



Transition to the future:

A step change in researcher development

Vitae Annual Report
January 2014 - March 2015

Vitae is led and managed by CRAC:
The Career Development Organisation.

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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this report of Vitae's achievements in what has been a significant year for Vitae. Vitae has transitioned from being funded predominately by RCUK and the UK funding bodies to introducing a membership offer for UK organisations from January 2015 as part of its strategy for a sustainable funding base. Over 130 UK institutions have invested in Vitae membership during a time when universities face increasing financial and operational pressures: a clear demonstration of the value Vitae provides to institutions.

During this current contract, Vitae has worked towards achieving a step-change in how institutions support research staff. It is through Vitae's strategic approach, working closely with the European Commission to develop and manage the UK process for the HR Excellence in Research Award to best meet the needs of the UK, that over 90 UK universities have obtained the Award. It is likely that this Award will be increasingly important in the evaluation of European funding bids, thereby putting the UK in an excellent position to secure European funding. The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is now firmly in institutions' strategies.

The increasing diversity of doctoral training structures presents challenges for institutions in providing equality of access and provision of researcher development programmes. Through their 'Open Space' and other activities, Vitae has provided collective opportunities for those involved in developing researchers to explore the challenges of offering equality of access to professional development for all doctoral researchers.

Looking forward, I believe that Vitae will continue to be world leading in researcher development. Vitae's continued contribution to the development of effective policy and practice, both within the UK and internationally, offers considerable benefits to UK institutions to provide high quality, innovative and transformative development opportunities to researchers for the benefit of UK research, the economy and society. I look forward to continuing to work with Vitae to enhance the researcher experience.



Professor Dianne Berry OBE,
Director of Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development,
University of Reading
Chair, Vitae External Advisory Board

Summary

Vitae has achieved a worldwide reputation for the outstanding development of early career researchers. Recognising that significant challenges remain in institutional provision for professional and career development for research staff, the RCUK and the UK HE funding bodies funded Vitae to lead a step-change in institutional provision for the career development of research staff (January 2013 to March 2015), alongside continued strengthening of researcher development for doctoral researchers within an increasing diversity of doctoral programmes and undertaking the transition of Vitae to self-sustainability. This report reviews Vitae activity from January 2014 to March 2015 and builds on the Vitae 2013 Annual Report 'Researcher development in a time of change'¹.

The strategic aim of the step-change was to increase institutional provision for the professional and career development of research staff in alignment with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers² which sets out principles to improve support for research staff and management of research careers in the UK. In particular, the programme aim was to accelerate the translation of policies into practice within the research environment so as to enhance the career development of research staff across all disciplines. As part of this strategy, Vitae reviewed progress in relation the Concordat, examined institutional provision for research staff across the sector, and created new resources for principal investigators, research leaders and research directors to assist them in their roles in managing research staff, as well as for research staff, augmenting the extensive range of resources already provided by Vitae for doctoral researchers and supervisors.

The Every Researcher Counts programme has gained recognition as providing helpful and innovative guidance to principal investigators and raised the profile of equality and diversity in researcher careers. The associated 'Actions for All' are ten practical actions for institutions to improve equality and diversity for all those within the research environment, derived in collaboration with the diverse community that engaged with the programme.

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), along with its associated resources, continues to be used extensively across the sector by institutions, funders and individual researchers as a strategic and practical framework to inform researcher professional development.

In addition to engaging the sector in a step-change in institutional provision for research staff, exploring the implications for researcher development in the changing landscape in doctoral training, and establishing a professional development programme and framework for those involved in researcher development, Vitae completed a substantial transition to a self-sustaining programme, consulting closely with the sector. Organisational membership commenced on 1 January 2015 providing the platform for the professional development of researchers for the 134 UK members. International and affiliate membership is available to other organisations. Additionally, Vitae works internationally through consultancy, projects and collaborations, aligned with its continuing mission to lead world-class professional and career development of researchers. Vitae continues to successfully influence policy, roll out new resources, events and innovations, and work in collaboration with institutions and other bodies in the UK and internationally.

