You can use the RDF in whatever way works for you. The graphic with the division into domains and sub-domains gives a big picture overview, which will help you appreciate all the different facets that make up a successful researcher. On closer study, the RDF provides a comprehensive framework to describe your attributes and skills. The detail in the phases of the descriptors give you the language to articulate the skills you are developing and ideas on how to develop them even further. Working with the RDF will be an enjoyable journey of discovery that will guide you through your doctorate and beyond.

The RDF can be used not only to help you plan for your long term career ambitions but also to make a feasible short term plan.

You will find the RDF on the inside of this leaflet. For the purpose of this publication we have focused on those areas of the RDF which are useful to explore in the first few months of your doctoral research. We call it 'a lens' on the RDF. This particular lens highlights the knowledge, behaviours and attributes required to start out in research and to begin developing as a researcher.

How to use the 'Getting started in research lens'

You may wish to use this lens to:

- consider the knowledge, behaviours and attributes essential to a successful start in doctoral research
- select areas where you may need to develop in order to become an effective researcher
- develop self-awareness by considering which areas you're most interested in
- inform progress and professional development reviews with your supervisory team
- start collecting evidence of the transferability of your knowledge, behaviours and attributes for your CV and job applications
- prepare an action plan for developing your research and your career.

> "I wish now that as a doctoral researcher I had given more thought to what I was doing to build my career. I would encourage anyone undertaking a doctorate now to be proactive: think about what is really important to you."
>
> Participant in the Vitae Effective Researcher programme

To protect and maintain the integrity of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and the Researcher Development Statement (RDS)[1] and to ensure a consistent approach to the development of lenses on the RDF, anyone wishing to create a lens on the RDF should seek permission from Vitae, and must adhere to the RDF conditions of use[2]. Enquiries regarding the development of a lens on the RDF can be directed to rdf@vitae.ac.uk

For further information about the range of Vitae activities go to www.vitae.ac.uk or contact website@vitae.ac.uk

If you are employed in a staff suport capacity and your institution is a Vitae member organisation, you may also request a press version[3] of this file.

[1] www.vitae.ac.uk/rds
[2] www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfconditionsofuse
[3] www.vitae.ac.uk/get-press-files

Focus through a lens

Now look overleaf and choose one 'Getting started' descriptor that you will devote special attention to every week or month for the first year of your doctorate. You could do this at random or you can answer the suggested 'starter questions' on the RDF graphic overleaf. Your answers will depend on your academic and professional experience and the requirements of your research project.

Once you have chosen your descriptor, create an action plan for how you are going to develop in that area. Remember that your objectives need to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound). Regularly review and record your progress. You can subscribe to the Vitae RDF Planner to record your achievements.

Register on our website using your institutional email address and visit www.vitae.ac.uk/inductions-routemap for more professional development tips for new researchers!

Register on our site using your institutional email address to access content
www.vitae.ac.uk/membership/register

Find out about getting started in research at
www.vitae.ac.uk/gettingstartedlens
including an interactive version of the 'Getting started in research lens' with more information about the descriptors.

For further information about the RDF visit
www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf

Intro course to professional development
www.vitae.ac.uk/pdproc

To find out about the Vitae RDF Planner visit
www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner

Browse our changing themes, find links to #vitaehangout recordings at
www.vitae.ac.uk/focus-on

Getting started

> "The PhD is MY project and I am the driving force"
>
> Participant in the Vitae Effective Researcher programme

Congratulations on starting your doctorate and embarking on the journey towards the highest level of degree that can be achieved! Starting a PhD can seem daunting, but taking a professional approach to your development from the start can help make the path smoother, and enable you to be a more successful researcher in the long run. It will also enable you to use the experience effectively as a stepping stone to a range of careers.

The right mindset

As a researcher you are already committed to enquiry through your research. Professional development extends this process to your own capabilities, understanding, aptitudes and ambitions.

Competition for posts and use of short-term contracts mean that researchers, along with other professionals, have to be flexible and adaptable about what they can do. Taking responsibility for your own professional development can help you to get the most of all, the opportunities offered to you, whether in or outside academia

Developing as a researcher

During your research you will push the boundary of current knowledge, gradually becoming an expert in your field. It's important to recognise that through doing your research you will begin to develop a unique set of high-level capabilities including:

- the knowledge, abilities and techniques to do your research
- the personal qualities and approach to be effective in your career
- the standards, requirements and professionalism of the research community
- the skills you need to work with others and to contribute to the wider impact of research.

Development as a professional researcher involves more than building your research skills and profile. Successful researchers engage in continuous professional development to ensure they are always learning and improving.

> "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

Know yourself

In order to engage effectively with your career planning, it's important to expand your self-awareness. Knowing what you are good at and how to enhance your strengths to improve further will enable you to make more informed choices about opportunities that come your way and allow you to truly maximise your potential. You can improve your self-awareness by:

- taking stock of your capabilities and expertise now, at the start of your doctorate. This will help you appreciate what foundation you already have and what to prioritise developing
- being aware and keeping track of the skills and competencies you are gaining as you progress through your doctorate
- identifying skills you would like to develop and taking opportunities to develop them
- understanding what you enjoy and don't enjoy to help you choose the most satisfying career path after you finish your doctorate.

