

研究者のための + α シリーズ Vol.6
The Importance of Career Development for Researchers

—研究者が就活するうえで心得るべきこととは—

(2021 年 5 月 27 日 (木) 16:00~18:00 開催)

Thank you for many insightful questions and comments. The speakers' responses to them are listed as follows.

【Q1】 アカデミックな場への就職を考える場合、コミュニケーション能力や教えるためのスキルなど、研究能力以外の能力も重要とのことですが、それらの研究能力に対する割合はどの程度でしょうか。研究以外の能力を伸ばすことで、研究が遅滞すると思うのですが、その点をどう考えればよいのか教えてください。【研究員・ポストク相当の方より】

【A1】

- The Vitae Researcher Development Framework is an academic researcher framework—you need these broader abilities as an academic. By developing your broader abilities you become a better researcher, so your research will benefit too. How much time to spend on this will depend on your assessment of what abilities you need to develop and how best to do this. It is this self-awareness that helps you be a better researcher.

【Q2】 I myself a Ph.D. candidate in the Humanities. My feeling that if you take the 'hard sciences' out of the equation, the employability diminishes greatly. While research abilities are highly valued, it feels more towards the 'big data' 'quantitative' methods, which mostly do not apply to the humanities. I have hard time to picture myself trying to explain a potential employer that I worked on a qualitative basis, analyzing, for example, graphics of public and warning signs in terms of gender representation... It might be interesting for them personally, but not as an employer. 【大学院生の方より】

【A2】

- There is an exciting new movement called 'SHAPE' social sciences, humanities and the arts for people and the economy. It is supported by the British Academy and is trying to tackle this perception. Qualitative approaches add an important richness of interpretation to our understanding of the world and there are employers that value that. The SHAPE website (<https://thisisshape.org.uk>) might help you to frame this for potential employers.

【Q3】 新型ウィルスの影響もあり、アカデミズムのポストにおいて、研究時間の確保が難しくなっていると感じますし、周囲をみてもそのように感じます。新しいキャリアの構築に関して、日本の、特に社会科学の場合、なかなか企業が積極的に採用するようにはなっていない分野もあり（国際関係や政治学等）、また年齢や性別で区別されてしまうように感じますが、その点については、どのようにお考えでしょうか。【研究員・ポスドク相当の方より】

【A3】

- Unfortunately, Covid-19 has had an impact on the employment market in many countries that have been badly affected, particularly for younger people. In the UK, many universities have halted their recruitment processes. But they will come back. In the meantime, you will have to work harder to find opportunities. In today's webinar Katie gives excellent advice on how to increase your networks. It is so important to increase your visibility as a researcher and to use your network to introduce you to other researchers, so you hear about potential opportunities. Do what you can to contact research groups that are working in areas of interest: this may not result in a position, but it could lead to joint research and then something bigger. Not all countries have been affected by Covid-19, so if you can be mobile, then maybe it is worth looking internationally—this experience will be so valuable to you as an academic.

【Q4】 One of my concerns about finding a job outside of academia is that it may be difficult to return to academia if I find that I prefer working in academia after all. Furthermore, a friend of mine who left academia because he wanted to pursue science journalism was told that, unless he fully gave up the idea of returning to academia in the future, they would be hesitant to hire him (they wanted full commitment). Do you have any comments or testimonies on the possibility/difficulty of returning to academia after say, 2-3 years of working in a non-research position? 【研究員・ポスドク相当の方より】

【A4】

- Having made a career transition myself from an academic career to working at Vitae, I understand your concerns. However, in my own experience, it was a very positive and fulfilling move. Janet's research also shows that researchers making a transition to careers beyond academia tend to be satisfied with their new role and only a small proportion would consider moving back into academia. Though if you would like to move back again, in some fields, the practical experience that you gain elsewhere would be highly valuable in an academic role. Some universities value and prioritise links to business and industry, which could give you an advantage. In the UK, there is an organisation dedicated to supporting

researchers to move back into academic roles after a career break (including time spent working in another sector) and you may find some useful advice on their website (<https://daphnejackson.org/>).

【Q5】 For the case of Japan with respect to international students/researchers, the opportunities and options related to professional development provided by institutions could often be considered as “limited” (possibly due to language restrictions). Are there any recommendations for a researchers on how to actively seek such opportunities by themselves? 【大学院生の方より】

【A5】

- Universities in Japan have started to provide professional development opportunities for researchers—for example Vitae has delivered training courses in Hiroshima and Kyoto—but I agree that provision is still fairly limited. I can suggest talking with your fellow researchers and if collectively it is something you would like to see, then put a proposal to your institution. You can also as a group organise your own activities. Decide what aspects of being a researcher you want to improve—you will get professional development from a wide range of activities, such as organising a conference or seminar programme, or writing club. These will develop your project management skills and your initiative and leadership capabilities as well as improving your broader knowledge of your subject. If you go to the Vitae website (<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/>), there are examples of different ways to improve your competencies.