¹ www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/vitae-annual-report-2013.pdf

² www.vitae.ac.uk/concordat

'A step-change in institutional provision for research staff': Vitae outputs at a glance

- **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**
 - Progress in implementing the Concordat report
 - CROS and PIRLS surveys (2015)
 - Research Staff Conference – 'Recognition and value'
 - 'Actions for all' for institutions regarding equality and diversity for research staff
 - The landscape of researcher development provision for research staff

- **HR Excellence in Research**
 - UK institutions implement the four-year external review process
 - 94 UK institutions hold the award overall

- **Development programmes for research staff**
 - **Six new training and development programmes:**
 - Preparing for leadership
 - First-time academic leadership
 - Research staff futures
 - Enhancing professional effectiveness
 - Introducing impact and engagement
 - Progressing your academic career
 - Managing your career
 - **Online resources supporting professional development** and engagement with career planning using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)
 - **Vitae Researcher Development Framework resources**, including information sheets and new lenses (independent researcher, publishing, knowledge exchange)
 - **Every Researcher Counts guide** for research staff to prepare for development reviews
 - **On-line career resources** for research staff
 - **40 case studies of careers outside academia**
 - **Researchers on placement guide**

- **Resources for PIs, research directors and research leaders**
 - Every Researcher Counts – Equality and diversity development resources for PIs and research leaders, with accompanying ECU guidance
 - Every Researcher Counts conferences – examination of issues for the development of research staff
 - Careers conversations briefings
 - Career guide infographics by discipline
 - Good practice in managing research staff – PIs talking videos
 - Checklist for internships

- **Researcher developers' professional practice and development**
 - Career Framework for Researcher Developers (CFRD)
 - Connections CPD programmes for researcher developers
 - Vitae Member Community online social platform

- **Review and evaluation**
 - 'What do research staff do next?' survey of research staff after academia
 - On-line impact and evaluation toolkit

‘A step-change in institutional provision for research staff’: Vitae key achievements

A step-change in institutional provision for research staff requires a commitment to change through actions in strategy, policy and practice at all levels within an institution. Vitae’s key achievements are summarised in relation to Vitae’s four aims; to inform development and implementation of policy, enhance institutional provision, empower researchers to make impact in their careers, and evidence impact of professional and career development support for researchers. The linkages to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the HR Excellence in Research Award are outlined in ‘Vitae contribution to policy and practice’. The impact of our work is summarised in ‘Vitae impact’.

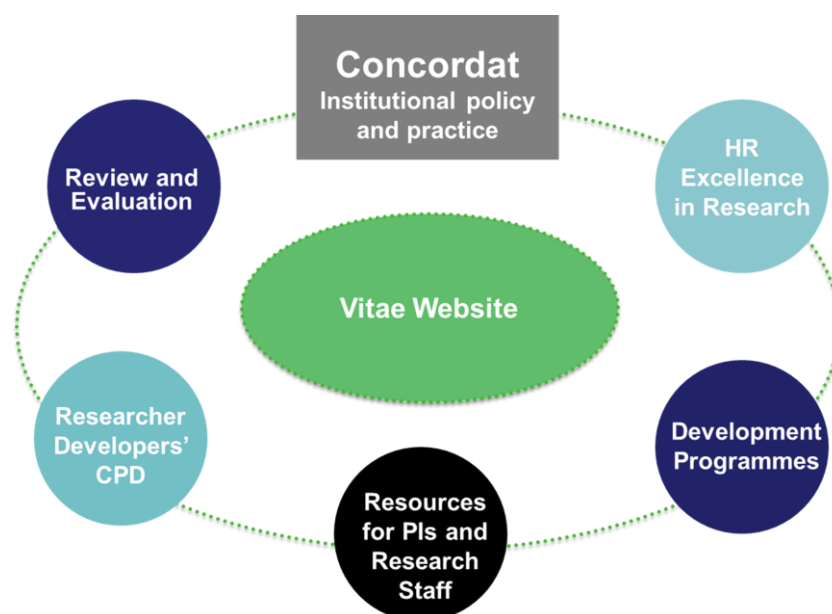
Vitae has focused on enhancing institutional provision to equip research staff for a variety of different careers. Importantly the programme has created new resources for principal investigators and research leaders to enable them as key influencers of research staff career decisions, to provide broader guidance to research staff within the day to day research environment. These resources include examples of good practice amongst principal investigators, mentoring career conversations, guidance on internships, analysis of career destinations by discipline from the series ‘What do researchers do?’, a ground-breaking survey of research staff careers outside of academia, and the Every Researcher Counts resources for effectively managing equality and diversity within the research environment.

