

Research Staff Professional Development Guidance

This document outlines professional development guidance and expectations for research staff. It is intended as a guide for researchers and their managers to assist in discussion and planning of professional development activities.

The [University's Staff Development Policy](#) is the overarching policy that outlines training and development expectations for all staff members of the University.

This Research Staff professional development guidance provides specific additional information about the nature of development that would be appropriate for University of Sussex research-only staff. In line with other UK HEIs and policy recommendations of UK and EU funders, a minimum of 5 working days for professional development is recommended for research staff.

1. Professional Development Expectations

- 1.1 In accordance with the [UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#); it is a University expectation that research staff engage in development opportunities that will be of significant value for their professional and career development.
- 1.2 The nature and level of professional development undertaken annually will vary depending on the career stage, development needs and career aspirations of the individual researcher in addition to the demands of the research work for which the individual has been employed.
- 1.3 The University expects that every researcher should spend a **minimum of five working days** per year engaged in activities relating to their professional development. A record of professional development activity undertaken forms a component of the annual [research staff appraisal process](#).
- 1.4 **Researchers** should be proactive in identifying their professional development needs and discussing their requirements with their manager via regular review meetings and the [research staff appraisal process](#). Research staff are encouraged to seek opportunities to develop both research skills as well as broader transferable skills, both of which are important for careers within and outside academia.
- 1.5 It is an expectation that **Principal Investigators and Research Staff Managers** should actively encourage their research staff to undertake professional development activities. Researcher professional development objectives should be discussed and agreed between the researcher and their manager at the beginning of a research contract (see [start of contract discussion guidance](#)) and as a key component of the annual [research staff appraisal process](#).
- 1.6 **The University** provides a variety professional development opportunities for research staff as outlined in (Section 3). Depending on the development needs of the researcher it may also be appropriate to undertake external professional development opportunities.
- 1.7 Professional development need not be limited to attendance at workshops and courses. There are a wide variety of activities that researchers can undertake to develop their research and transferable skills. Examples of development activities for researchers are given in Section 2.
- 1.8 **All Parties** are encouraged to be innovative, flexible and responsive when considering support for researcher career development. It is important to look beyond the immediate needs of the research project to consider what other development opportunities may be beneficial.



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2. Examples of professional development activities for researchers

Professional development needs can be met through a wide range of activities. These might include (but are not limited to):

- Skills workshops and courses (e.g. those organised by the Research Staff Office or other providers see section 3 below)
- Discipline specific training e.g. departmental seminars, journal clubs, away days, training on specific methods or analysis
- Receiving Mentoring and/or coaching
- Participation or organisation of seminar programmes
- Networking and collaborating with other disciplines or institutions
- Involvement in peer review
- Involvement in grant applications
- Consultancy or commercialisation of research
- Undertaking teaching and lecturing
- Regular discussions and feedback with peers and supervisors
- Prepare and discuss a personal research plan
- Supervising/mentoring junior colleagues or students
- Writing a blog or research communication articles (e.g. the Conversation)
- Conference participation or organisation
- Secondment or placement with another organisation or research group
- Job shadowing/visits to potential employers
- Engagement with public engagement or widening participation
- Involvement with Departmental, School or University Committees
- Attending careers fairs or having one to one careers guidance



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3. University support for research staff professional development

