourselves:** what you want from life as well as your capabilities, attributes, expertise and potential
- **Careers:** what types of jobs and roles are available to you
- **The wider picture:** how the economy, political, social and technological climate impact on career opportunities

Although life is unpredictable, it is still possible to manage your career as an ongoing process where you add to your experiences and reflect on how you wish to pursue these experiences in a range of sectors. There are many models of career management, but below is a simple framework to get started.



This booklet has been designed to give you practical tips to help you identify and build the pieces of your own puzzle. We include the steps you should take to understand yourself and your capabilities; increase your awareness of job opportunities and what employers are seeking; setting yourself career and personal development goals; taking a proactive approach to development opportunities, and ultimately presenting yourself to an employer in the best light to get the job you want.



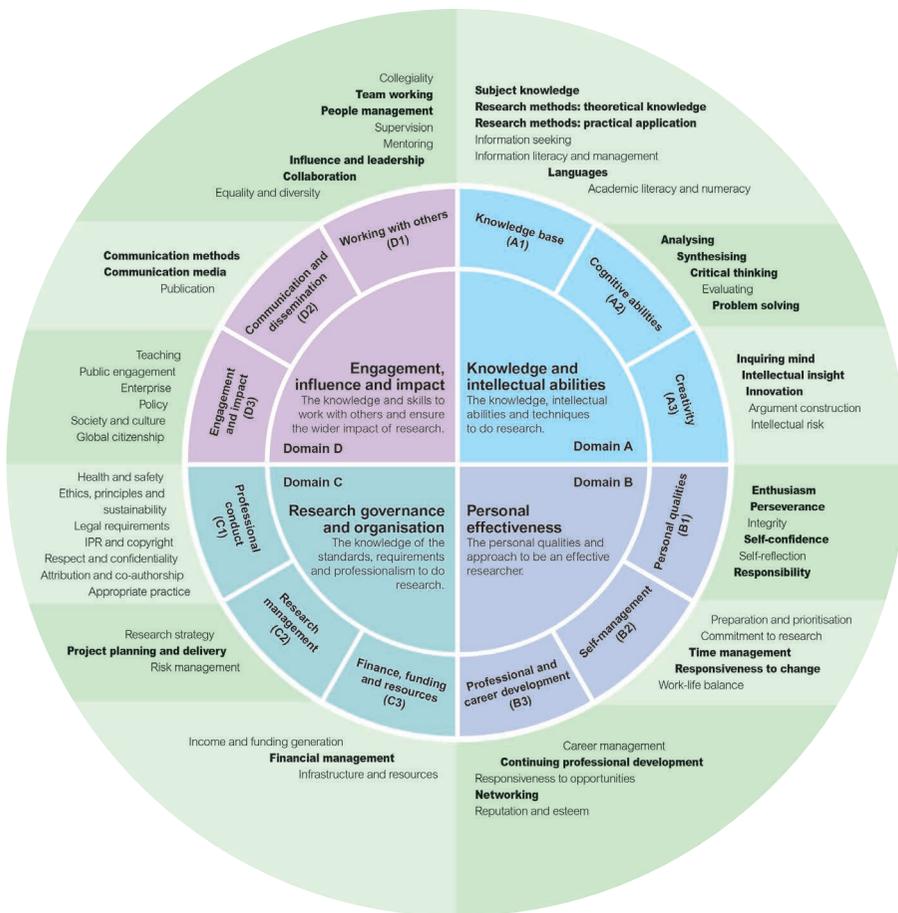
### Did you know...

...that doctoral research training gives researchers access to a diversity of employment opportunities?

Find out about the extensive range of potential careers, employment destinations and roles, available to researchers, in the 'What do researchers do?' series [www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd)

## Introduction

Throughout this booklet we make reference to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework ([www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf)) and how you can use it in practice. This Framework is specific to researchers and has been designed as an inspirational guide to personal development to help you make the most of your strengths. Vitae has also taken the opportunity to survey the views of employers to establish the key knowledge, behaviours and attributes developed by researchers that are most desirable. These have been mapped onto the RDF and expressed as the 'Employability lens on the Researcher Development Framework'<sup>5</sup>.