New development programmes for research staff, tailored to their needs in terms of content and delivery, map to key career milestones and recognise constraints on their time. These programmes include: becoming effective in a new post; leadership; impact; broadening horizons and looking towards future careers. Together they provide a complete suite of resources **Research Staff Futures and Preparing for Leadership** for institutions to provide for research staff. The resources meet the sector requirements identified in an examination of gaps in sector provision. Interest in these resources has been overwhelming and they are now in use in institutions across the UK.

All programmes are mapped to the **Vitae Researcher Development Framework** so that research staff can efficiently and effectively identify opportunities to meet their own professional development needs. Structured support for research staff in using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is provided **24/7 on the Vitae website**, along with careers stories and guidance specifically for research staff. Institutions can map their provision for research staff to the RDF to enable research staff to make informed choices according to their **self-determined professional development needs**.

The outputs from the programme are summarised in ‘**A step-change in institutional provision for research staff’: Vitae outputs at a glance**. The outcomes of this programme enhance institutional provision for research staff and extends Vitae’s existing successful work in the area of doctoral training to form a set of comprehensive resources aligned to the career journeys of early career researchers. The programme has created resources and information to enhance institutional HR Excellence in Research Award progress and review, the delivery of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and the professional development of research staff.

‘A step-change in institutional research staff provision’: Vitae contribution to policy and practice



Vitae’s key areas of focus enable a step-change in institutional provision for research staff through strategic linkages to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the HR Excellence in Research Award, encompassing **Vitae’s aims to inform development and implementation of policy, enhance institutional provision, empower researchers to make impact in their careers, and evidence impact of professional and career development support for researchers:**

- The **HR Excellence in Research Award** process managed by Vitae in the UK, gives institutions the opportunity to conduct an internal analysis to compare policies and practice against the principles of the Concordat, as well as the UK QAA Code for research degrees. Gaps are addressed in an institutional action plan, updated every two years with a review of progress.
- Vitae’s **development programmes for research staff** and **resources for PIs and research leaders** are **focused on the research environment and** can be utilised by institutions to achieve and enhance action plans
- Successful innovative development of researchers is reinforced by **improving the professional development and practice of staff who develop researchers**, thereby enabling them to better reach their goals associated with action plans
- **Review and evaluation** are critical to identify progress and areas to improve, which feeds back into institutional policy and practice
- The **Vitae website**, provides 24/7 career and professional development information to researchers, PIs and staff supporting them, providing a wealth of resources to inform and enhance progress with the **HR Excellence in Research Award**.

Impact of Vitae programme

'A step-change in institutional provision for research staff' (January 2014 – March 2015)



Vitae worked with 132 UK HEIs. All Russell Group institutions meaningfully engaged with Vitae.

358 participants attended the Vitae Researcher Development International Conference, including international participants from 12 countries.

Nearly 4000 researchers were reached through face-to-face training, workshops, conferences, and seminars in 2013-14.

The Vitae Hubs facilitated more than 50 collaborative activities and organised over 60 regional activities to share practice and implement policy.

Six research staff development programmes were developed and piloted with research staff developers and research staff from 53 HEIs.

90 UK HEI staff were trained in use of the Every Researcher Counts programme and guidance materials.

New Career Framework for Researcher Development professionals (CFRD) to enhance the professional development of the RD community was developed with input from 138 researcher developers.

Enhance higher education provision

Evidence impact

Vitae Researcher Development Evaluation Toolkit and associated resources on line

'What do research staff do next?' survey completed by over 1700 research staff who have left academia for other occupations

Publication of 40 research staff career stories

Major review of progress against implementing the principles of the Concordat completed.

23 UK HEIs maintained the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award after two-year review, and 10 UK HEIs maintained the award after four-year external review. 91 UK HEIs now hold the Award.

Every Researcher Counts (ERC) training materials are recommended by RCUK to support equality and diversity requirements.

Influence policy

Empower researchers

Researchers from 215 countries access the Vitae website, with over 1000 new registrations per month.

More than 13,000 researchers have access to the RDF Planner through organisational subscriptions.

Over 3000 views of online Vitae Hangouts for researchers.

Over 100 participants attended the Vitae Research Staff conference focusing on the recognition and value principle in Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.



1. Inform the development and implementation of effective policy relating to researcher development

1.1. Vitae leads the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. A **review of progress across the sector** against each of the Concordat principles³ concluded that a variety of sources showed there had been excellent progress. However, there are continued challenges with the engagement of researchers and principal investigators (PIs). During 2014, Vitae developed new resources to help institutions engage PIs in research staff development, which are reported in section 2.

