

# Make the most of your doctorate

What you do during your doctorate will impact your future professional career. It is important to review your career direction regularly. Even if you feel clear about what you want to do, you can benefit from thinking about how to achieve your aims and also considering what alternatives are available.

Whether your doctorate is part of a clear career strategy, a way to change direction or simply an interesting opportunity, you can use it to enhance employability. During your doctorate you will have the opportunity to undertake a range of activities that will help you develop high level skills and experience and enable you to explore possible career paths.

Think about how you are going to network, raise your profile online, gain work-experience in fields or sectors of interest and expand your range of skills and experience through additional activities.

Find Vitae resources that could help you.

## Register on our site using your institutional email address.

If your organisation is a Vitae member we will recognise you and you will be able to access our full range of online resources.

- **Vitae PDP ROC** Introduction to professional development: new online course for researchers at any career stage. Explore ways of organising evidence, select and prioritise areas for development and plan professional development goals. [www.vitae.ac.uk/pdproc](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/pdproc)
- **The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)** can help you identify areas for development. [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfresearchers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfresearchers) - Start using the RDF with our 'Getting Started in Research Lens': [www.vitae.ac.uk/gettingstartedlens](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/gettingstartedlens)
- **'What do researchers do?'** provide a wide range of case studies and employment data of doctoral graduates: [www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd)
- **Online #vitaehangout for researchers** Recordings of online Q&As with expert panelists on a variety of topics, from 'Making a successful start in your PhD' to 'Starting your own business' [www.vitae.ac.uk/hangouts](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/hangouts)
- **Careers section** provides information on managing your career, CVs, funding and career stories for academic and non-academic paths [www.vitae.ac.uk/careers](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/careers)
- **Researcher Bulletin** Sign up to updates on professional development by ticking 'yes' on web registration [www.vitae.ac.uk/membership/register](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/membership/register)
- **Vitae RDF Planner** a great follow-up to the PDP ROC this application will help you identify strengths, action plan, review achievements and create a portfolio of evidence. Available through organisational and individual subscription [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)

If you are employed in a staff support capacity and your institution is a Vitae member organisation, you may also request a press version<sup>2</sup> of this file.

Schedule for Success – Planning your doctorate was originally inspired by and adapted from The PhD Calendar, School of Graduate Studies at The University of Melbourne, developed by Stella Clark (School of Graduate Studies) and Richard James (Centre for the Study of Higher Education) (2002).

Vitae and its membership programme is led and managed by CRAC: The Career Development Organisation

# Schedule for Success

## Plan your doctorate and develop your career

### your doctorate

- could include:**
- Decide on training needs using the Professional Development Planner
  - Training
  - Begin data collection
  - First year report
  - Seminars/conferences
  - Family, work or other commitments
  - Your own milestones

### Midway through your doctorate

- Milestones could include:**
- Meetings with careers advisor to explore career options
  - Meetings with your supervisor(s)
  - Assess research results and what needs doing
  - Keep writing chapters/reports
  - Present your research at seminars or conferences
  - Family, work or other commitments
  - Your own milestones

### chedule for your year: Please use the box

Week 1 check time of meeting with supervisor	Week 2	Week 3 Plan seminar presentation	Week 4
Week 5	Week 6	Week 7 Submit Report	Week 8
Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12
Week 13	Week 14	Week 15	Week 16
Week 17	Week 18	Week 19	Week 20
Week 21	Week 22	Week 23	Week 24
Week 25	Week 26	Week 27	Week 28

### The creative researcher

Tools and techniques to unleash your creativity



### The balanced researcher

Strategies for busy researchers



### The enterprising researcher

Create, recognise and seize opportunities



Enterprise Educators uk

Anne Goodman, Alison Mitchell, Jennie Videler and...

