BRITISH COUNCIL

RESEARCHER
CONNECT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
FOR RESEARCHERS

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THE SUCCESS AND REPUTATION OF RESEARCHERS AND THE INSTITUTIONS THEY REPRESENT IS IMPACTED BY THEIR ABILITY TO WORK AT AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. RESEARCHER CONNECT DEVELOPS THE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS REQUIRED FOR RESEARCHERS TO SUCCEED INTERNATIONALLY.

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CHALLENGES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

In an increasingly competitive and global market, researchers and the institutions they represent need to communicate their research to an international audience.

Without the skills to do this, researchers and research institutions can find themselves at a competitive disadvantage, affecting grant income, international presence and reputation.

Researchers need the communication skills to:

- publish in international journals
- present at conferences
- apply for funding from national and international bodies
- communicate with the wider public and policy makers
- build international collaborations to further their research.

In recognition of this need, and building on our vision for prosperity for all through internationalised education, the British Council has developed the Researcher Connect professional development course.

RESEARCHER CONNECT

Researcher Connect is a professional development course that focuses on the development of excellent communication skills for international, multicultural contexts.

It provides participants with the insights, understanding and tools to communicate effectively, whatever the situation or context. Its secondary function is the development of critical thinking, reflective and critiquing skills.

Researcher Connect contributes to the researchers' professional development in key areas outlined by the Vitae Research Development Framework (see Why choose Researcher Connect section).

Researcher Connect is offered as a series of modules delivered in workshop format by experienced and quality-assured trainers. In addition, we are building an online learner community with related activities and resources, and have partnered with Epigeum to provide online courses (see Researcher Connect modules section).

WHY CHOOSE RESEARCHER CONNECT

Researcher Connect uses a unique methodology and approach that is introduced in the Foundation Module and applied throughout all the other modules in situations, along with examples tailored to the participating researchers.

The delivery of all of the modules follows an experiential learning philosophy and practice. The learning experience is benefited by participant input and reflection generated through activities, feedback and review.

The Researcher Connect approach was formed by our expert development team after many years' analysis and practice of effective communication in multiple cultures around the world. It was created in collaboration with leading academics and piloted in over eight countries worldwide.

We are confident that the Researcher Connect approach and resources provide the means for researchers' career development.

UK culture of research excellence and the Researcher Development Framework

The UK recognises, through the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers[1], that researcher training and development is essential to maintaining its status as a world leader in research. In response to this, Vitae produced the Researcher Development Framework (RDF)[2] in collaboration with the higher education sector and other stakeholders.

Researcher Connect has been developed with consideration to the RDF, to deliver skills training that will help researchers progress in their career and function at an international level.

[1] The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is an agreement between funders and employers of research staff to improve the employment and support for researchers and research careers in UK higher education. It sets out clear standards that research staff can expect from the institution employing them, as well as their responsibilities as researchers. For more information, please visit: www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/vitae-concordat-vitae-2011.pdf

[2] The Researcher Development Framework (RDF), developed by Vitae and endorsed by QAA, is an important part of research career development in the UK. It identifies attributes and behaviours of successful researchers and helps develop these throughout the research community, to allow researchers to get the most out of their careers. For more information on the RDF, please visit: www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework

Researcher Connect is a professional development course with a focus on communication skills. It can contribute directly to Domain D of the RDF (Engagement, influence and impact), predominantly D2: communication and dissemination.

The various Researcher Connect modules can also indirectly help researchers' development in ten of the other 11 key skills areas highlighted in the RDF: Working with others (D1); Engagement and impact (D3); Knowledge base (A1); Cognitive abilities (A2); Creativity (A3); Personal qualities (B1); Professional and career management (B3); Finance, funding and resources (C3); Research Management (C2); and Professional conduct (C1).

Researcher Connect trainers

Researcher Connect is delivered by trainers with a wealth of experience of academic engagement and up-to-the-minute knowledge of current research publication, conferencing trends and issues.

All of the trainers undergo a training workshop and evaluation to ensure that they meet the high level of quality required by Researcher Connect.

Flexible course options

One of the strengths of Researcher Connect is its flexibility. The course is offered as a series of modules (see Researcher Connect modules section) that can be chosen according to the needs of the participants. Researcher Connect also offers a platform for interdisciplinary learning; the course experience is enriched by having researchers from many fields sharing ideas and knowledge.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

With a presence in over 100 countries, and decades of experience in supporting researcher development globally, the British Council understands the demands researchers face when working in an international environment.