1.2. The UK process for the **HR Excellence in Research Award** is managed by Vitae. As a result, the number of UK institutions holding the award is now 94, compared with a total of 245 across Europe. The first cohort of 10 UK institutions has progressed through the four-year external peer review process. Vitae consulted on a UK position statement and championed the UK sector's views to the European Commission on the future development of the HR Excellence in Research Award progress⁴.

“Robust evidence of continuous progress, aligned to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, is being demonstrated by UK Award holders that retain the Award; however, we need to continue to make improvements in the experiences of researchers on the ground.”

Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Vice-Chancellor, University of London and Chair, Concordat Strategy Group
 Announcement of 10 UK universities maintaining the award after external review, January 2015

1.3. The **Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)**, describing the competencies of successful researchers, underpins the professional development of researchers at all levels within UK institutions. It is now well-embedded in the UK HE sector, with the majority of UK institutions and 100% of Russell Group universities referencing the RDF on their websites. The Vitae RDF Planner, and associated resources, is used by over 13,000 researchers at 84 institutions in the UK, Europe, Australia, Africa and Japan, with requests to translate the RDF into Japanese, French, Danish and Arabic.

“The RDF provides a strong basis for the delivery of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the QAA Quality Code for research degree programmes.”

Professor April McMahon, Vice-Chancellor,
 Aberystwyth University

“The RDF Planner captures activities that I would otherwise forget. I trust [the RDF] as a guide to the skills I need”

RDF Planner user



³ Vitae, Progress in implementing the Concordat principles, 2014. www.vitae.ac.uk/news/progress-in-implementing-the-concordat-principles

⁴ www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/hr-excellence-in-research

1.4. The Every Researcher Counts (ERC) programme⁵, recommended in the RCUK Expectations for Equality and Diversity⁶, provides resources to support good equality and diversity practice in the research environment alongside other initiatives including Athena Swan. **Actions for All: ten key actions for institutions to improve equality and diversity for research staff** was the result of four conferences (involving over 250 participants representing a cross section of interest from HR equality specialists, researcher developers, academics and PIs, and research staff), and consultations during six train-the-trainer events (involving 90 participants from 50 institutions gaining experience of the ERC development resources for principal investigators and research leaders).

“The information from the event was so useful and some of the more practical ‘tips’ will be very useful in our action plan. I will also be introducing the use of the Every Researcher Counts resources.”

Participant from Equality and Diversity conference in Scotland



1.5. A Vitae ‘Focus on’ campaign, including a Google hangout on equality and diversity in research careers along with a resource for research staff (Section 2), and updated **Premia web resources** for disabled researchers provide a comprehensive set of ERC resources, encompassing all protected characteristics.

“It has influenced my thinking about LGBT+ work that my institution is undertaking. I am in the process of establishing links between the Equality and Diversity team and the Research Staff Reps that didn't exist before.”

Participant from Every Researcher Counts Train-the-Trainer event

In relation to doctoral training, Vitae, as a member of the **QAA postgraduate advisory group**, contributed to the revision of the Qualification Characteristics statement for doctoral degrees to bring them in line with the UK Quality Code⁷.

1.6. The Vitae ‘Open Space’ event on the recruitment and professional development of doctoral researchers addressed the challenges of ensuring an equality of opportunity to professional development provision for all in light of the changing structures for doctoral education, such as doctoral training centres.

“[The event] gave us great ideas for supervisor training, which is something we were thinking of setting up next semester.”

Participant from Doctoral Training Open Space event

1.7. ‘Understanding the recruitment and selection of postgraduate researchers by English higher education institutions’ was a research study for the Higher Education

⁵ www.vitae.ac.uk/erc

⁶ www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/skills/EqualityStatement.pdf

⁷ QAA, Doctoral degree characteristics, publication forthcoming at www.qaa.ac.uk

Funding Council for England (HEFCE) by CRAC and Vitae, supported by the University of Derby. It explores why and how institutions recruit and select postgraduate researchers, and how that activity relates to institutions' strategic research objectives and the funding landscape⁸.

