Introduction to the Researcher Development Framework

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework is a guide to your development as a researcher, helping you to identify the strengths you already have and to prioritise areas to work on with your personal and career development in mind.

Using the Researcher Development Framework

The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) can help you decide priorities for your professional development, informing discussions with your principal investigator or research manager or for you to think through on your own. It helps you to consider the skills and experiences that will improve your career prospects and articulate your capabilities to future employers.

I think it’s really useful, and I do think that it’s beneficial for people to spend time at fairly regular intervals thinking about their development.

It made me realise that there are loads of areas where I could try and develop myself, and if I had the time I could spend every day on a relevant training course.

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The RDF is made up of:

- Characteristics, expressed in the framework as descriptors, encompassing the knowledge, intellectual abilities, techniques and professional standards needed to do research, as well as the personal qualities, knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research:
Three to five phases for each descriptor, describing stages of development, e.g.

You are not expected to reach Phase 5 for everything! The phases are there to help you think about the next step and whether or not it is one that you wish to take, so if the higher phases seem daunting just look at the next step up from where you are and focus on that; or alternatively reflect on whether that area is something you even want to improve.

I found it useful to see what employers think would be an ideal person with the ideal skill set to do the job.

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Whilst the RDF outlines the characteristics of successful researchers, it isn’t only aimed at those who want to become professors or have their own labs. The framework can help you think about what you’re interested in and what you’re not to help you decide your next step, inside or outside academia. Even if you want to move to a career that’s not research it can help you to articulate the skills you have gained from being a researcher and help you think about which of those are transferable to other careers.

The way it was framed – ‘what’s your ideal thing to do after this?’ – it just helped me structure my thoughts in a better way.

It’s putting into words what I might not have thought I could do. If you asked me to put down my skill set, it’d probably just be a list of two or three words for each thing, whereas this is quite nice to actually look at and think ‘whereabouts am I?’.

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You can download the RDF from Vitae’s website

http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/430901-291181/Researcher-Development-Framework-RDF.html

If you identify areas you’d like to develop but aren’t sure where you can find training or support, the Support for Researchers webpage has a wide range of links that can point you in the right direction: www.ox.ac.uk/supportforresearchers

If you have any questions or comments about the RDF or any other aspect of your career and professional development as a researcher, please contact Dr Laura Hodsdon: laura.hodsdon@learning.ox.ac.uk. To receive regular updates on training, workshops, events, and funding for research staff, sign up to the Research Staff Mailing List by sending a blank email to researchstaff-subscribe@mailist.ox.ac.uk.