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Queen Mary Academy

Researcher Development

**Skills Assessment and Personal Development Plan**

Name

Year of Study – FT/PT Date

All full-time PhD students at Queen Mary are expected to take part in two weeks of transferable skills training activities per academic year. This assessment form allows PhD researchers to assess their confidence in a variety of skills and, in turn, create an action plan for their development at different stages of their PhD.

The form is based on the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework) which is structured into four domains covering the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of researchers. The descriptions below are taken from Phase 1 of the RDF and reflect the skills that PhD researchers should demonstrate at this early stage in their career.

**Instructions:**

* Step 1: Rate your current skill level for each description from 1 (not at all strong) to 5 (very strong).[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Step 2: Together with your supervisor or review panel, decide on the urgency of developing each skill:
	+ Tick ‘Current’ if you need to develop this skill in the next 6 months.
	+ Tick ‘Future’ if it is a skill you need to develop at a later stage of your PhD.
	+ Tick ‘N/A’ if the description is not relevant to you or feel that your current skill level suffices for the time being.
* Step 3: Create an action plan (last page) for your ‘Current’ development needs. Tips:
	+ Be realistic! Don’t overestimate how much you can achieve in a few months.
	+ Make sure you set SMART objectives (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, **T**ime-bound).

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact Dr Fryni Panayidou, Researcher Development Adviser (PGR).

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| **Domain A: Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities** |

**This domain contains the knowledge and intellectual abilities needed to be able to carry out excellent research.**

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| **A1** | **Knowledge Base** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Subject knowledge**
 | Has, at least, core knowledge and basic understanding of key concepts, issues, and history of thought. |  |  |  |  |
| Knows of recent advances within own research area and in related areas. |  |  |  |  |
| Is working towards making an original contribution to knowledge. |  |  |  |  |
| Is developing a broader awareness of international and non-academic aspects of knowledge creation. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Research Methods – Theoretical Knowledge**
 | Understands relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application within own research area. |  |  |  |  |
| Justifies the principles and experimental techniques used in own research. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Research Methods – Practical Application**
 | Uses a range of research methods linked to study area; documents own activity. |  |  |  |  |
| Shows growing competence in own subject area and is developing awareness of alternative methods and analysis techniques. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Information Seeking**
 | Acquires and develops search and discovery skills and techniques. |  |  |  |  |
| Identifies and accesses appropriate bibliographical resources, archives, and other sources of relevant information including web-based resources, primary sources and repositories. |  |  |  |  |
| Makes best use of a range of current tools and techniques. |  |  |  |  |
| Assesses the reliability, reputation, currency, authority and relevance of sources. |  |  |  |  |
| Seeks feedback from relevant groups to access other insights. |  |  |  |  |

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| **A1** | **Knowledge Base** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Information Literacy and Management**
 | Designs and executes systems for the acquisition and collation of information using information technology appropriately (e.g. word processing, spreadsheets, simulation systems, databases).  |  |  |  |  |
| Develops awareness of information/data security and longevity issues. |  |  |  |  |
| Knows where to obtain expert advice, i.e. information/data managers, archivists and librarians. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Languages**
 | Has excellent knowledge of language(s) appropriate for research, including technical language. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Academic Literacy and Numeracy**
 | Ability to understand, interpret, create, and communicate appropriately within an academic context. |  |  |  |  |
| Prepares grammatically and syntactically correct content for presentations. |  |  |  |  |
| Writes in a style appropriate to purpose and context for specialist and non-specialist audiences. |  |  |  |  |
| Is mathematically competent to undertake research in own research area; understands and applies any statistics that may be used in own research area; analyses data and uses appropriate computer packages. |  |  |  |  |
| Is IT literate and competent in using information and digital technology. |  |  |  |  |

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| **A2** | **Cognitive Abilities** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Analysing**
 | Critically analyses and evaluates own findings and those of others. |  |  |  |  |
| Validates datasets of others. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Synthesising**
 | Sees connections between own research and previous studies; benefits from guidance with synthesising information/data and ideas |  |  |  |  |