1.8. The Annual Vitae Researcher Development International Conference 2014

was the largest dedicated event that brought together all those with a strategic and practical role in developing researchers, attracting over 350 participants and providing a choice of over 40 workshops and plenary sessions. The conference addressed the strategic and practical implications of policy developments relating to doctoral education and research staff development, building institutional capacity for researchers' professional development, demonstrating the value of researcher development, and the professional and career development of research staff. The HEFCE funded project undertaken by CRAC 'Understanding the recruitment and selection of postgraduate researchers by English HE institutions' was launched along with the research 'International comparisons in postgraduate provision'. The conference sponsored the UK 3 Minute Thesis competition which took place before dinner with an RCUK sponsored prize of £3,000 for the winner.



2. Enhance higher education provision to train and develop researchers

2.1. A web-based **Review of the landscape of research staff provision** revealed that 63% of UK institutions have public information on professional development for research staff, rising to 92% of Russell Group institutions. Where this provision was visible, almost half of all institutions have mapped their research staff provision to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), compared with around 75% of Russell Group institutions mapping provision for doctoral researchers.

The research staff provision at research intensive universities was compared with the training and development undertaken by CROS 2013 respondents. Research staff were most likely to have undertaken training in funding and budget management, research and project management, and research skills and techniques, corresponding with the finding that more than two-thirds of institutions have visible provision in these areas. Provision of public engagement and knowledge transfer training appears to be less well established, with less than 50% of institutions providing public engagement training and only 30% providing knowledge exchange training. 50% of research staff expressed interest in developing in these two areas.

All new Vitae resources for research staff are mapped to the RDF. The **Knowledge Exchange** and **Independent Researcher** lenses complement the **Public Engagement lens** on the RDF, and there are also comprehensive Vitae resources for public engagement. The resources developed for principal investigators enable them to encourage research staff to undertake professional development, aligned to the RDF, and promote equality and diversity

⁸ www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2014/pgrrecruitment/

in the research environment. New resources on the Vitae website support research staff to track professional development using the RDF. CROS 2015 continues to inform priorities and progress in research staff development.

2.2. A dedicated section of the Vitae website signposts principal investigators and research leaders to new resources⁹ to help them support the career development of their research staff: New tools to facilitate **career conversations with research staff** which can be customised by institutions to signpost local resources, **discipline-specific briefings on career destinations** to illustrate the diversity of researcher career paths, **PIs Talking** video interviews with principal investigators and research leaders to share good practice and management of research staff, and a leaflet with a checklist and guidance on **internships** for PIs.

“I have used the [Vitae] resources to develop a programme that currently supports over 150 new and experienced supervisors and PIs. This training is starting to have an impact demonstrated in improved student satisfaction (PRES data) and completion rates (local data).”

Judith Williams, Senior Lecturer and Head of Academic and Researcher Development,
University of Manchester

2.3. Research Staff Futures is a comprehensive suite of programmes that builds institutional capacity to develop research staff, comprising four programmes that map to key stages in research staff careers: **Enhancing Professional Effectiveness; Introducing Impact and Engagement; Progressing Your Academic Career; and Managing Your Career**. Having engaged in ‘train the trainer’ pilots, involving 180 research staff participants and 50 research staff developers as observers, 53 UK institutions are now able to deliver these programmes.

“The experience of the course was fundamental to my being able to shift my approach and to structure impact and engagement issues into the very way I think about the research.”

Participant from Introducing Impact and Engagement pilot



“I was successful in securing a lectureship recently... I know the course played a significant part in this”

Participant from Enhancing Professional Effectiveness

“The course isolated key issues about what was important in choice of a career.”

“The course has helped me to clarify my direction and future goals.”

Participants from Managing Your Career

2.4. A thorough review of institutional provision and the leadership needs of research staff led to the development of two new programmes: **Preparing for Leadership** targets research staff who are not yet independent researchers. Pilots were heavily oversubscribed and had to be extended. One hundred and seventeen research staff and 30 research staff developers, as observers, participated. **First Time Academic Leadership**, is a more specialised programme for early career principal investigators, available for institutions to target to specific groups and tailored to their specific needs.

⁹ www.vitae.ac.uk/pi

“The training improved my confidence to take a leadership role in the future.”

“Homework was interesting – I would’ve never picked up a leadership book and also I learnt a lot about myself from the road map.”

Participants from Preparing for Leadership pilot

2.5. Dissemination of new research staff

development programmes took place through 60 events across the UK regions to share practice and consider policy implementation. Vitae Hubs facilitated 55 collaborative events, 12 pilot programmes, 15 train-the-trainer and taster sessions, and countless other exchanges of expertise and resources.

