

How to be an effective researcher

for postgraduate researchers

The 'How to be an effective researcher' programme for postgraduate researchers is a freely available resource for UK higher education institutions. The programme has been developed as a resource to organisers of researcher development programmes.

“ I was sceptical but had no reason to be, this course is excellent. It actually gives PhD students the skills they need to help them change certain aspects of their project – leaves them feeling in charge and in control ”

Participant 2007

“ Good combination of fun activities and activities that required serious brain power ”

Participant 2007

Overview

'How to be an effective researcher' for postgraduate researchers is a two-day, non-residential programme aimed at those who are three to twelve months into their doctoral studies.

Background

Written and developed by Dr Sara Shinton and Janet Wilkinson and piloted at the University of Edinburgh in 2005, the programme was short-listed for a Times Higher Education Award in 2007. It has since attracted significant interest from a number of institutions and more than 1000 postgraduate researchers have attended a course.

Programme aims

This developmental training opportunity focuses on building understanding, skills and confidence in communication, planning, time management, problem solving, leadership and assertiveness. Learning and working styles are explored in the following areas:

- PhD project planning and time management
- working effectively with others in the research environment
- collaboration and negotiating
- culture within research groups, institutions and countries.

Programme delivery

'How to be an effective researcher' has been developed to ensure that it has the flexibility to be delivered to postgraduate researchers working in similar academic subjects or to researchers from a mixture of disciplines.

Manuals with all the information needed to organise and deliver the programme are freely available from Vitae and include:

- administration guidelines and timelines
- guidelines for facilitators to lead and de-brief the programme and individual exercises

The programme is also supported by:

- a kit of resources which is available through your local Hub contact¹
- access to a network of experienced external trainers who are able to deliver or support the delivery of the programme on your behalf

We can also arrange visits to other 'effective researcher' programmes or 'taster days' for people from your institution who are interested in getting involved.

¹Institutions are asked to organise and cover courier fees to send the kit back to their regional Hub

Further information about delivering the 'How to be an effective researcher' programme for postgraduate researchers can be found at www.vitae.ac.uk/effectiveresearcher

How to be an effective researcher

for research staff

Building on the success of 'How to be an effective researcher' for postgraduate researchers, this programme has been developed to address the process of moving into a research manager position. The programme will be made freely available to UK higher education institutions from the end of September 2008, and has been developed by Vitae as a resource for staff running researcher development programmes.

“ Made me value the skills I have as a researcher and made me want to develop them further ”

Participant 2008

“ Novel, creative, useful and applicable! ”

Participant 2008

Overview

A two-day, non-residential programme that uses a series of experiential learning activities to enable participants to explore the practical skills required for successful project management and the further development of intellectual independence.

Background

'How to be an effective researcher' for research staff was developed by Education-Training Ltd and Shinton Consulting Ltd, run in partnership with the Midlands Hub, and part funded by the UK GRAD Programme. It was piloted as a regional workshop in the Midlands in January 2008 and was followed by an additional institutional pilot at the University of Warwick in February of the same year.

Programme aims

The programme has been designed to integrate self-awareness and learning across a number of key areas which include:

- project management – for participants' own projects, and in assisting others with their projects
- people management – managing others and being managed
- prioritisation of competing tasks and managing complex, diverse workloads
- orientation within a longer-term career.

Programme delivery

The programme has been developed to ensure that it has the flexibility to be delivered to research staff working in similar academic subjects or to researchers from a mixture of disciplines.

Manuals with all the information needed to organise and deliver the programme are freely available from Vitae and include:

- administration guidelines and timelines
- guidelines for facilitators to lead and de-brief the programme and individual exercises

Vitae can also:

- provide access to a network of experienced external trainers who are able to deliver or support the delivery of the programme on your behalf
- arrange visits to other 'effective researcher' programmes or 'taster days' for people from your institution who are interested in getting involved.