## Starting your doctorate

You are now starting your doctorate. We hope you will enjoy this unique period in your life. Comprehensive planning in the early months of your doctorate will set the stage for successful and timely completion. Together with your supervisors, why not work out interim goals and note these on the reverse of this Schedule for Success?

The experience and challenges of doing your doctorate will depend on your route into it. What skills and research thinking have you gathered from other jobs, careers and previous qualifications? During your doctorate you will use and build on previous experience. More advice at [www.vitae.ac.uk/startingadoctorate](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/startingadoctorate) and [www.vitae.ac.uk/inductions-routemap](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/inductions-routemap)

## Further into your doctorate

As you progress into your doctorate, the tasks and milestones you set yourself will be different from those you set in your first year. You may want to block out time for writing, whether this is for your thesis or other writing. Breaking down large writing tasks into smaller chunks (such as chapters or even paragraphs) may make the task feel more achievable. Note deadlines on your Schedule for Success. Set aside time to plan for your future professional career and what you need to do towards achieving it. More on [www.vitae.ac.uk/prof-development](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/prof-development)

## The Vitae Researcher Development Framework

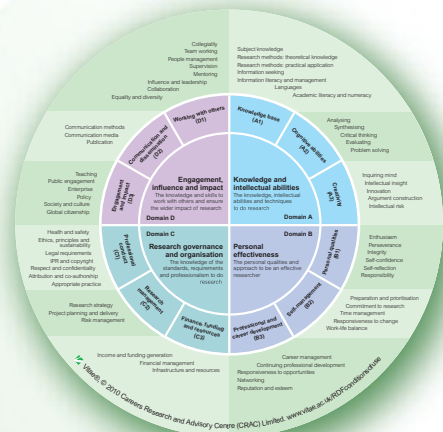
The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) has been designed to guide you in your professional development as a researcher. It encourages you to set aspirational goals to become a successful researcher during your doctorate and beyond.

The RDF was developed through interviews with successful researchers in a range of disciplines. It encourages you to identify your strengths and identify and prioritise professional development goals. It enables you to consider skills and experiences that will enhance your career prospects and articulate your knowledge, behaviours and attributes to employers.

The RDF consists of four domains, 12 subdomains and 63 descriptors, each of which is described by up to five phases of development. It is designed to be applicable to all researchers, from those just beginning their research through to world leading experts, so do not be put off by the higher 'phases'. Phase 1 is what you might aspire to during your doctorate and you will probably find that in some areas you already match or exceed this. Get advice from supervisors and peers about which descriptors to concentrate on or use the RDF with our 'Getting Started in Research Lens'.

The Researcher Development Framework will be useful to decide where to concentrate your developmental efforts, building on your strengths to become a well-rounded, effective and successful researcher.

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



See the full graphic overleaf

## How to use this schedule

The purpose of this schedule is to help you record (and stick to) the decisions you have made about managing your doctorate. Block out time for writing and experiments or data gathering, seminars and conferences but also record personal milestones. Work through our 'Balanced Researcher' booklet and use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to support you through cycles of planning, doing, reviewing and revising.

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

# The Vitae RDF Planner

Scheduling for success involves not just planning for your doctoral studies but also planning your professional and career development. Research has shown that people who reflect on, and are more aware of their abilities, reach higher levels of achievement.<sup>1</sup> The RDF has been designed to help you with this process. You could also try our online app, the RDF Planner. It can help you identify areas for professional development, create an action plan and record evidence of your progress. Use it to help you plan for your long term career ambitions but also to make a feasible short term plan. You could share your action plan with your supervisors, staff developers or careers advisors. Record the deadlines for your actions (and block out time for them) on your schedule overleaf.

For more information see [www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/rdfplanner)

You can access the Planner through an institutional or a personal subscription.

## Supervisory and other supportive relationships and institutional provision

The relationship with your supervisors is key to the success of your doctorate. They can be your biggest allies so manage this relationship professionally. Schedule and prepare for regular supervisory meetings with a clear agenda for each. Supervisors' styles vary so it is important to talk about what you both expect. All doctoral researchers are expected to be proactive, independent and assertive. Even so, if you need support be willing to ask for it. It is best to deal with any problems as they arise.