Since 2008, Vitae Hubs have contributed to building institutional capacity at a regional level with over 500 individual researcher developers from across the UK participating in over 200 training and capability building events. Regional networks and working groups established through Vitae membership will continue to provide the sector opportunities to interact and share practice.



2.6. Across the UK and elsewhere, there is now an established professional community of researcher developers who have responsibility for researcher development as all or part of their roles. Vitae is committed to the professional practice and career development of those working to support the development of researchers and has developed the Vitae **Career Framework for Researcher Developers (CFRD)** along with a dedicated section of the website¹⁰ to support these professionals in their own career planning. One hundred and thirty-eight UK researcher developers were involved in its development and validation. **Vitae Connections** is an established annual programme to provide CPD workshops, which have been attended by over 230 researcher development professionals at different stages in their careers.

“It was a very good – very useful day. The allocation of mentors was very welcome. The session on workshop planning was particularly helpful as it was something I’d been struggling with.”

Connections 1: Getting to grips with the job participant

“Researcher developers who have been working in the field for some time are reaching a point where they are looking for how to develop themselves and their role further when there are no more senior roles to aspire to. Events that address this by looking at leadership, promotions and opportunities for development (e.g. research) are all areas of interest for established researcher developers.”

Connections 2: Horizon scanning participant

3. Empower researchers to make an impact in their careers

3.1. Encouraging researchers to take responsibility for their career development is enshrined in the Concordat to Support the Careers Development of Researchers. The Professional Development Planning for Researchers Online Course (**PDP ROC**) is a new structured online course taking research staff through a professional development planning process

¹⁰ www.vitae.ac.uk/cfrd

linked to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. This programme aims to encourage research staff to take up opportunities provided by their institutions.

3.2. Achieving your best as research staff: Preparing for professional development conversations, developed as part of the Every Researcher Counts programme, is a new resource for research staff preparing for appraisal and review conversations. It leads research staff through a needs analysis, action planning, and relevant resources with the aim of increasing the quality of the review and improving outcomes for both the researcher and manager.

3.3. Vitae has published **40 career stories** of research staff who have moved to a wide range of other occupations across Europe. These stories were derived from the online survey, 'What do research staff do next?' which received over 1,771 responses from research staff who had left academia¹¹.

"It's a great initiative. I think it's important to tell a more informed and nuanced story of how and why researchers leave academia: it does not have to be due to lack of options or as a sign of defeat."

'What do research staff do next?' survey respondent

3.4. The annual **Vitae Research Staff Conference** took its theme, 'recognition and value of researchers,' from the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and was attended by 100 participants, the majority involved in research staff associations.

"I left [the conference] feeling inspired... I now have more tools to help me with my professional development. It made me realise that everyone is in the same boat and that there are people (i.e. Vitae) who are working to support and promote us."

Participants from Vitae Research Staff Conference 2014

3.5. Vitae supports and advises the **UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA)** to expand its reach into local institutional staff networks by creating and nurturing regional staff association networks, resulting in a stronger voice for research staff across the UK.

3.6. Are you thinking of doctoral research? is a new section of the Vitae website commissioned by HEFCE and RCUK specifically to support the decision-making of those considering doing a doctorate in the UK¹².

¹¹ www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrsdn WDRSDN partners include Vitae, Naturejobs, Science Europe, LERU, Research Council of Norway, Research Councils UK, Wellcome Trust, Royal Academy of Engineering, British Academy, UK Research Staff Association, AGCAS, National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, UKSPA, Institute of Physics, and the British Library

¹² www.vitae.ac.uk/thinkingofaPhD

3.7. Vitae hosted the first **UK final of the 3 Minute Thesis (@3MT)** where six finalists competed for a £3,000 prize to use on a public engagement project, sponsored by RCUK. Over 30 institutions participated in the semi-final hosted by the University of York.



4. Evidence the impact of professional and career development support for researchers

4.1. The new online **Vitae Researcher Development Evaluation Toolkit**¹³ provides resources for researcher developers and policy and decision-makers, to benchmark and evaluate their provision including templates, case studies, papers, presentations, and links. It includes:

- The Impact Framework, establishing a clear and robust focus for evaluation of activities
- Step-by-step approach to planning an evaluation
- Evaluation templates and case studies for each of the impact levels
- Recent publications on successful evaluation studies
- Useful links for further information

'Focus on': Increasing researchers' engagement with Vitae resources

Vitae 'Focus on' campaigns target researchers and staff, guiding researchers to Vitae's on-line resources on specific themes. Each 'Focus on' is accompanied by an online video Vitae Hangout, a live Q&A session with a group of expert panellists. The Vitae Hangout recordings have been viewed over 3,000 times. Themes included Enterprise, Starting your PhD, Career Transitions, Moving on and up for research staff, and Every Researcher Counts.