“The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them.”

George Bernard Shaw

<sup>5</sup> Full details can be found at [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf/lenes](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf/lenes)

## Understanding yourself: What makes you tick

A natural starting point before you begin researching possible careers is to spend time considering your capabilities, expertise, prior experience and personal values. Being self-aware helps to ensure any career decision is right for you. Knowing what motivates you and gives you fulfilment, or equally being aware of your constraints, can influence the future decisions about your career. It can help identify the type of environments or work cultures you thrive in, and target the type of learning and development opportunities that will benefit you the most.

### Realise your talents

- Think about significant points of achievement or challenge in your life to date.
- Why are they significant?
- What have you learnt from them and how might they influence the type of career path you pursue?

### Understand your personality type

- Understanding your personality type can often provide the key to recognising why you have tendencies to act or react in a certain way and help identify the types of work environment you thrive in. There are a number of tools widely used including Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) which may be provided by your careers service or staff development team.

### Understand your learning style

- Identifying the most effective way you learn can inform the type of training or development you could undertake in order to develop a particular capability. Again a number of tools like the Learning Style Questionnaire (Honey and Mumford, 1982) should be available from your institution.

### Audit your capabilities and expertise

- What do you consider to be your areas of expertise?
- What skills and qualities do you possess as a result of your research, work history/experience, hobbies or voluntary work?
- Use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) to map your current capabilities, attributes and competencies. (See page 16 for an example of how to do this.)
- What capabilities or competencies are missing and how can you fill in the gaps?

### Understand your values and motivations

- How far do your values and motivations form the foundation of what you consider to be career success?
- What elements would a job role need to include for you to feel satisfied at the end of a day's work? Look at the examples on the next two pages. Which ones strongly resonate with you?



## Understanding yourself: What makes you tick

### Identify your 'career anchors'<sup>6</sup>

Your career anchors represent your unique combination of perceived career motivations and values. You can establish which of the eight anchors are important to you by considering the following questions:

- What motivates you?
- What values are important to you?
- What type of work environment do you enjoy working in?
- Are there any fundamental constraints such as location or family that you need to take into account when planning your next career move?
- How strong are these anchors in your decision making about a career choice?

Entrepreneurial creativity	Service or dedication to the cause	Pure challenge	Lifestyle
Technical / functional competence	General managerial competence	Autonomy / independence	Security / stability

“I wish now that as a doctoral researcher I had given more thought to how what I was doing would help to build my career. I would encourage anyone undertaking a doctorate now to be proactive: think about what is really important to you and how you can achieve it.”

Esther Haines, Outreach Co-ordinator Department of Physics, University of Otago<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Organizational Culture and Leadership, 3rd Edition, E.Schein © J Wiley and Sons, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Career Profiles of Graduates, Vitae 2009

### Activity: Uncover your career priorities

This exercise is an opportunity to reflect on the values that can influence your career satisfaction<sup>8</sup>. Below is a list of some of the factors that motivate people at work. Work down the list, marking each factor on a scale of 1-5. Complete this at pace and trust your initial instinct.

Potential motivators	Scale (1- not important to you, to 5 - very important to you)
Control over my work	
Good income	
Job security	
Flexibility of working arrangements	
Managing other people	
Professional recognition	
Opportunity for promotion	
High level of responsibility	
Pursuing excellence	
Helping others or benefiting the wider community	
Managing major projects	
Opportunity to develop skills	
Status within an organisation	
Status outside an organisation	
Challenging work using my abilities and skills fully	
Specific geographic location	
Working in a team	
Using technical expertise	
Opportunity to be creative	
Variety	
Working alone	
Contact with people	
Feeling appreciated	

This list is not exhaustive. Add any other factors that you feel should be on 'your' list.

#### Reflect on:

- how many of your highest priorities are met by your current work
- whether any of your highest priorities are in conflict with the work you do now
- which, if any, of your priorities you are prepared to compromise
- how could you increase your satisfaction by building more of your highest priorities into your current work?
- what factors would you consciously seek in a new job or career opportunity?

Knowing what motivates you and gives you fulfilment can guide you to the right choices for the future. It can also help you to focus your time and effort on development activities and career avenues that bring the rewards that matter to you.