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| **A2** | **Cognitive Abilities** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Critical Thinking**
 | Able to understand argument (oral and textual) and articulate own assumptions; developing independent and critical thinking. |  |  |  |  |
| Has the ability to recognise and validate problems. |  |  |  |  |
| Recognises multiple ways of knowing and alternative paradigms. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Evaluating**
 | Summarises, documents, reports and reflects on progress. |  |  |  |  |
| Evaluates the impact and outcomes of own research activities. |  |  |  |  |
| Assesses the quality, integrity and authenticity of primary and secondary research information/data. |  |  |  |  |
| Accepts and gives constructive criticism. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Problem Solving**
 | Isolates basic themes of own research; formulates basic research questions and hypotheses. |  |  |  |  |

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| **A3** | **Creativity** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Inquiring Mind**
 | Demonstrates a willingness and ability to learn and acquire knowledge. |  |  |  |  |
| Demonstrates flexibility and open-mindedness. |  |  |  |  |
| Develops a style of questioning and questioning technique. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Intellectual Insight**
 | Absorbs and appropriates ideas; is intellectually astute. |  |  |  |  |
| Creates ideas and opportunities by investigating/seeking information. |  |  |  |  |
| **A3** | **Creativity** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Innovation**
 | Understands the role of innovation and creativity in research. |  |  |  |  |
| May engage in inter-disciplinary research. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Argument Construction**
 | Constructively defends research outcomes. |  |  |  |  |
| Provides some evidence in support of ideas. |  |  |  |  |
| Structures arguments clearly and concisely. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Intellectual Risk**
 | Tests the boundaries, is willing to expose ideas to a critical audience, and to critically appraise other research. |  |  |  |  |

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| **Domain B: Personal effectiveness**  |

**This domain contains the knowledge and intellectual abilities needed to be able to carry out excellent research.**

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| **B1** | **Personal Qualities** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Enthusiasm**
 | Maintains enthusiasm and motivation for own research. |  |  |  |  |
| Recognises the need for passion and pride in own work. |  |  |  |  |
| Is highly motivated even when work is mundane. |  |  |  |  |

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| **B1** | **Personal Qualities** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Perseverance**
 | Demonstrates self-discipline, motivation and thoroughness. |  |  |  |  |
| Perseveres in the face of obstacles and set-backs but benefits from peer, supervisor or leader support. Is developing some resilience. |  |  |  |  |
| Deals effectively with the routine aspects of research. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Integrity**
 | Understands and demonstrates standards of good research practice in the institution and/or research area. |  |  |  |  |
| Seeks guidance as necessary. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Self-Confidence**
 | Aware of some personal abilities and willing to demonstrate them. |  |  |  |  |
| Recognises boundaries of own knowledge, skills and expertise and draws on and uses sources of support as appropriate. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Self-Reflection**
 | Makes time to reflect on practice and experience. |  |  |  |  |
| Develops strengths and improves on weak areas. |  |  |  |  |
| Seeks personal feedback. |  |  |  |  |
| Learns from mistakes. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Responsibility**
 | Gradually takes complete responsibility for own project and own well-being; develops independence. |  |  |  |  |

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| **B2** | **Self-management** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Preparation and Prioritisation**
 | Prepares and plans project to meet objectives and, with support, is able to adapt if necessary. |  |  |  |  |
| **B2** | **Self-management** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Commitment to Research**
 | Commits to and completes first project and establishes research credentials. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Time Management**
 | Manages own time effectively to complete research project; adheres to clear plan. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Responsiveness to Change**
 | Adapts approach when required to; seeks guidance and recognises risks. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Work-Life Balance**
 | Is developing an awareness of work-life balance issues. |  |  |  |  |
| Uses support and advisory resources when necessary to avoid undue pressure and to enhance personal well-being. |  |  |  |  |
| Considers the needs of others. |  |  |  |  |

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| **B3** | **Professional and Career Development** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Career Management**
 | Takes ownership for and manages own career progression, sets realistic and achievable career goals, identifies and develops ways to improve employability. |  |  |  |  |
| Presents own skills, personal attributes, and experiences through effective CVs, applications, and interviews. |  |  |  |  |
| Begins to establish a career network. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Continuing Professional Development**
 | Demonstrates self-awareness and the ability to identify own development needs. |  |  |  |  |
| Appreciates the need for and shows commitment to continuing professional development. |  |  |  |  |
| Recognises transferability of own experience and articulates this to potential employers or line managers. |  |  |  |  |
| Develops and maintains own records of achievement and experience. |  |  |  |  |