See 'Supervision and key relationships' on the Vitae website for further information and advice:

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

Your supervisor is only one of your sources of support. You should aim to build a wider network around your doctoral project. Your network could include other postgraduate researchers, research staff, technicians, librarians, trainers, advisors and career staff.

Make yourself familiar with your institution's requirements for doctoral conduct and completion. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education QAA assures standards and improves the quality of UK higher education: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Find out about institutional provision for postgraduate researchers and where to get support such as pastoral care, training and development opportunities and careers advice.

To complement the support available from your institution Vitae has many resources for postgraduate researchers, including:

- **Doing a doctorate** Advice to help you through at different stages  
[www.vitae.ac.uk/doingadoctorate](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/doingadoctorate)
- **Routemap for new researchers** will help you find the Vitae resources most relevant to you  
[www.vitae.ac.uk/inductions-routemap](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/inductions-routemap)
- **Focus on...** Browse our changing themes, find links to online #vitaehangout recordings or join forthcoming online events: [www.vitae.ac.uk/focus-on](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/focus-on)
- **Vitae researcher booklets** provide practical and relevant information on topics including time management, creativity, enterprise and leadership [www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcherbooklets)
- **Resources for disabled researchers:** Advice for you if you have a disability or work with someone who does [www.vitae.ac.uk/disability](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/disability)
- **Doing a part-time doctorate?** See other researchers talking about their experiences [www.vitae.ac.uk/PTfilms](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/PTfilms) and find quick tips - one in our quick tips series! [www.vitae.ac.uk/PTtips](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/PTtips)

<sup>1</sup> Hartnell-Young, E., Harrison, C., Crook, C., Davies, L., Fisher, T., Pemberton, R. & Smallwood, A. (2007). The Impact of ePortfolios on Learning. Coventry: British Educational Communications Technology Agency. [http://partners.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=rh&catcode=\\_re\\_rp\\_02&rid=14007](http://partners.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=rh&catcode=_re_rp_02&rid=14007)

## Starting your doctorate

### Milestones could include:

- Induction(s)
- Meetings with your supervisor(s)
- Agree supervision process with your supervisor(s)
- Write a research plan
- Define methodology
- Start/complete literature review
- Begin data collection
- Identify immediate development needs
- Training
- First year report
- Seminars/conferences
- Other commitments eg. family, work...
- Your own milestones