<sup>8</sup> Making Headway, Maureen Mitchell and Sally Gruhn, CRAC, 1995

“The world is changing and we need to be prepared to change along with it. Just a generation ago, a career was viewed as a commitment to a lifelong occupation. Now, old occupations are disappearing, new ones are being invented, and many jobs have evolved to be considerably different than they were a few years ago.”

Career Edge, June 2009

Once you have an understanding of your motivations and capabilities, it is time to explore and research your options. Have you ever spent time really thinking about job roles and career opportunities? How far have you considered widening your career horizons? Stepping away from what you know may be a little daunting but it can also present you with a wider choice of opportunities. Taking time to open yourself up to more career possibilities before you need to be actively looking for a new job will help you be more ready to rationally consider and seize opportunities should they come your way.

### Step 1

#### Where do you see yourself?

A useful starting point is to look at the 'Widening horizons funnel' diagram on the next page, to get you thinking about the types of areas you might consider exploring and how far you might be willing to step beyond the environment in which you currently work.

- Do you wish to work in an academic environment?
- Do you want to transfer your research into a different setting?
- Could you start up your own business?
- Do you wish to apply your capabilities and expertise in a non-research environment?

### Step 2

#### Explore what's out there

Explore the types of jobs and roles that appeal to you.

- Review job adverts and collect those that attract you. Don't choose them necessarily on the basis of whether or not you think you could do them or whether you think you could successfully apply for them. Perhaps you might like to choose the ones that:

- you find interesting
- you think will be rewarding
- you think will be worthwhile
- are the 'right move' for you

- Seek out occupational profiles or career stories and attend career events to explore the types of jobs that are out there. Some good websites include:

- [www.vitae.ac.uk/careerstories](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careerstories)
- [www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi)
- [www.prospects.ac.uk/types\\_of\\_jobs.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm)

The job descriptions or career stories you like may not immediately relate to your capabilities and expertise, but on closer analysis may include responsibilities that match your skill set and other activities you have been involved with i.e. previous job roles, clubs, societies or voluntary work.

- Ask supervisors, principal investigators, research managers, colleagues, friends and family for their input. Example questions could be:

- What do you think my strengths are?
- What careers do you think I would be suited to?
- Do you think I would suit a research career?

#### Ask yourself the following questions<sup>9</sup>:

- What jobs exist?
- What have other people in your discipline done?
- Who is recruiting people like you?
- How do recruitment processes work? What kinds of career pathways do people follow?
- What qualifications and experience are required?

#### Widening horizons funnel<sup>10</sup>

Nearby	Still close	A little further	Away from research	Anything goes
			Legal or patents	Any 'graduate level' job - Accounting - Law - Marketing - Production - Admin
		Government lab	Teaching schools/colleges	Personnel
	Research Fellow	Museum/gallery	Scientific/public policy advisor	Private sector
	Technical support	Research Institute	Government 'desk researcher'	Not-for-profit sector
Research staff – new contract	Lecturer	Research Council, Charity, private company	Publishing	Self-employment
	Administrator	Small or medium enterprise, Research and Development	Research Councils	Small or medium enterprise
	Entrepreneur	Consultancy firm or Independent consultant	Clinical advisor	Large organisation
		Your own 'spin-off' business	Pharmaceuticals	Service sector
			Production manager	Manufacturing
			Technical sales/marketing	Government
			Consultancy	Start your own business
Narrow horizon – known and safe but secure	A little wider – but still university based	Still research but transferring research skills to another setting	Using knowledge and understanding but not research	Using transferable skills rather than specific knowledge

Increasing 'risk' and research effort to investigate

Increasing breadth of opportunity

Increasing likelihood of some kind of retraining (but not always)

Increasing wide horizons, the world is your oyster!

<sup>9</sup> From Vitae's 'What do researchers do?' Labour market information [www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi)

<sup>10</sup> Based on material from 'Broadening Horizons'. Originally appeared in the Contract Researchers' Career Development Training Pack

### Step 3

#### Focus your ideas

Start to narrow down your ideas to focus on some specific career areas you'd like to explore using the 'career funnel'.

