



ESF MOF, November 2011

Initial findings of feasibility study to assess the applicability across Europe of a generic framework for the professional development of researchers based on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework

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

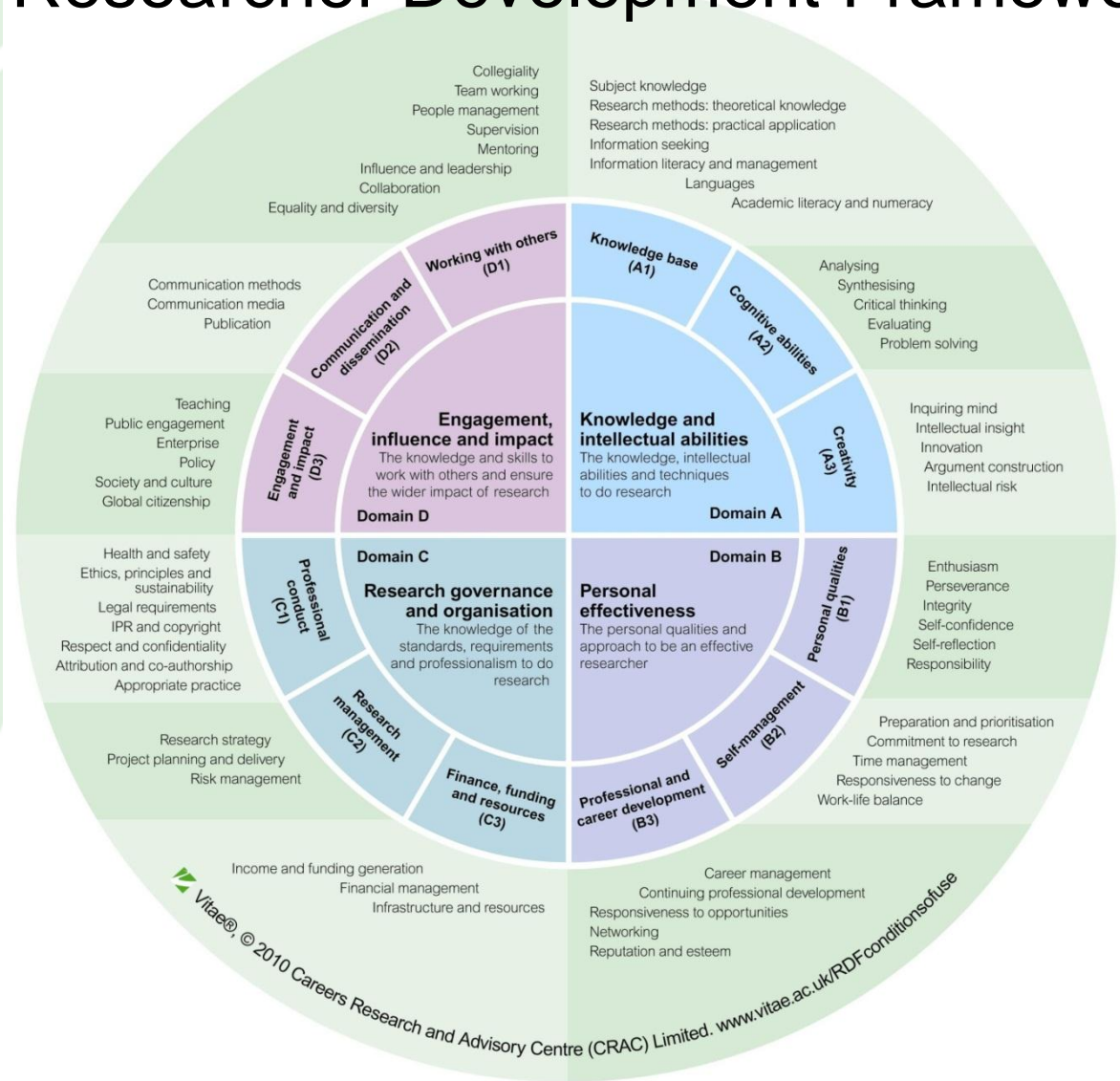
---

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

# RDF feasibility project

- ✔ Methodology
- ✔ Review of content
- ✔ Professional development tool
- ✔ Other messages
- ✔ Conclusions
- ✔ Draft recommendations

# Researcher Development Framework



- Framework of the knowledge, behaviour and attributes of successful researchers
- Enables self-assessment of strengths and areas for further development
- Common language for researchers capabilities

# Methodology

- ✔ Six focus groups in six countries
  - ✔ Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway
- ✔ Standard process:
  - ✔ Individual use of the RDF
  - ✔ semi-structured focus groups
  - ✔ range of researchers by disciplines/experience
  - ✔ feedback on overall content of the RDF and value of professional development planner
- ✔ Analysis of focus group responses
- ✔ Presentation of initial findings to ESF MOF
- ✔ Preparation of report and recommendations

# Review of content (1)

## ✔ First impressions

- ✔ complicated / overwhelming
- ✔ intriguing

## ✔ Second impressions

- ✔ very positive
- ✔ common framework, consistent language can enhance mobility
- ✔ presents researcher as a profession
- ✔ trade-off of complexity compared to flexibility of use
- ✔ 'I can recognise myself'
- ✔ how do I assess where I am?