4.2. Vitae manages the **Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS)** and the **Principal Investigators' and Research Leaders' Survey (PIRLS)**, to provide institutions with critical benchmarking data on researchers' experiences. In 2013, 68 institutions participated in **CROS** and 49 in **PIRLS**. In 2014, Vitae consulted with the sector to revise the surveys in preparation for 2015.



4.3. 'What do research staff do next?' (WDRSDN) has added to the body of knowledge about researchers' career paths in the UK through Vitae's 'What do researchers do?' series of publications. WDRSDN explores, for the first time, the challenges and opportunities for research staff who move from research staff roles to other occupations, including how research staff make this transition and what advice they would give to other researchers.

4.4. **Vitae in the news** records the media interest in Vitae expertise and knowledge of researcher development internationally, with 35 articles published in the press during the last

¹³ www.vitae.ac.uk/evaluation

year. These can be found in our 'About Vitae' section of the website, along with our representation on key committees in the UK and internationally.

Vitae membership: the platform for the professional development of researchers

Following a period of intense consultation and planning, Vitae introduced organisational membership on 1 January 2015. As of March 2015, over 130 UK institutions have taken up Vitae membership, and the numbers continue to grow in the UK and internationally. Organisational membership extends across the whole organisation to include all those interested in the development of researchers and researchers themselves. Building upon Vitae's past successes and strengths, organisational membership adds value at all levels within an institution with benefits for:

- Senior managers
 - Policy updates and analysis
 - Research on career trends
 - Research and publications on impact
- Researcher developers
 - Practice sharing and professional development via events and the online Vitae Member Community
 - High quality resources to enhance professional practice
 - Researcher development training resources
- PIs/academics and supervisors
 - Targeted resources for supporting researchers
 - Information on careers and destinations of researchers
 - Research into their views, experiences, and best practice
- Doctoral researchers and research staff
 - Online careers and development resources
 - Training courses and events
 - Professional development planning tools
- Prospective researchers
 - Advice on doing doctoral degrees
 - Resources for getting started in research



Vitae membership includes:

- **Vitae Member Community**¹⁴: an online community for members to network, share practice, and collaborate
- **Membership directory**: every user within a member organisation can complete a profile and publish it to a searchable membership directory. The directory is an excellent tool to showcase the diverse talents and experiences of members

¹⁴ www.vitae.ac.uk/community

“Being a Vitae member helps position us as a leading organisation in researcher development and contributes to keeping us abreast of innovations and best practice.”

Prof David Bogle, Head of the Graduate School, University College London

Vitae is providing new membership categories, including:

- **Affiliate membership:** for organisations who don't employ researchers, but who have a stake in researcher development, including funding bodies, professional bodies, and government agencies
- **Associate membership:** for individuals who offer services related to researcher development and are not employed by a higher education institution (HEI)
- **Individual researcher membership:** for researchers based at non-member institutions

The new **Vitae website** supporting membership was launched in March 2014 with new and refreshed content, improved search and navigation, accessibility on portable devices, and members-only content. Vitae's position as a top online destination for researcher development information has been retained with **13,600 registrations** at the end of March 2015 and over **1.4 million hits** over the year. The top ten institutions accessing the website are all Russell Group universities, whilst users are based in 215 different countries.

Building capacity around the globe: Vitae's international work

Vitae is recognised globally as a leader in the world-class professional development of researchers and increasingly provides consultancy on capacity building for universities, funders, and government agencies; participates in collaborative projects; and delivers a wide range of training programmes.

Institutional strengthening and capacity building

Vitae is working with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) on a five-year institutional strengthening programme for a group of 29 Sub-Saharan African universities from nine countries as part of the **Climate Impact Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa (CIRCLE)** programme¹⁵.



“An extremely useful workshop. The skills and knowledge I have acquired will improve the institutionalisation of mentoring in my institution.”

CIRCLE workshop participant

For researchers working at the **MRC Unit in The Gambia**, Vitae, in conjunction with the University of Manchester, designed and delivered a six-month researcher development programme. The project aimed to deliver a sustainable and affordable programme enabling

¹⁵ www.acu.ac.uk/focus-areas/early-careers/circle/

researchers to enhance their outputs and empowering them to take control of their personal and career development in a strategic manner utilising the RDF.

