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Research
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Career Management

Introduction to Research Leadership

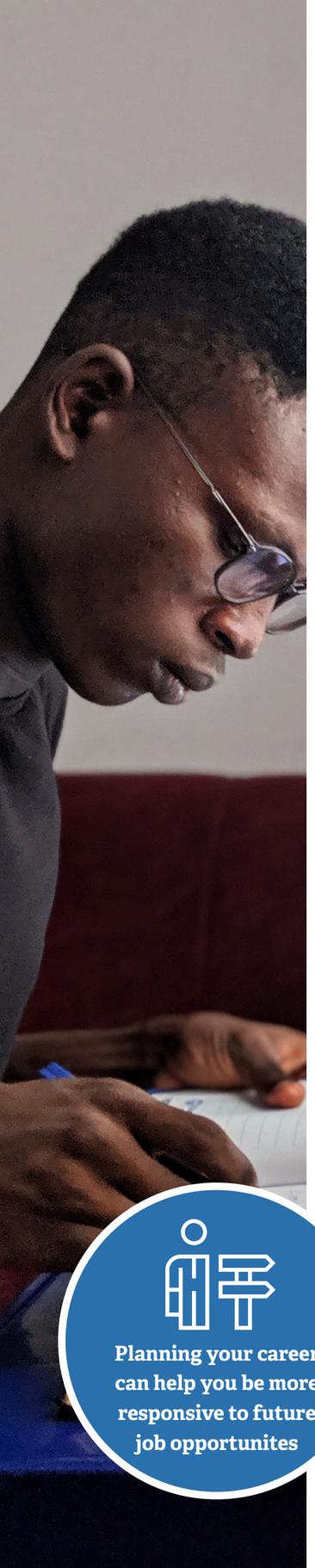
This module is part of the Introduction to Research Leadership series of resources, which provides an introduction to leadership theory, skills behaviours and attributes for researchers who aspire to a research leadership position.

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.

Career Management is a process based on understanding yourself and your potential opportunities.

It involves understanding:

- what you are capable of and what you want from your life
- careers, for example types of work, recruitment methods; career structures and what support, training and development is available
- the wider economic, social, political and technological climate.



Career management:

This leadership module discusses why career management is always important - not just when you are looking for a new job or dissatisfied in your current role. It shows proactive ways to develop your career for leadership, and helps you create an action plan.

It relates to the following aspects of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework:

B3 Professional and career development – Career management

B1 Personal qualities – Self-reflection

Why is career management important?

Taking steps to manage and plan your career and your continuing professional development can help you be more responsive to job opportunities as they arise.

In addition, having clear career objectives will help you maximise the training and development opportunities available to you to help achieve your next career goal.

And finally, being aware of your skills and competencies and being able to communicate these can be extremely helpful for forging collaborative research relationships with other institutions and industry partners. The better your career knowledge and understanding, the more able you will be to take the lead in initiating new prospects and partnerships.

Tips for career management from academic and research leaders[1]

- Learn about the roles you are interested in and know the criteria for progression
- . . . but also be open to unexpected opportunities and don't confine yourself to a single area of expertise

'Seize the opportunities that are offered to you . . . I didn't quite realise half the time that I was being offered fantastic opportunities . . . usually I did take them, but it wasn't that I realised "well, that will be fantastic for my career"'

(Senior research leader[1])

- Take the time to plan ahead
- Use appraisals as a tool to discuss and plan your career development
- Factor your personal values into your career planning. Only pursue opportunities that are a good fit for you

'I'm not defined by my institution; I'm defined by my work. And I think a lot of people cling on to their institutional status in ways that actually prevent them from fulfilling what they really could do . . .'

(Senior research leader[1])

- Develop the skills you will need at your next career level before you get there
- Be resilient and learn from failures
- Take time to reflect and consolidate

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.

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Research Leadership Resource: Career management

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How can you improve?

- Self-awareness helps ensure your career decisions are right for you. Think about your skills, values, abilities, personality, your past and current work experience and your life beyond work, including commitments, responsibilities, leisure interests, work-life balance, health and fitness.
- Recognise the constraints that might stop you moving forward and achieving your career goals. Appreciating your constraints helps you make realistic decisions and plans so that you do not feel perpetually under pressure or disappointed.
- Engage with others. Seek advice and guidance, establish networks within your field to open future doors to yourself and those you manage and supervise as you become established in your career.
- Get inspired by the career stories of others and find out how they got to where they are now. Inspire others yourself by sharing your career knowledge and experiences perhaps through careers activities or become a coach or mentor to junior researchers.

Knowing what motivates you and gives you fulfilment guides you to the right choices for the future.

'I get satisfaction from finding out things that other people don't know and the science behind it. That's why it's important for me to take it to the highest level because I like teaching people, training them and seeing them do well for themselves.'

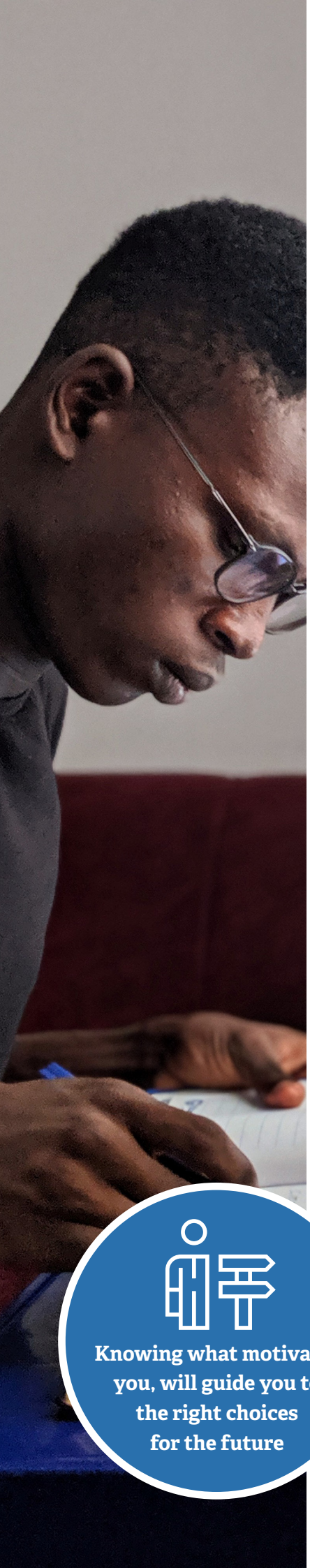
(Senior Postdoctoral Fellow[1])

'The honest reflection is that at some point I should really have looked a little bit more closely at what leadership at my University means...if anything I think I would have preferred to have stayed and carried on leading research within a defined group, not at an institute level.'

(Senior Research Leader[1])

www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/guides-briefings-and-information/developing-the-next-generation-vitae-brunel-lfhe-2015.pdf

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Knowing what motivates you, will guide you to the right choices for the future

Reflection

Write a list of what motivates you in the workplace. Use this to reflect on how you can get more out of your current role and shape the kind of job role you might seek in the future.

In the workplace I am motivated by . . .

I can get more out of my current role by . . .

The implications for kinds of future job roles that would suit me are . . .

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