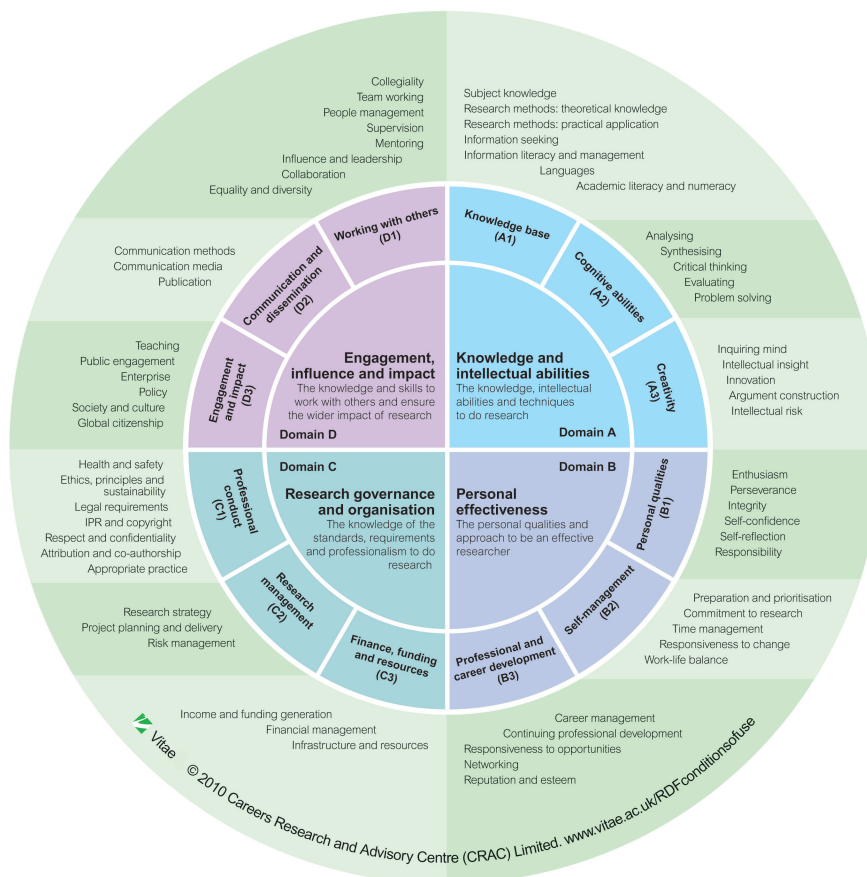
The [Research Staff Office](#) coordinates University professional development opportunities tailored specifically for research staff. There are also a variety of other units around the University offering professional development opportunities:

- Research Staff Webpages (including Research Staff Office) – Hub of information for research staff and those supporting researchers:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/researchstaff>
- Research Staff Development Series – Tailored development workshops and events for research staff: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/rsds>
- 1:1 Coaching sessions for Research Staff – Confidential and impartial coaching by qualified development coach on any aspect of professional/personal development:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/researchstaff/coachingandmentoring>
- Research Staff Representatives – Opportunities for researchers to influence University policy and get involved with University committees:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/researchstaff/representingresearchers/researchstaffaffreps>
- Staff Development Unit – training and development courses open to all University staff members: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/>
- Researcher Development Programme – Development workshops and online courses targeted at doctoral researchers and open to all early career researchers:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/doctorschool/internal/researcherdev/>
- Academic Development and Quality Enhancement – Support and training for Teaching and Learning including ‘Starting to Teach’ and PGCertHE courses:
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/>
- Careers and Employability Centre – Offers 1:1 careers advice and online careers resources for research staff: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/aboutus/researchstaff>
- Library Research Support – 1:1 resource awareness sessions, open access information, online resources and workshops for researchers -
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/library/research>
- Research Professional – Online database for funding opportunities, tailored searches and email alerts: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/funding/researchprofessional>
- University Widening Participation – opportunities for outreach and engagement with students considering University: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/aboutus/teachers/wp/staff/>
- Vitae – The University of Sussex is a member of Vitae, the national organisation supporting the career development of researchers. Vitae provide training, information and resources for researchers and research managers on all aspects of researcher career development: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/> (Some content will require you to register with your UoS email account).

4. The Researcher Development Framework

The [Vitae Researcher Development Framework \(RDF\)](#) summarises the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of effective and highly skilled researchers in a useful format. The RDF is structured into four domains, which encompass what researchers need to know:

- to do research
- to be effective in their approach to research
- to be effective when working with others
- to be effective in contributing to the wider environment



The Researcher Development Framework is useful for:

- aiding self-reflection and to set yourself goals
- choosing the most appropriate formal and informal development opportunities provided by your institution and looking for development opportunities outside of your research
- preparing for one-to-one progress reviews, appraisals and career development conversations with your principal investigator, research manager or mentor
- considering how your skills and experiences will enhance your career prospects
- highlighting, articulating and evidencing the transferability of your skills in your CV, in job applications and at interviews.