How do I start planning my professional development?

Vitae asked leading academics what makes a successful researcher. Their answers informed the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and Statement (RDS), which has been endorsed by all UK universities, Research Councils and other research funders. You can use the RDF to guide you in your professional development as a researcher and set aspirational goals to excel in your career.

Depicted as a circle (see figure overleaf), the RDF is divided into four domains, 12 subdomains and 63 descriptors, each of which is described by up to five phases of development, which you can explore using our online Vitae RDF Planner...

Getting started in research
A lens on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework

vitae realising the potential of researchers | **Researcher Development Framework**

How can I support my colleagues and how can they help me?

Behaviour:
- Actively work in an inclusive, respectful and constructive way with colleagues, stakeholders and research users
- Recognise and acknowledge the contribution of others and own part in team success
- Build relationships in academic and commercial contexts; approachable and interact constructively with others; manages expectations and resolve conflict

Attitude:
- Respect the inclusive and collegial manner in which researchers conduct relationships within and beyond academia
- Respect individual difference and diversity

What can I do to practise my communication skills?

Knowledge of:
- Appropriate communication and dissemination mechanisms for different audiences

Behaviour:
- Communicate effectively in both written and oral modes with a range of audiences formally and informally through a variety of different techniques and media

How might my research make a difference?

Attitude:
- Recognise the importance of accountability of research with regard to social and economic impacts, internationalisation and global citizenship

What are the ethical issues relevant to my research?

Knowledge of:
- Health and safety issues, confidentiality and ethical requirements of his/her research field

What can I do to manage my research project better?

Knowledge of:
- Project management tools and techniques

Click on highlighted descriptors for more advice and guidance!

What do I need to know to make a start in my research?

Knowledge of:
- The area of research, the advances within it and its relationships with other research areas
- Sources of information, bibliographic software and other information technologies

Behaviour:
- Conduct effective and comprehensive information searches
- Record, manage and handle information/data using appropriate bibliographic software and other information technologies

How am I going to critically analyse the literature in my field?

Behaviour:
- Think originally, independently and critically; develop theoretical concepts
- Recognise and validate problems; formulate and apply solutions to a range of research problems

Where can I get new ideas from that could benefit my research?

Attitude:
- Take a creative, imaginative and inquiring approach to research
- Be open to new sources of ideas

What can I do to reflect on my current skills?

Attitude:
- Approach research with enthusiasm, passion and confidence
- Be self-reflective; seek ways to improve performance and strive for research excellence
- Be pro-active, independent, self-reliant and take responsibility for self and others

How could I plan my time more effectively?

Behaviour:
- Plan, prioritise and conduct research in proactive way
- Deliver research projects and results on time and effectively

What opportunities can I take to improve and develop myself?

Behaviour:
- Take ownership of and manage professional development
- Actively network for professional and career purposes and seek to enhance research reputation and esteem

Central diagram

Domain D — Engagement, influence and impact
The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research.

- Working with others (D1)
  - Collegiality
  - **Team working**
  - People management
  - Supervision
  - Mentoring
  - Influence and leadership
  - Collaboration
  - Equality and diversity
- Communication and dissemination (D2)
  - **Communication methods**
  - Communication media
  - Publication
- Engagement and impact (D3)
  - Teaching
  - Public engagement
  - Enterprise
  - Policy
  - **Society and culture**
  - Global citizenship

Domain A — Knowledge and intellectual abilities
The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research.

- Knowledge base (A1)
  - **Subject knowledge**
  - Research methods: theoretical knowledge
  - Research methods: practical application
  - **Information seeking**
  - Information literacy and management
- Cognitive abilities (A2)
  - Analysing
  - Synthesising
  - **Critical thinking**
  - Evaluating
  - **Problem solving**
- Creativity (A3)
  - **Inquiring mind**
  - Intellectual insight
  - Innovation
  - Argument construction
  - Intellectual risk

Domain C — Research governance and organisation
The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research.

- Professional conduct (C1)
  - **Health and safety**
  - **Ethics, principles and sustainability**
  - Legal requirements
  - IPR and copyright
  - Respect and confidentiality
  - Attribution and co-authorship
  - Appropriate practice
- Research management (C2)
  - Research strategy
  - **Project planning and delivery**
  - Risk management
- Finance, funding and resources (C3)
  - Income and funding generation
  - Financial management
  - Infrastructure and resources

Domain B — Personal effectiveness
The personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher.

- Personal qualities (B1)
  - **Enthusiasm**
  - Perseverance
  - Integrity
  - **Self-confidence**
  - **Self-reflection**
  - Responsibility
- Self-management (B2)
  - **Preparation and prioritisation**
  - Commitment to research
  - **Time management**
  - Responsiveness to change
  - Work-life balance
- Professional and career development (B3)
  - Career management
  - **Continuing professional development**
  - Responsiveness to opportunities
  - Networking
  - Reputation and esteem