

Using the Portfolio of Activity to prepare for your Career

For an Introduction to the PGR Portfolio of Activity see:

www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/pgr-development/Short_guide_PGR_Portfolio_of_Activity.pdf

See also [Using Descriptors in the Portfolio of Activity](#)

There are several ways in which you can use the PGR Portfolio of Activity to prepare for future research grant and job applications. You can:

- Assemble a list of achievements and record of training for your CV
- Record specific skills and related evidence for written applications
- Record attributes and supporting evidence to prepare for job interviews

If you start with good habits, you will assemble a highly useful record of achievement for the future

Choosing events to record

Researcher Developer Statement:

www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Researcher%20development%20statement.pdf

Full list of these lenses on the RDF, and links to the RDF files (Vitae website):

www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/437191/Increasing-the-impact-and-engagement-of-researchers.html

The events required for a CV will depend on the type of employment; academic jobs will expect a longer CV with a full publication list while external companies are typically interested in your wider skills, including team-working and leadership. To keep your employment options open, you should record a broad range of activities.

Your achievements, your experiential experience in your research, or attendance at training events can all be listed in the Portfolio and are all relevant to your list of experience..

Looking to the future: Consider the evidence that you need to provide to obtain your preferred future role. Current jobs adverts will provide an indication of the abilities and experience that are expected from applicants and so could set targets for your future development.

For example, recent adverts on the University web-site expected the following in Personal Attributes:

- 'Good team-working ability' and 'Ability to work autonomously when required', (grade 7 Science and Engineering research role)
- 'Active commitment to research and teaching in the area of ...' (Arts-based lecturer)

What evidence could you present to support your having the above attributes?

Researcher Development Framework: The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) defines the skills that **successful researchers** will demonstrate. No researcher has all the listed skills, but you should be able to demonstrate that you have a wide range of skills from all RDF domains. Consider;

- Are you able to add relevant activities to all four domains in the Portfolio of Activity?
- Can you list activities that demonstrate that you have the important skills in Domain B, such as "Commitment to Research" and "Time-management"?

Lenses on the Researcher Development Framework: If you are looking for a career outside Academia, your CV may need to focus on your wider skills set and experience. Vitae provide a useful set of **Lenses on the Researcher Development Framework** (see above) that focus on specific skills and types of evidence you could need in a range of employment areas.

Providing evidence

Within job applications you will need to explain how you can match the required job attributes in the job description, either in your covering letter, in the application form or at interviews. You can use the Portfolio of Activity to help this preparation:

- Add descriptors to relevant records to associate specific skills/attributes with your experience.
- Use the description for the activity to focus on how you demonstrated that skills within the activity, and, in the case of group activities, your personal involvement and contributions.

These notes are also a useful exercise in self-reflection; the ability to self-assess and identify areas for your own improvement is, in itself, an important personal skill

Note: you may use the Portfolio of Activity to add brief notes for each event, but you should ensure that there is sufficient information to help you remember the details in three or so years' time.

Privacy: You can de-select the tick-box in the Portfolio if you want to create notes that are purely for your own use. These records will not be included in emails sent to your supervisor or anyone else.

The STAR Approach

This approach is very common in many non-academic areas to provide evidence for your skills, in particular to answer interview questions such as 'Tell me of an example where you demonstrated good team-working'. STAR stands for:

Situation: the problem, or challenge that you had to solve, i.e. to set the context.

Task: what did you need to achieve as a solution?

Your answer here may be combined with your description of the situation.

Action: what you did to solve this problem?

This is the most important part of the answer. You need to focus on your involvement, your initiatives and the skills you used to achieve these tasks. You should also explain the reasoning for your actions, but without too much technical details.

Result: what was the result of your actions?

You will need to be clear the consequences of your actions. This is also an opportunity to show your reflective thinking about what you have learnt and consequently what you might do, or have done, differently in a future situation.

You should be able to at least verbally use this logic to explain how you use one or more skills for selected activities or achievements that you have record in your Portfolio.

You can then create effective notes in the description part with the essential information. You could also use the STAR initials to help abbreviate your notes.

How you describe the situation in future, may eventually depend on the specific job application and Interview, but having a clear recollection of your own reasoning and actions will provide excellent preparation. The practice will also help you self-assess your own skills.