## ✔ Most reviewed all descriptors

# Review of content (2)

- ✔ Domain A: knowledge and intellectual attributes
  - ✔ need higher levels of academic literacy
  - ✔ researchers require 2/3 languages
  - ✔ is curiosity/openness to new ideas stressed enough?
- ✔ Domain B: personal effectiveness
  - ✔ good list 'easy to understand'
  - ✔ resilience needs stressing 'response to constant failure'
  - ✔ not able to have work-life balance

# Review of content (3)

- ✔ Domain C: research governance and organisation
  - ✔ international project management needs more emphasis
  - ✔ reference European legislation
- ✔ Domain D: engagement, influence and impact
  - ✔ terminology: engagement, corporate, astute
  - ✔ do researchers need to communicate?
  - ✔ 'Citizenship' too abstract a concept
  - ✔ differences between mentoring and supervision

# Overall review of content

- ✔ General agreement on overall content
- ✔ No consensus on any changes
- ✔ Individual preferences for small changes / additions / deletions
- ✔ Individual preferences for presentational changes, moving descriptors to other Domains
- ✔ Need for more comprehensive glossary, more FAQs



# Value of RDF PDP (1)

- ✔ Works for different approaches: big picture or detail
- ✔ Aspirational: *'PhD is more than knowledge management'*
- ✔ Good to structure thoughts
- ✔ Engagement influenced by personal preference / experience:
- ✔ Useful to do with others, talk through with supervisor
- ✔ Useful to go through with researcher, select areas to focus on

# Value of RDF PDP (2)

- ❑ Too advanced for some early career researchers: introduce 'aspiring to phase one'
- ❑ Include negative statements
- ❑ General enough to use outside higher education
- ❑ Most developed long term action plans, up to 10 years

# Value of RDF PDP (3)

- ✔ More guidance and resources needed
- ✔ Why is it structured this way; are all the domains the same?
- ✔ How to start; what to focus on?
- ✔ What is an action plan?
- ✔ What is a [SMART] objective?
- ✔ How to evidence expertise and competence; how to be objective?
- ✔ Value of 360 degree feedback
- ✔ Screencast helpful; break into sections, provide script
- ✔ More examples of case studies, action plans
- ✔ Links to online resources and courses

# Other messages

- ✔ Powerful vehicle for wider discussions:
  - ✔ Concept of academic career; collegiality
  - ✔ Concept of continuing professional development
  - ✔ Researchers' responsibilities to communicate widely
  - ✔ Research integrity, professional conduct
  - ✔ Equality and diversity in research careers
  - ✔ Enterprise, innovation and IPR in research
- ✔ Value of transferability to other HEIs, sectors
- ✔ Concept of career management, within closed research systems
- ✔ Need for local support structures for researchers
- ✔ How does RDF link/map to European Charter?

# Conclusions

- ✔ Overall very positive response to the RDF
  - ✔ further clarity through better glossary and explanations
  - ✔ important to facilitate initial engagement
  - ✔ individual preferences on engagement
- ✔ Different levels of readiness in different HEIs/countries
  - ✔ concept of career development
  - ✔ culture of appraisal, review and self evaluation
  - ✔ local provision of development opportunities
- ✔ Value of European wide framework
  - ✔ support implementation of the Charter and Code
  - ✔ concept of European researcher; common language
  - ✔ Portability: geographical and inter-sectoral mobility
  - ✔ economies of scale; not reinventing wheels

# Draft recommendations Europe



- ✔ Develop a pan-European web-based interactive RDF
- ✔ Develop additional FAQs, resources and guidance for a European audience
- ✔ Map and link existing European resources against the RDF
- ✔ Integrate with Charter and Code / Euraxess
- ✔ Provide (subscription) access to European researchers
- ✔ Initially target institutions with HR Excellence in Research award

# Draft recommendations Funders



- ✔ Use the RDF to review professional development requirements for funded researchers and national provision
- ✔ Consider licensing the RDF at a national level
- ✔ Provide access to funded researchers
- ✔ Link from the RDF through to national provision

# Draft recommendations Institutions

- ✔ Use the RDF to review professional development provision within the institution
- ✔ Consider licensing the RDF at an institutional level and providing access to researchers
- ✔ Link from the RDF through to institutional and national provision
- ✔ Integrate the RDF into institutional review processes for researchers



# Draft recommendations Researchers

- ✔ Use the RDF to assess your capabilities and expertise as a researcher
- ✔ Use the RDF to set realistic achievable career goals
- ✔ Reflect on the broader aspects of being a researcher
- ✔ Use the RDF to articulate your expertise to others
- ✔ Validate / benchmark yourself against other researchers