As the UK's cultural relations organisation, we encourage scientific, technological, cultural and educational co-operation between the UK and other countries. We believe science and innovation are integral to culture, and the sharing of scientific knowledge to be an excellent way of building trust, understanding and opportunities internationally.

We have a long history of connecting researchers globally to both encourage collaboration and support the development of research capacity in the UK and partner countries.

We do this by linking key organisations in the UK research sector, such as the funding councils, universities and research institutions, with their counterparts overseas.

Researcher Connect was developed in recognition of the fact that communication skills are indispensable to the free flow of knowledge and ideas across cultures, and are integral to researchers and research institutions functioning at the international level.

RUNNING A WORKSHOP

We can help you tailor a Researcher Connect workshop to your requirements.

If you are interested in running a workshop, please email: uk-researcherconnect@britishcouncil.org

Module selection

Researcher Connect workshops are flexible, and you can choose to run the modules you feel would be most beneficial to the participants. Some modules complement each other more than others and you may consider theming a course around writing skills, for example. The Foundation Module provides an appropriate introduction to all other Researcher Connect courses and is mandatory Research Connect workshops generally last three to five days depending on the number of modules run. It is recommended that longer workshops are run with pauses so that participants can make the most of their learning experience.

We can help you tailor your course so that the module selection and course intensity fully meet the needs of the researchers.

Participants

Workshops are for up to 20 researchers from any of the fields. The Researcher Connect course is not an English language course, and participants should have a minimum of B2-level English already.

Certification

A certificate of completion will be given to each participant in order to demonstrate their attendance on the course.

RESEARCHER CONNECT MODULES

Researcher Connect:
Foundation Module

A half-day module

Many of us may have had the experience of feeling we've given a brilliant, uplifting presentation, of writing an in-depth and perceptive paper or an abstract that ticks all the boxes, essentially believing we have communicated well. Yet, to our surprise, we then find that the audience were unresponsive, the editorial board rejected the paper or the abstract failed to generate views. Our communication failed in some way to achieve what we wanted.

The Foundation Module module provides participants with the insights, understanding and tactics to avoid such situations, and to communicate effectively whatever the situation or context. The module also examines writing skills and looks at how to adapt your writing style to suit a variety of audiences.

The unique approach delivered in the Foundation Module is the culmination of many years' study, analysis and practice of effective communication in multiple cultures around the world by our expert team.

This module offers a simple but challenging toolkit for effective communication, and serves as the foundation for all Researcher Connect modules. Its secondary function is the development of critical thinking and critiquing skills.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand your audience and their specific needs.
- Develop a toolkit of skills and techniques, plus the confidence to use them to effectively analyse and understand audiences and their specific needs.
- Be able to communicate in an appropriate language, at a level and with a message that is relevant to the audience.
- Be able to confidently and concisely define your own internal objectives for communicating with a particular audience and understand how these will affect audience attitude, understanding or behaviour.

Who is this module for?

Researchers from any discipline should benefit from this module.

Best taken in combination with:

The Foundation Module is an essential course in Researcher Connect.

Links with the Vitae Research Development Framework (RDF).

This module helps develop skills relevant to the following areas identified in the RDF:

Primary

− D2: Communication and dissemination.

Secondary

− A1: Cognitive abilities.
− B1: Personal qualities.

Researcher Connect:
Abstracts

A half-day module

Abstracts are critical, not just as concise summaries of academic papers and presentations, but as roads to further publication opportunities and access to wider audiences. Written well they can open doors to publication in peer-reviewed journals, to acceptance of papers in conferences and introduce your work to stakeholders from many areas.

The Researcher Connect Abstracts module enables participants to become both critical readers and writers of abstracts through review, specific skills development activities and practice.

It applies the unique Researcher Connect approach to excellent communication, enabling participants to adapt and apply generic models, strategies and techniques to their own particular abstract writing needs. Researchers identify and adjust their particular abstract writing style, and also understand how to develop their technique to write for different audiences such as corporate R&D, the public or for cross-disciplinary research projects.

The module is applicable to participants from any research field creating abstracts for any platform, from submission of conference presentations to journal publications and online profiles.