#### Activity: Career funnel

The aim of this activity is to refine your short-list of career options at each of the four stages until you narrow it down to one or two avenues



#### Your notes:

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### Step 4

#### Keep yourself informed

The career landscape is constantly evolving. At any time career avenues could be closed off as well as new pathways opening. Make sure you are fully informed about the health of the sectors you are interested in working in. Is it an area of growth or retraction? How competitive is the field? What new opportunities are potentially on the horizon? Familiarise yourself with the most up-to-date labour market information (LMI) e.g. Vitae's 'What do researchers do?' series [www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi)

- Get involved in departmental committees or online discussion forums to help keep abreast of developments in your institution, research field or employment sectors you are interested in. Jiscmail, H.NET, academia.edu, #ecrchat and #phdchat on Twitter are good starting points.

Finally, be honest with yourself. Make sure you are not self-imposing barriers that may prevent you from achieving your career goals e.g. lack of self-belief, anxiety or procrastination.

Being prepared for your next career step requires you to be proactive in researching possible careers, asking for advice and being in a position to respond to opportunities. Some jobs are never advertised and you can create openings through collaborative work and actively building your network of contacts.

#### Make a development plan

Create a plan, or review your existing personal development plan (PDP) detailing the training and development opportunities needed to help bridge any skills gaps between your current role and the type of role you are interested in pursuing. Discuss this with your supervisor or research manager as well members or colleagues from your wider network.

Think about what opportunities are open to you to have these dialogues i.e.

- With your supervisor or research manager as part of a pre-arranged meeting or appraisal
- Via an academic coaching or mentoring scheme if one is available to you

#### Put a timeframe to your plan:

What do I need to do?	When do I need to do it by?	Review date
<i>Get involved with the research staff association to get more experience of team work</i>	<i>End of February</i>	<i>End of April</i>

“ I would advise doing all you can to network. You never know who might want your services after meeting you at a conference, reading your article or seeing your online profile, perhaps years after you sowed the first seed. ”

Andrew Eaves, Operational Research Consultant, Andalus Solutions Limited<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Career Profiles of Graduates, Vitae 2009

## Being proactive and using networks: Leave no stone unturned

### Your experience history

Obtaining experience can be essential in order to pursue some career options or it may help clarify your ideas. Experience may not be directly relevant to the career path you wish to pursue but can provide an opportunity to develop desired transferable skills that you may not readily develop in your current research role. Whatever the reason, obtaining experience is useful and can be varied but do consider what you wish to achieve.

- **Research Councils** and learned societies provide a range of placements and schemes that offer access to research outside your institution or work experience with employers
- Speak to your **faculties/departments, careers service and employer relations personnel** within your institution about:
  - work placements
  - enterprising activities
  - teaching and training opportunities
  - mentoring
  - internships
  - making speculative approaches to employer contacts for work shadowing
  - collaborations with employers or other institutions
  - visiting other research groups, either in the UK or overseas
  - becoming a departmental representative
  - organising a conference
- Look out for opportunities to:
  - write for newsletters or blogs
  - become a committee member of a postgraduate or research staff association
  - participate in skills development courses within and outside your institution

### Network

Establishing and maintaining a wide professional network can not only prove helpful in your current research role, but may also prove to be the opening to your next collaboration, contract or change of career direction. If there is no existing forum for you to meet the people you want to network with, consider setting one up.

Online networking is the most accessible platform for networking. Social networking sites enable you to access a professional community, use the people you know to make contacts and give you access to tools that facilitate networking. Make the most of professional online networking sites like LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Academia and Mendely. Social networking works best as a follow-up to a positive face-to-face encounter, or secondly as a personal introduction from a colleague.

Setting up a website around your research topic is another way of promoting yourself and your research in the way you choose, as well as extending the scope of a business card or email by giving someone a way to find out more about you.

Remember reciprocity is central to networking. Actively engaging with your contacts and sharing information will promote positive relationships and encourage people to be responsive when you are seeking help or information e.g. Does anyone have any contacts in the sector/specific employer you are interested in?

Don't forget the wealth of potential contacts via family and friends too. They may prove to be only one degree of separation away from the job of your dreams!

