



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD

Vitae and supporting postgraduate
researchers' personal and career
development

Dr Janet Metcalfe, Vitae

www.vitae.ac.uk

Vitae is supported by Research Councils UK (RCUK),
managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation
and delivered in partnership with regional Hub host universities

ellen.pearce@vitae.ac.uk

Support for postgraduate researchers



- ✔ The changing environment
- ✔ Vitae programme
- ✔ Impact and evaluation
- ✔ Next steps

A changing landscape



- ✔ SET for Success, Roberts (2002) and implementation (2003)
- ✔ UK GRAD Programme (2003)
- ✔ Science and Innovation Framework (2004-14) - building research capacity
- ✔ QAA Code of Practice for RDPs (2004)
- ✔ RCUK Research Careers and Diversity Unit established (2005)
- ✔ Leitch (2006) - high level skills - economic contribution
- ✔ Warry Report (2006) economic impact of research and researchers
- ✔ Council of Science and Technology (2007) - framework for researcher careers
- ✔ Innovation Nation (2008) - unlocking the talents of all
- ✔ European Council for Doctoral Education established (2008)
- ✔ HE Debate: Thrift and Wellings reports (2008) - sustainability of Roberts
- ✔ The UK's Competitive Advantage (2008) - market for international researchers
- ✔ Redefining the doctorate (2008)
- ✔ Vitae (2008)

SET for Success

‘PhDs do not prepare people adequately for careers in business or
academia

- *in particular, there is insufficient access to training in interpersonal and communication skills, management and commercial awareness’*

‘...the training elements of a PhD – particularly training in transferable skills – need to be strengthened considerably’

...using the annual [Roberts] reporting...regarding the application and impact of skills development:

- evaluating the impact of skills development
- entrepreneurship/enterprise skills
- skills that help and enable outreach and public dialogue
- skills that foster the better use of research outputs in policy making

A changing landscape



“The product that the PhD researcher creates is not the thesis – vital though that is to their subject area through the creation of original knowledge – no, the product of their study is the development of themselves”

Sir Gareth Roberts

A changing landscape



“The importance of sustainable and attractive research careers is critical in a world where the UK cannot compete on cost, [but] must raise our game on skills, training and knowledge”

Rt Hon John Denham MP
Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Research Careers and Diversity Unit Strategy, RCUK



“RCUK investment in attracting, training and managing the next generation of world-class researchers will make a major contribution to the quantity, quality and impact of research to the benefit of UK society and the economy”

- ✔ Attract the most creative minds into research
- ✔ Encourage researchers to get the training they need
- ✔ Help research organisations manage their staff and develop their careers
- ✔ Encourage people from all groups in society to take up research careers
- ✔ Enhance the international reputation of UK research training

About Vitae



- ✔ Vitae is about professional development and careers for doctoral researchers and research staff
- ✔ Vitae builds on the work of the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD (ReSDAG)
- ✔ Vitae aims to raise the profile of researchers and their contributions to society
- ✔ Vitae will achieve its aims primarily by working with universities
- ✔ Vitae also works with researchers, employers and other stakeholders

Vision and aims

For the UK to be world-class in supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers

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

Vitae activities



- ✔ UK network of regional Hubs: newsletters, events and local activities
- ✔ National networks, communities of practice
- ✔ National activities: conference, policy forum, policy development
- ✔ Vitae website: postgraduate researchers & research staff sections; careers section, practice sharing databases
- ✔ Publications: GRADBritain, PGR Tips, PhD planner, Balanced Researcher, overVIEW
- ✔ National provision and practice: national provision, training and career development materials
- ✔ Research and development: careers, evidence building, Rugby Team

National networks

- ✔ Postgraduate researchers
- ✔ Research staff
- ✔ HE staff supporting researchers
- ✔ Policymakers and those interested in policy
- ✔ Supervisors and principal investigators
- ✔ Non-HE employers

Provision and practice

✔ National provision

- GRADschools, including local GRADschool support
- Effective Researcher
- Careers in Focus
- supporting part-time researchers
- Broadening Horizons

✔ Activities linked with the Research Councils

✔ Community of practice support

- Trainers and developers database
- Training and career development resources

✔ Innovation unit

Research and development unit



- ✔ Building the evidence base
- ✔ Researching effective practice
- ✔ Sharing and enhancing approaches to evaluation
- ✔ Understanding the needs of researchers
- ✔ Researcher development framework
- ✔ Identifying researchers' career paths
- ✔ Understanding non-employers' views
- ✔ Working with the Rugby Team

Rugby Team



- ✔ Researcher development impact and evaluation group
- ✔ Mission is ‘to *propose meaningful and workable ways of evaluating skills development in early career researchers*’
- ✔ Sector working group with national stakeholder membership:
 - HEFCE, NPC, QAA, RCUK, SHEFC, UK GRAD, UKCGE, UUK, UKHERD, NRSA, AGCAS, HEA
- ✔ Purpose is to:
 - be aware of ‘the big picture’ and help the sector keep in focus the main drivers of change
 - prioritise its efforts to influence the development and coherence of various national evaluation initiatives to best meet the needs of the sector
 - act as a sounding board for Vitae R&D activities

Building the evidence base



▣ Improving our knowledge of doctoral graduate careers

- What do researchers do? series
- Recruiting PhDs: What works?
- Employers' views of researchers' skills (Rugby Team)
- RCUK longitudinal study
- Career profiles project

▣ Assessing progress

- PRES (postgraduate research experience) (HE Academy) [CROS]
- STaRSS project: supervisors' views (Rugby Team)
- Redefining the doctorate (HE Academy)
- QAA Code of Practice, audit and consultation
- HEFCE qualification rates, trends and profiles studies

▣ Evaluating skills development

- Roberts reporting (RCUK)
- Database of practice (UK GRAD)
- Impact framework (Rugby Team)

“How exactly does a PhD impact on the economy?”

HM Treasury



- ✔ Longitudinal studies of careers and inter-sectoral mobility
- ✔ Skills for employability
 - entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, broader technical skills (e.g. quantitative methods), applying research in policymaking
- ✔ Skills for interdisciplinary working
- ✔ Influencing career flows and public perceptions
 - attractiveness of research careers, outreach to schools, public engagement

2009 themes

- ✔ Sustainability of the Roberts' agenda
- ✔ Research and development activities
- ✔ 'Researcher development framework'
- ✔ Innovations in careers and skills development for researchers
- ✔ Concordat implementation process and benchmarking

Next steps for PGR

- ✓ **HE Debate: DIUS postgraduate researcher policy**
 - supply and demand
 - critical mass, concentration and collaboration
- ✓ **Sustainability of the Roberts' agenda**
- ✓ **Building the evidence base**
 - demonstrating impact
 - understanding researchers; careers
- ✓ **Redefining the doctorate**
 - national postgraduate policy and researcher funding
 - role of graduate schools
 - status of professional doctorates
 - nature of 'doctorateness'; pedagogy and assessment
 - international standing of the UK doctorate