Module content:

The first units cover the essential structural elements of abstracts and how these can be re-ordered, used or not used to meet the different requirements of different audiences and platforms. There follows a brief review of some basic 'good writing' techniques to adopt and practise, and an enquiry into abstract styles commonly demanded by different fields. From these units participants create a personalised checklist of best practice criteria that they can apply to their own and to other's writing during their research careers.

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Learning outcomes:

- Be able to create effective abstracts for different audiences.
- Have a good understanding of the functions of abstracts.
- Have been introduced to different styles of abstracts in different fields and different publications.
- Have practised a range of tools and approaches for abstract creation.
- Be able to make well-informed decisions on how to structure abstracts and select appropriate content and style.

Who is this module for?

Early-career researchers from any discipline should benefit from this module.

Best taken in combination with:

Abstracts is best taken in combination with: Foundation Module (mandatory); Writing for Publication or Presenting with Impact.

Links with the Vitae Research Development Framework (RDF).

This module helps develop skills relevant to the following areas identified in the RDF:

Primary

– D2: Communication and dissemination.

Secondary

– A1: Knowledge base.
– D3: Engagement and impact.

Researcher Connect:
Academic Collaboration

A half-day module

Academia is an intensely collaborative, globalised activity. Research and teaching operate within extensive networks; funds and people flow between institutions and across borders. Therefore, when considering any academic project or work, it is important to consider whether it should be engaged in collaboratively.

The Academic Collaboration module is designed to enable participants to begin negotiating this complex environment and equip them with a toolkit for clear, accurate and successful communication and collaboration.

Module content:

Participants first look at what collaboration is and examine the advantages and potential challenges of collaborating. Having familiarised themselves with this concept, they reflect on their own network, and the appropriate ways of expanding contacts through networking events. The module will also look at relationship-building, and how to follow-up with contacts through effective emails and further communication through social media sites.

Learning outcomes:

- Be able to understand which of your academic activities most readily lend themselves to collaboration.
- Be able to recognise the advantages and disadvantage of collaboration.
- Recognise how, when and where to approach potential collaborators and communicate with them.

- Develop communication strategies for establishing and maintaining successful collaborations.
- Be able to approach potential collaborations with more confidence through various forms of communication and communicate with them effectively.

Who is this module for?

Researchers, academic managers and supervisors from any discipline should benefit from this module.

Best taken in combination with:

Academic Collaborations is best taken in combination with: Foundation Module (mandatory) and any of the Researcher Connect modules.

Links with the Vitae Research Development Framework (RDF).

This module helps develop skills relevant to the following areas identified in the RDF:

Primary

- D2: Communication and dissemination.

Secondary

- D1: Working with others.
- B1: Personal qualities.

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Researcher Connect:
Effective emails

A half-day module

Many of us email every day of our lives; however, miscommunication, missed information and occasionally personal offence from poorly thought-through emails can still cause many problems. This is particularly true when it comes to working across multiple cultures on complex subject areas, and can be even more pertinent when emailing in a second language such as English.

The Effective Emails module enables participants to understand how their emails are being read, and to be aware of common errors. It builds a toolkit for clear, accurate and successful communication.

Module content:

Participants first look at the function or purpose of specific professional emails and review common structures and standard phrases. Having familiarised themselves with these protocols they practise using them in a series of 'difficult' communication scenarios and then give and receive direct feedback on the emails' effectiveness and impacts.

Where time allow the module also looks at email etiquette; for example, around Out of Office, storage and tracking.

Learning outcomes:

- Be able to format emails effectively.
- Be able to write in a range of styles appropriate to different audiences.
- Be confident users of standard phrases commonly found in emails.

- Be able to write 'difficult' emails such as large requests, complaints and persuasion.
- Have practised emailing single partners and multiple partners in challenging scenarios.
- Be able to interpret and, where needed, ask for clarification of requests embedded in indirect questions and complex phrases.
- Feel confident about understanding poorly written emails and have a strategy for clarifying these.

Who is this module for?

Researchers, academic managers and supervisors from any discipline should benefit from this module.

Best taken in combination with:

Effective Emails is best taken in combination with the Foundation Module and any of the Researcher Connect modules.

Links with the Vitae Research Development Framework (RDF).

This module helps develop skills relevant to the following areas identified in the RDF:

Primary
- D2: Communication and dissemination.

Secondary
- D1: Working with others.
- B1: Personal qualities.