### Activity: List your relevant experiences



Review and edit the list of experience examples on this page to suit your own experience history. Think about what you have learnt from each experience and how you could gain more from any future opportunities.

## Understand what employers want: Prepare and promote yourself



As researchers, you will appreciate the importance of analysing and evaluating information. Most employers, including those advertising academic positions, will use a job description accompanied by a personal specification which will state what specific skills and experiences are required for that position. Use this information to map your own capabilities to those that an employer requires and to prepare to apply for the position and any subsequent follow up i.e. an interview. This is your chance to describe and provide evidence of your capabilities and where essential preparation will help you gain an interview.

**When reviewing job adverts you need to consider whether you could respond to the following:**

- What attracts you to this job?
- What makes you suitable?
- How do your capabilities and expertise relate to the job specification?

Employers will also expect you to demonstrate an understanding of their organisation and to some extent the sector within which they operate. Whilst researching this, take time to consider 'do I want to devote myself to this organisation?' Applying for a job is just as much about you being right for the employer as them being the right employer for you.

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework and the supporting 'Employability lens' provide a basis to consider your research skills and how they map to what employers seek and value from researchers. If you are transferring your skills to careers where an employer may be unfamiliar with the value of obtaining a doctorate and experience as a member of research staff, you will need to emphasise the transferability of your research skills. You will notice that employers will use various terms to describe skills, experiences and personal attributes, and you need to use your own research capabilities to understand the language they are using. Employers' websites provide a good starting point.

### Presenting your application

Employers will either ask you to apply for a role with a cover letter and CV or by completing an application form. In either circumstance it is imperative that you:

- match your capabilities and experience to what they are looking for
- mirror the language they use, e.g. are you applying for an academic or non-academic role?
- be focussed and concise in presenting yourself

You can get further guidance about successful applications from your careers service or via the Vitae website [www.vitae.ac.uk/careers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careers) where you can review example academic and non-academic CVs and cover letters. For the remainder of this section, we will focus on responding to competency-based questions, which can be asked at both application and interviews.

### Did you know...?

**According to the What do researchers do? data - of all researchers surveyed:**

- 90% make a difference in the workplace
- 92% are creative/innovative at work
- 70% have supervisory responsibilities

More info at [www.vitae.ac.uk/destinations-3years-on](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/destinations-3years-on)

## Understand what employers want: Prepare and promote yourself

### Responding to competency-based questions

Employers use competency-based questions to assess that you have the right capabilities for the job by giving you the opportunity to give practical examples of your experience. One example of ensuring responses are as concise and impactful as possible is to use the **STARR** approach. This ensures you include the following in your responses:

- S** **Situation** – Think about and present a situation you were involved with
- T** **Task** – What was the objective you set out to achieve?
- A** **Action** – What did you do? What was the method of how you approached the task?
- R** **Result** – What was the outcome of your actions?
- R** **Reflect** – Look back on what you have achieved and suggest other approaches or new ideas.

Remember in your responses to use positive and action words. Also be mindful that you focus on **your** contribution in the examples you choose. E.g. "My role was to... and as a result I influenced..." This will ensure your potential employer is left in no doubt of your role.

“ I have drawn on my experience as a doctoral researcher in virtually all the jobs I have had since leaving university. ”

Andrew Hann, Senior Properties Historian, English Heritage<sup>12</sup>



<sup>12</sup> Career Profiles of Graduates, Vitae 2009

### Activity:

#### Preparing your responses to competency questions

- Print out your own copy of the Employability lens on the Researcher Development Framework [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdflenses](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdflenses)
- Review the job adverts you have selected and list the skills and competencies they are asking for.
- Try and map these onto the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. This should help guide you towards the type of evidence you can provide to an employer to demonstrate you have the relevant experience.
- Prepare your own examples of your capabilities and experience using the STARR approach.
- Use Vitae RDF Planner to plan your professional development.

#### Vitae Researcher Development Framework Planner



Take control of your professional and career development with the Vitae RDF Planner.