Vitae delivers an annual programme of events to researchers sponsored by **the Barrié Foundation, Spain**, including GRADschools and Leadership in Action. Vitae trained local practitioners to deliver the programmes through a train the trainer event, as well as providing a professional development master class for supervisors. Vitae has delivered a master class programme for health faculties from two universities in **Denmark and Norway** to explore commonalities in their researcher development utilising the RDF. Vitae has also developed a master class programme for Danish graduate school administrators and delivered training courses for postgraduate researchers.



Developing researchers

Vitae has delivered a variety of courses in Europe and North America, including Creativity in Research, Introduction to the RDF and Professional Development, Impact, Entrepreneurship, and Preparing for Careers Outside Academia. During 2014, Vitae has also delivered several training events on public engagement and project management for a research funding agency, **NFP, Poland**. During 2014, Vitae was included on 14 applications for Marie Skłodowska-Curie ITNs to provide professional development training, access to the RDF Planner, and other development opportunities.

“It was eye-opening, the principles taught were practical and as a young researcher will enable me to maximise my potential and build a stronger career.”

Participant from the Creative Researcher workshop, Belgium

European collaborative projects

Meeting the career development needs of researchers in Europe is one aim of several European Commission funded projects of which Vitae is part, including ImpactE, which focuses on developing tools to assist internationally mobile researchers to make the cultural and social transitions to work successfully in a new research environment¹⁶.

European professional development framework for researchers

Vitae is a partner in the British Council-led European Commission funded project: ‘Policy into Practice: EURAXESS Researcher Career Skills for Career Development’ (**PIPERS**), which will develop a European professional development framework for researchers to enable the EURAXESS network to support the career development of mobile and non-mobile researchers.

The competencies of doctoral researchers in Croatia

Two complementary studies by CRAC/Vitae for a European-funded project, for the University of Zagreb and partners, explored current Croatian doctoral researchers’ skills

¹⁶ www.impacte.eu/

competencies and Croatian employers' needs. The outputs informed the guidelines and framework for modernising doctoral education in Croatia.¹⁷

Vitae leading to the future

Researcher development has been a core activity for CRAC since the 1960s, and Vitae has an established world-leading position in developing researchers. Moving forward to a sustainable future, Vitae retains the CRAC core values of being knowledgeable, innovative and collaborative and will continue to work across our five strands of successful researcher development:

- Influencing strategy and informing policy
- Strengthening institutional provision and quality
- Supporting researcher developers in their professional practice and development
- Inspiring researchers to realise their full potential
- Evidencing the impact of researchers and researcher development

Driving forward innovation and addressing new challenges in developing researchers, our approach will inspire evidence-based professional development for researchers to achieve world-class research, innovation and impact, and successful careers in all employment sectors. We remain committed to the professional development of doctoral researchers, research staff, and those who develop researchers, and seek to encourage more research into the professional practice and impact of researcher development.

Vitae's activities will build a sustainable future through:

- Providing a valued membership offer
- Extending Vitae membership and activities in the UK and internationally
- Continuing our focus on professional development planning, the RDF Planner, development resources, high quality training, and conferences/events, including the Vitae Annual Researcher Development International Conference
- Addressing UK-level researcher development coordination relating to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the HR Excellence in Research Award
- Strengthening our work in Europe and capacity building in the rest of world

¹⁷ MODOC, 'Doctoral education for transferable skills in Croatia: Guidelines for further development.'
http://uzdoc.eu/sites/default/files/guidelines_croatia.pdf



Vitae, is an international programme led and managed by CRAC, a not-for-profit registered UK charity dedicated to active career learning and development. Working in the UK since 1968, when we ran our first project to support transitions of doctoral researchers to industry, Vitae has great expertise at enhancing the skills and career impact of researchers locally, within a global context.

We work in partnership with UK and international higher education institutions, research organisations, funders, and national bodies to meet society's need for high-level skills and innovation.

Vitae aims:

- **Influence effective policy** development and implementation relating to researcher development to build human capital
- **Enhance higher education** provision to train and develop researchers
- **Empower researchers** to make an impact in their careers
- **Evidence the impact** of professional and career development for researchers

Vitae and its membership programme is led and managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation.

Further information on our activities with HEIs, researchers and employers may be found on this website, www.vitae.ac.uk

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