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| **B3** | **Professional and Career Development** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Responsiveness to Opportunities**
 | Demonstrates an insight into the transferable nature of research skills to other work environments and the range of career opportunities within and outside academia. |  |  |  |  |
| Understands and takes advantage of a broad range of employment and professional development opportunities within and outside academia, including work experience and internships. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Networking**
 | Develops and maintains co-operative networks and working relationships with supervisors, colleagues, and peers within the institution and the wider research community |  |  |  |  |
| Uses personal and/or online networks effectively for feedback, advice, critical appraisal of work and for responding to opportunities |  |  |  |  |
| Engages with learned societies and public bodies. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Reputation and Esteem**
 | Speaks with authority on own topic. |  |  |  |  |
| Begins to be known as a good researcher. |  |  |  |  |

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| **Domain C: Research governance and organisation**  |

**This domain contains the knowledge of the standards, requirements and professional conduct that are needed for the effective management of research.**

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| **C1** | **Professional Conduct** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Health and Safety**
 | Understands relevant health and safety issues and demonstrates responsible working practices. |  |  |  |  |
| Takes responsibility for own space; aware of impact on others and wider environment. |  |  |  |  |

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| **C1** | **Professional Conduct** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Ethics, Principles, and Sustainability**
 | Understands and applies the relevant codes of conduct and guidelines for the ethical conduct of research; seeks advice from supervisor. |  |  |  |  |
| Demonstrates awareness of issues relating to the rights of other researchers, of research subjects, and of others who may be affected by the research. |  |  |  |  |
| Is mindful of own impact on the environment. Understands how to behave and work in a sustainable way. |  |  |  |  |
| Understands the concept of corporate social responsibility; seeks guidance as necessary. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Legal Requirements**
 | Has basic understanding of legal requirements surrounding research – e.g., Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act, Equality Act, and equivalent legislation in other parts of the UK |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **IPR and Copyright**
 | Has basic understanding of data ownership rules as they apply to own research. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Respect and Confidentiality**
 | Within own research respects the right of participants to confidentiality and anonymity. |  |  |  |  |
| Respects colleagues. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Attribution and Co-Authorship**
 | Understands concept of attribution and applies it consistently and fairly to appropriately recognise contributions and co-authorship. Seeks advice on local codes of conduct. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Appropriate Practice**
 | Understands and adheres to the rules and regulations concerning academic malpractice in the institution in which based and of professional body and funder, if appropriate. |  |  |  |  |

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| **C2** | **Research Management** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Research Strategy**
 | Aware of how own research aligns with the research strategy of the institution and strategic focus of the discipline/research area. |  |  |  |  |
| Develops understanding of broader context of research. |  |  |  |  |

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| **C2** | **Research Management** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Project Planning and Delivery**
 | Applies effective project management through the setting of research goals, intermediate milestones, and prioritisation of activities. |  |  |  |  |
| Acts on decisions agreed with supervisor/line manager and delivers results. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Risk Management**
 | Makes basic risk assessment and is able to manage risks in own project with support. |  |  |  |  |
| Aware of risks in virtual environments and when using interactive communication technologies. |  |  |  |  |

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| **C3** | **Finance, Funding and Resources** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Income and Funding Generation**
 | Understands the processes for funding and evaluation of research. |  |  |  |  |
| Writes own research proposal. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Financial Management**
 | Understands the basic principles of financial management. |  |  |  |  |
| Has some commercial awareness. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Infrastructure and Resources**
 | Makes efficient use of available resources. |  |  |  |  |
| Knows immediate academic system/work environment, departmental or faculty. |  |  |  |  |

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| **Domain D: Engagement, Influence and Impact** |

**This domain contains the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to engage with, influence and impact on the academic, social, cultural and economic context.**

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| **D1** | **Working with Others** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Collegiality**
 | Shows consideration to others. |  |  |  |  |
| Listens, gives, and receives feedback and responds perceptively to others. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Team Working**
 | Understand own behaviours and impact on others when working in and contributing to the success of formal and informal teams. |  |  |  |  |
| Appreciates contributions of other team members including non-academic members. Thanks people for their contributions. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **People Management**
 | Negotiates activities and deadlines with supervisor/line manager. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Supervision**
 | Engages in peer support and evaluation and undergraduate support and assessment. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Mentoring**
 | Effectively supports the learning of others when involved in teaching, mentoring, demonstrating or other research activities. |  |  |  |  |
| Recognises the importance of mentorship and receiving mentoring. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Influence and Leadership**
 | Engages in debate and invites challenge. |  |  |  |  |
| Develops awareness of need to gain support. |  |  |  |  |
| Recognises implications of own research for real life contexts. |  |  |  |  |
| Learns of the value to academia of engaging in dialogue with those who use the outputs of research to achieve influence and impact |  |  |  |  |