[www.rdfplanner.net/](http://www.rdfplanner.net/)

- Keep a record of all your professional development activities in one place
- Identify your expertise and capabilities to plan your career
- Print reports for discussions with mentors, supervisors, career advisors etc
- Identify your learning and development needs and monitor progress
- Upload files such as CVs, conference details, testimonials etc to record achievements
- View the attributes of successful researchers through a 'lens' on employability, enterprise, leadership and more



Ask your institution if you have organisation subscription access before getting an individual subscription at [www.rdfplanner.net](http://www.rdfplanner.net)

“ The terminology of 'competencies' is used throughout the Royal Bank of Scotland framework, and is in line with the Researcher Development Framework. It is easy to map the Researcher Development Framework with the Royal Bank of Scotland competence framework. ”

Royal Bank of Scotland

## Understand what employers want: Prepare and promote yourself

Map your skills and experience onto the Vitae Researcher Development Framework using the STARR, or manage the process with the RDF Planner

Skills and experience required by employer	RDF knowledge, behaviour and attributes	My relevant experience (S)ituation, (T)ask, (A)ction, (R)esult, (R)eflect
You can manage your time effectively	<b>B2 Self Management Time Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivers research projects and results on time and effectively</li> </ul>	(S) At the start of my research project (T) I prepared a detailed project plan. (A) I used this to plan my time effectively, and reviewed my progress and milestones at regular intervals, modifying my plans accordingly. (R) This has ensured I delivered my project on time. (R) On reflection, I would actively share this plan with my research manager as a focal point for our meetings so that she could monitor my progress too and help me define my project goals.
You can demonstrate you can successfully work in a team towards a common goal	<b>D1 Working with others Team working</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognises and acknowledges the contribution of others and own part in team success</li> </ul>	(S) As the chair of our department's Research Staff Association, (T) I was responsible for working with the rest of the committee to organise an end of year social event. (A) We all had our roles to make sure the event was a success and I was responsible for promoting the event to the research managers and senior academics in our department by sending out and following up personal invitations. (R) The event was well attended and was a success thanks to the way the committee worked together as a team and kept each other informed. I took the opportunity to acknowledge everyone's contribution in an email to the Head of Department and to research colleagues. (R) More regular committee meetings in the run up to the event would have helped ensure we maximised any spare capacity we had to help each other.
You are an effective communicator	<b>D2 Communication and dissemination Communication methods</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates effectively in both written and oral modes with a range of audiences formally and informally through a variety of different techniques and media</li> </ul>	(S) I participated in a regional poster competition which involved (T) presenting my research project in a concise and visual way that could be understood by members of the public. (A) At the poster event, I had the opportunity to discuss my research with a range of employers and local people making sure they could see the relevance of my work by using language and examples that were familiar to them. (R) Visitors to the event had the opportunity to vote for the best poster and I came second overall. (R) I would spend more time practising my 'pitch' to increase my confidence at a public event.

**In an interview situation, you can expect competency questions to be framed in the following kinds of ways:**

- Give an example from outside your studies or research when you worked in a team. What was your role and what did you contribute to the team's performance?
- Describe a challenging project activity which you have planned and taken through to conclusion. What was your objective? What did you do and what was the outcome? Include any changes you made to the initial plan.

**The interviewer is also likely to ask a range of additional questions like:**

- What do you perceive to be your core strengths?
- Where do you identify your areas of development to be? How would you develop them in this role?

Again, further examples can be found through your careers service or the Vitae website. For specific questions on academic job interviews see [www.vitae.ac.uk/academicinterviews](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/academicinterviews)

Finally it is worth remembering that an interview should be a relatively balanced experience i.e. it is just as much an opportunity for you to find out about the role and organisation you are applying to as it is for the interviewer to get to know you. Just as there is a range in the experience of potential candidates, you will find interviewers range in their skill of conducting an interview. Following the tips we have shown you will help ensure you get across the right information. You may even give your interviewer the answer to a question they didn't know they were looking for!



In the final pages of this booklet we set out some areas of further support within your institution and beyond. As a final reflection, the career specialist Dr Peter Hawkins succinctly said **"We usually spend more time planning our next holiday than planning for our career. One thing is certain, the clearer you can picture your ideal job, the easier it will be to seize it."**<sup>13</sup> So do yourself a favour, book some time out in your diary to devote some quality time to reflect about your future, and good luck for whatever that future may bring!