Researcher Connect:
Presenting with impact

A 1 to 1.5-day module

Presenting with Impact focuses on the skills, confidence and know-how to present at international conferences. Participants work on creating and giving clear, effective and relevant (to the audience) presentations about aspects of their research.

As with all the Researcher Connect modules, Presenting with Impact is highly experiential with participants developing, delivering and critiquing a brief presentation through a series of step-by-step activities.

Learning outcomes:

- Be able to clearly articulate to the audience the key message(s) of and purpose for the presentation.
- Have confidence in their ability to present clearly and effectively.
- Have experience of using a generic presentation structure and feel confident to adapt this to their audience's needs.
- Have an awareness of and had practice with the non-verbal, vocal and linguistic skills, aids and techniques for effective presenting.
- Have had exposure to several different presenting styles and be able to critique these.

- Have developed and practised using a framework for self-critiquing and development.
- Have started to develop an appropriate style and technique for presenting.

Module content:

Presenting with Impact starts by overviewing some presentation essentials and the basics of visual and vocal delivery, before analysing what makes a presentation effective or not. Participants consider helpful presentation structures, then start to work on their own output using a model process. The module considers effective ways to generate content that engages with the audience's needs, how to create an impactful key message and to open and close in a memorable, effective manner. Throughout the module the participants practise a range of non-verbal and vocal skills and techniques. Finally, consideration is given to how to work with notes efficiently and the range of visual aids available to us.

The module ends with a chance for each participant to prepare and deliver their own presentation. This is then fine-tuned after critical evaluation by the rest of the group.

Who is this module for?

Researchers, managers and supervisors from any discipline should benefit from this module.

Best taken in combination with:

Presenting with Impact is best taken in combination with the Foundation Module (mandatory); Abstracts. This module also balances well with any of the writing skills Researcher Connect courses.

Links with the Vitae Research Development Framework (RDF).

This module helps develop skills relevant to the following areas identified in the RDF:

Primary

– D2: Communication and dissemination.

Secondary

– D3: Engagement and impact.
– B1: Personal qualities.

Researcher Connect:
Persuasive proposals

A one-day module

It is becoming increasingly necessary in the professional research environment for researchers, even at a fairly early-career stage, to seek external funding from sponsors, grant agencies or governments. Researchers may also seek support in the form of resources or partnerships and access a myriad of other services from industry, the wider research community and other bodies. In some fields it is often essential to gain authorisation to progress with a research programme from an ethics board or other statutory body.

In all these and many more cases, the researcher will likely be required to submit a proposal. This module enables researchers to write successful proposals; those that are clear, concise and achieve what they are asking for.

The insight and techniques gained in Persuasive Proposals are highly transferable to other professional situations such as pitching to investors, networking and even for interviews.

Learning outcomes:
- Be clear about what proposals are and why we write them.
- Have an understanding of what qualities make a proposal effective.
- Be familiar with generic international proposal structure (the parts of a proposal).
- Understand and have practised the process of proposal development.
- Be able to profile the proposal readers and meet their expectations.
- Be able to create clear and logically connected goals, outcomes, outputs and inputs.
- Be comfortable adapting language to the reader (clarity, effective simplicity).
- Be able to work with the proposal formula set by the reader organisation.

Module content:
The module starts with an overview of how proposals differ from other forms of professional writing. It looks at common structural elements and the qualities of successful proposals by analysing samples. Participants look at why one proposal may differ from another and the decision-making process behind this. The next section develops project planning knowledge and skills. Finally, participants work in teams to create a proposal and compete to submit a winning bid.

There is an additional unit on the skills of paragraph writing for those requiring a refresher of this essential skill.

Who is this module for?
Researchers, managers and supervisors from any discipline should benefit from this module.

Best taken in combination with:
Professional Proposals is best taken in combination with: Foundation Module (mandatory) and Presenting with Impact. It complements the academic writing skills in Writing for Publication.

Links with the Vitae Research Development Framework (RDF).

This module helps develop skills relevant to the following areas identified in the RDF:

Primary
- D2: Communication and dissemination.
- C3: Finance, funding and resources.

Secondary
- B3: Professional and career development.
- B1: Personal qualities.
- A1: Knowledge base.

NB: THIS MODULE IS BEING REDRAFTED AND IS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE

Researcher Connect:
Writing for publication: basics

A 1 to 1.5 day module