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| **D1** | **Working with Others** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Collaboration**
 | Aware of the value of working collaboratively to benefit research and for maximising the potential for impact. |  |  |  |  |
| Co-produces research outputs with supervisors/research leaders. |  |  |  |  |
| Recognises common/conflicting interests within own and adjacent disciplines/research areas. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Equality and Diversity**
 | Is sensitive to and respectful of individual differences. Develops awareness of diversity and difference within working environment. |  |  |  |  |
| Understands equality and diversity requirements of institution. |  |  |  |  |

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| **D2** | **Communication and Dissemination** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Communication Methods**
 | Constructs coherent arguments and articulates ideas clearly to a range of audiences, formally and informally, through a variety of techniques. |  |  |  |  |
| Actively engages in knowledge exchange and debate with colleagues, sometimes between disciplines/research areas |  |  |  |  |
| Appreciates the skills of rhetoric. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Communication Media**
 | Develops skills in a range of communication means, e.g. face-to-face interaction using interactive technologies, and/or textual and visual media, where useful/necessary. |  |  |  |  |
| Has a web presence as a researcher. |  |  |  |  |
| Uses audio-visual aids effectively in presentations. |  |  |  |  |

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| **D2** | **Communication and Dissemination** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Publication**
 | Understands the processes of publication and academic exploitation of research results. |  |  |  |  |
| Produces some publishable material in print, electronic or other format. |  |  |  |  |
| Is developing awareness of the range and diversity of outlets for publications. |  |  |  |  |

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| **D3** | **Engagement and Impact** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Teaching**
 | Contributes to teaching at undergraduate level. |  |  |  |  |
| Assists in the supervision of undergraduate projects |  |  |  |  |
| Participates in research meetings (seminars, workshops, conferences, etc.). Has a developing awareness of the ways research influences/interacts with teaching. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Public Engagement**
 | Understands and appreciates the value of engaging with the public; willingly participates. |  |  |  |  |
| Open to influence of public interactions on own work |  |  |  |  |
| Responds to local opportunities and existing activities; presents aspects of research at public events. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Enterprise**
 | Creates ideas and identifies opportunities internally and externally. |  |  |  |  |
| Develops ideas in an innovative manner within own institution or externally. |  |  |  |  |
| Understands the process of commercial exploitation of research results. |  |  |  |  |
| Learns of the value to academia of establishing relationships in business/commercial contexts. |  |  |  |  |

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| **D3** | **Engagement and Impact** | **Current Skill Level: 1-5** | **Development Priority** |
|  |  | **Current** | **Future** | **N/A** |
| 1. **Policy**
 | Understands the relevant policy-making processes and presents findings in a policy-friendly format. |  |  |  |  |
| Analyses policies and understands the wider contexts in which they are situated. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Society and Culture**
 | Develops awareness of the impact of research on wider society and the impact of society, the environment and culture of research. |  |  |  |  |
| Understands concept of corporate social responsibility. |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Global Citizenship**
 | Shows a broad understanding of the context in which own research takes place, at the national and international level. |  |  |  |  |

**Action Plan for current development needs**

**Example:**

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| **Skills Area for Development:** | **Analysing** |
| **Objective** | Critically analyse and evaluate other researchers’ findings |
| **Activities to Complete** | 1. Attend workshops on *Critical Thinking* and *Reading Strategically and Analytically*
2. Read one thesis in a related research area to see how the author analyses & evaluates literature
3. Read article X, write a 500-100 word critical report and send to supervisor for feedback
 |
| **Completion Dates** | 1. dd.mm.yyyy, 2. dd.mm.yyyy, 3. dd.mm.yyyy |
| **Measures of Completion** | 1. Attendance and using new techniques learnt
2. Reading relevant chapters; keeping notes
3. Supervisor feedback on report
 |

**Copy and paste this table as many times as necessary:**

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| **Skills Area for Development:** |  |
| **Objective(s)** |  |
| **Activities to Complete** |  |
| **Completion Date(s)** |  |
| **Measure(s) of Completion** |  |

1. Adapted from the *Research Student Skills and Career Development Training Plan Template*, University of Leicester. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)