**"The decisions you make about your work life are especially important, since most people spend more of their waking lives working than doing anything else. Your choices will affect not only yourself and those closest to you, but in some way the whole world."**

Laurence G. Boldt, Career Consultant and Author

<sup>13</sup> The art of building Windmills, career tactics for the 21st century, workshop, by Dr Peter Hawkins

### Vitae resources to help you with your career

The **Vitae website** has a wealth of information in its careers section including the **What do researchers do?** Series of labour market information, incorporating discipline specific data, demonstrating the range of careers researchers take.

[www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd)

[www.vitae.ac.uk/career-intentions](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/career-intentions)

[www.vitae.ac.uk/career-paths](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/career-paths)

[www.vitae.ac.uk/career-progression](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/career-progression)

[www.vitae.ac.uk/destinations-3years-on](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/destinations-3years-on)

[www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/lmi)

**Career stories** (written and video) are available on the Vitae website. Be inspired by new possibilities and how people got there.

[www.vitae.ac.uk/careerstories](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careerstories)

In addition to the support and guidance which should be available from supervisors, research managers and the wider research community make use of the **Vitae website** for help in obtaining work within academia.

[www.vitae.ac.uk/careers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careers)

**The Employability lens on the Researcher Development Framework** provides an overview of the key knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes employers seek.

[www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfenses](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfenses)

**Vitae** runs a number of national and regional courses which will help realise the potential of your skills.

[www.vitae.ac.uk/courses](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/courses)

### Other career development resources

**Doctoral societies, research staff associations (RSAs) or postdoc societies** are a great way to develop skills in an environment outside your research. The UK research staff association (UKRSA) has information about known local RSAs or how to set one up.

[www.ukrsa.org.uk](http://www.ukrsa.org.uk)

**An Academic Career** developed by the University of Manchester Careers Service is an award-winning online resource helping you explore if an academic career is for you. It also provides information on academic applications and interviews.

[www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk)

**Occupational profiles** are very helpful to assist in researching careers, understanding the skills sought by employers and checking out sources of vacancies. If you are unclear which direction to take, try 'What job would suit me?' – the online career planning tool which helps you consider how your capabilities, interests and work values link into types of work.

[www.prospects.ac.uk/types\\_of\\_jobs](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs)

**University Careers Services:** Some universities will have dedicated careers advisers and information to support researchers. Others will provide more generic advice, information and guidance, which is very helpful if seeking a career where your broader transferable skills are being targeted. They will also have access to vacancies through links with employers and may organise events that could help in your career planning and job search. Some may have job-shops or other advice on work experience. The extent of the support they can offer will vary. Check out their websites.

**Human resource departments/staff development units and researcher development units:** Most universities offer training in time management, running a meeting, project management, negotiation skills and assertiveness and many other transferable skills. The extent to which and where you can access such services will vary. Some of this may be on offer within faculties or researcher development teams, so look out for such provision.

**Courses and mentoring** may be available within universities to support academic careers such as grant writing, public engagement, and knowledge transfer.

**Departmental /faculty/ university wide events** are a great way to meet a range of employers or former researchers who have taken a career route away from research.

**Employers visiting universities:** Find out what is happening such as employer days, recruitment fairs, specialist events. Does your careers service have vacancies you can access if seeking graduate training schemes or other entry points to getting a job?

### Other useful publications

Many books have been written to support career management skills and some are written for researchers. This is not an exhaustive list but a selection from the authors.

**University Researchers and the Job Market** published by the Association of Graduate Careers Services (AGCAS) is an online resource written for research staff on fixed term contracts but helpful for doctoral researchers too.

[http://www.agcas.org.uk/agcas\\_resources/115\\_University-Researchers-and-the-Job-Market](http://www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/115_University-Researchers-and-the-Job-Market)

'Moving on in your career: A guide for academic researchers and postgraduates', L Ali and B Graham

'Building your academic career', J Boden, D Epstein, and J Kenway

'Getting the job you will love', J Lees

'The art of building windmills', P Hawkins

'The Researcher Survival Guide', University and Colleges Union (UCU) available from campus offices or direct from [ucu.org.uk](http://ucu.org.uk)