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Introduction to Research Leadership

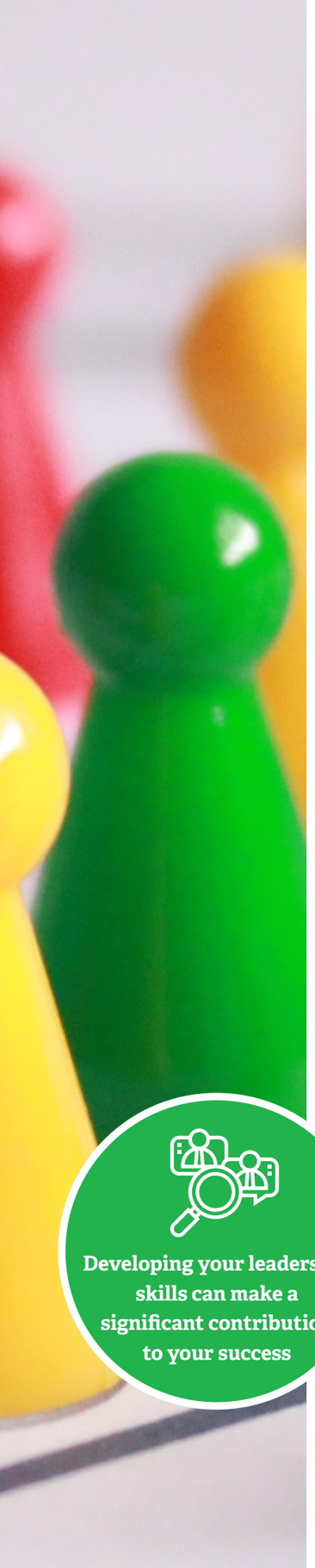
Introducing the series of resources

This module is part of the Introduction to Research Leadership series of resources, which provides an introduction to leadership theory, skills, behaviours and attributes for researchers who aspire to a research leadership position.

These resources were created by Vitae, a UK-based non-profit programme that supports the professional and career development of researchers globally. The resources are designed as a practical guide for you to use at an individual level. Depending on your preference and the amount of time you have available, you can focus on just one or two modules or work through all of the modules in the series at a pace that suits you.

The rationale for this series of resources is threefold:

1. Developing your leadership skills can help you enhance your current performance and thereby strengthen your promotion prospects
2. It is important to develop skills you will need at your next career level before you get there in order to perform more effectively in a new role
3. In an increasingly international and interconnected research world, developing leadership-related skills can improve your ability to communicate and collaborate globally.



Introduction:

In other words, developing your leadership skills can make a significant contribution to your success in getting things done, developing collaborations and advancing your career.

The resource series is based on the premises that:

- we all have the opportunity to exhibit leadership: it's needed in all spheres of life
- leaders need to develop effective self-leadership skills before being in a position to influence the behaviour of others
- researchers who attend to their professional and career development through reflection and planning and who gain support from others for this are more likely to attain their goals

How to use this series of resources

Each module is designed to take 30 - 60 minutes and includes exercises you can complete to aid understanding and reflection. Some of these are specifically designed to help you identify your development needs and action plan.

The modules are as follows.

1. Introduction to the series of resources

2. Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) – explores the Vitae RDF, including the Leadership lens on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework – a tool for understanding and assessing your skills, competencies, behaviours and attributes as a researcher.

3. What is research leadership? - introduces the responsibilities, skills, knowledge and attributes of research leaders, including a focus on self-leadership, mapped to the Leadership lens on the Vitae RDF.

4. Leading a research team - explains the 'action-centred leadership' approach to enhance your understanding

5. Networking - focuses on a vital area of development for your career progression and effectiveness as a research leader

6. Career management - shows you how to get ahead by focusing on your goals and making clear plans

1. Denney, F., Mitchell, A., & Wheat, K. (2015). 'Developing the next generation: Guidance and good practice in the development of early career researchers and academics'. The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited. https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/guides-briefings-and-information/developing-the-next-generation-vitae-brunel-lfhe-2015.pdf

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Research Leadership Resource: Introducing the series of resources

Reflection

Before moving on to another module, you may find it useful to complete the following reflective exercise.

The extracts below are from interviews with senior research leaders to explore preparation for research leadership.

'I think it's true as a researcher as well as a leader...you can't necessarily learn all the skills first that you might apply at some point in the next 40 years of your career; I think you have to learn to learn . . .' (Senior research leader[1])

What do you understand by 'learning to learn'?

'help them [early career researchers] . . . recognise every single thing which happens, good or bad, will actually allow them to analyse their ability to do things and find ways of doing things in the future . . .' (Senior research leader[1])

'I wish I'd known that you will fail at some things and I think that would have been useful for me to have known that beforehand, that everybody fails and things can go wrong and that's not a bad thing necessarily.' (Senior research leader[1])

Think of an example of learning from experience. What did you learn?

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