## Midway through your doctorate

### Milestones could include:

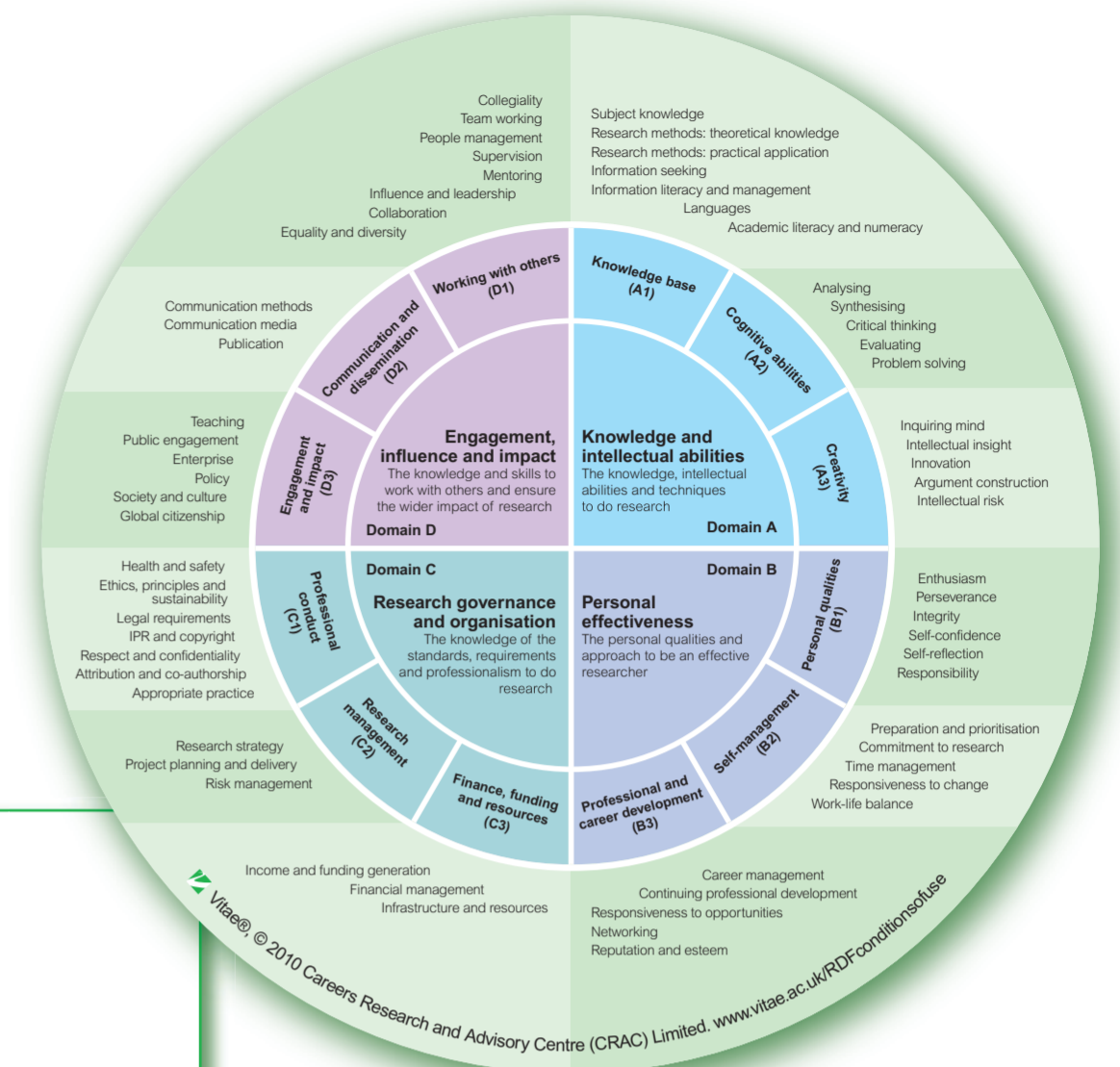
- Meetings with your supervisor(s)
- Training
- Assess research results and adapt your plan
- Writing: chapters/reports
- Present your research at seminars or conferences
- Meetings with careers advisor to explore career options
- Review your training needs using the Vitae RDF Planner
- Your own milestones

## Completing your doctorate

### Milestones could include:

- Finish data collection
- Draw up a plan to break down writing into manageable pieces
- Completion of chapters or sections and review by supervisor(s)
- First complete draft of your thesis
- Write up your research as a paper/book chapter
- Apply for jobs or funding and update your CV
- Submit your thesis!
- Viva practice
- Your own milestones

Use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to identify your strengths and development opportunities.



## Schedule for your year: Use the boxes to record targets and milestones

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7			
Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14	Week 15	Week 16	
Week 17	Week 18	Week 19	Week 20	Week 21	Week 22	Week 23	Week 24	Week 25	
Week 26	Week 27	Week 28	Week 29	Week 30	Week 31	Week 32	Week 33	Week 34	
Week 35	Week 36	Week 37	Week 38	Week 39	Week 40	Week 41	Week 42	Week 43	
Week 44	Week 45	Week 46	Week 47	Week 48	Week 49	Week 50	Week 51	Week 52	