【Q6】 Regarding networking, I have made a lot of tries and errors. Especially, I sometimes fear about approaching to new people in meetings/conferences, although it is important for establishing networks. I even sometimes fear about contacting people whom I know on social networking services, because I fear about being ignored or being responded badly. Do you have some tips to overcoming such fears? 【研究員・ポスドク相当の方より】

【A6】

- My advice to approaching new people will be: Be prepared—do your research in advance and identify who you want to network with and why. Be pleasant—write a good message, say something nice about their research, latest paper, etc, why you are interested in it and how it fits with your interests. Contact them in advance and suggest you meet for ‘coffee’ if at the same conference. Be brave—most people like receiving good feedback on their research and will respond well. Some may not answer, but don’t take it personally—everyone is very busy. The

exceptional person may be rude, but you probably don't want them in your network!

【Q7】 When moving onto a non-academic career in Engineering, many employers prefer those who have “work experience” over someone who is trained purely in theory/research based on job requirements in job advertisements. Are there any ways of tackling this issue in order to improve my employability? 【大学院生の方より】

【A7】

- Some employers, due to Covid-19 changing the way we can work and move around, have been implementing remote placements and internships. This might be worth exploring to give you work experience alongside your academic experience. Even a short placement could give you a useful insight into the different culture and ways of working.

【Q8】 Thank you for this seminar. My mentor is a very strong advocate of the academic career path and thinks very little of pursuing a PhD with the goal of leaving academia afterwards. 1) How important is it to secure my mentor's “good will” about my decision to leave academia? Will I eventually have to rely on e.g., his letter of recommendation? 2) Do you have any practical advice on how to slowly change my mentor's perception to being more open about alternatives to academia? Thank you very much. 【大学院生の方より】

【A8】

- And so let me start from the second question first, and I think, to be honest, it will probably be a long, slow process trying to change the mind of your mentor in terms of seeing the attraction of careers in academia. I think what's important for you is to know whether or not they will support you in terms of a letter of recommendation. How important it is to have a letter of recommendation from your mentor will depend on what is normal practice and the types of jobs and organisations that you are applying for. In the UK, it's quite normal to choose who you want to have as a referee and we would normally put the names of two or three people on our CVs (having asked these people first). I know, in other countries, the expectation is that one of these people would be your mentor. So I suggest one thing that you could do is to have a conversation with your mentor about whether or not they would provide you with a positive letter of recommendation for any applications that you make outside academia—even if they do not approve of your career choice. If they are not willing to do this, look for other academics, maybe in your research group, who would be willing to

provide you with a letter of recommendation for a position outside academia. It is perfectly valid to explain to a company the reason why you have chosen this person to provide your reference.

【Q9】 One of my professors advised me that it would be better to initially work for a general company before moving onto a NGO/non-profit. Would you happen to have any thoughts about this based on your own experiences working at Vitae which is a non-profit? 【大学院生の方より】

【A9】

- Thank you. In my own experience, I moved straight from academia to a nonprofit without working in a different company in between. But there is no right or wrong answer. So moving from different kinds of organisations will give experiences of different cultures and different priorities. And there certainly are differences in the way that commercial organisations and nonprofit organisations approach and achieve their goals. Another thing to say is that it's useful to take different kinds of opportunities as they come along. But if you have a particular desire to work in a nonprofit organisation, then it might be useful to look at job descriptions of the kinds of roles and organisations you're interested in and then map your own competencies and experiences against those job descriptions. And that will give an idea of whether you have some experience gaps that could be filled by some time in a different kind of organisation. But otherwise, I think it's fine to start in the kind of organisation you would like to work for.

【Q10】 博士号取得者に強い関心はあるがときどきあるいは少数採用しているという雇用者について、強い関心を持ちつつも採用まで踏み込めないという理由にはどのようなものがあるのでしょうか。年齢の問題や雇用者側がどのように扱えばよいかわからないなどの問題も考えられますか？雇用者側の意見をお聞きしたことがあれば教えていただきたいです。【大学院生の方より】

【A10】

- The employers in this group were classified as interested in recruiting PhDs. They would mention that jobs were open to PhDs, alongside other degree holders, in their job adverts, but they would not have a campaign to just recruit PhDs. They did know what a PhD brought to their organisations, but they only recruit PhDs occasionally, maybe because they are a small company only have a small number of positions for highly qualified/skilled employees.

【Q11】 研究業績以外の要素もアカデミック雇用でも重要といいますが、それがどう評価される

のか、どう示せるのか、わからなかったです。【研究員・ポスドク相当の方より】

【A11】

- I think this is an interesting question because it is difficult to evaluate someone's personal competencies. And in the UK, a lot of employers will have a list of competencies that they are looking for and will be described in the job advert, for example, good communication skills, good project management abilities, and good problem-solving. They will use competency-based interview techniques to ask you to provide evidence that you have these skills. So you need to think about what examples you can give to show that you're good at, for example, project management. Is there a specific project you can describe that you have delivered on time and effectively and the skills you used to do this effectively? In academia it is much less common to have competency-based interviews. But even in academic interviews, they will be making judgments on you by how you present yourself, what you say, and what you may bring to the research group. So you have an opportunity to talk about what you can contribute to the academic group that goes beyond your list of research papers and grant income. You can give examples of how good you are at, for example, working with others, building collaborations, managing complex projects, etc.

【Q12】 Thank you for this event. In the lecture, you discussed that some of the doctoral holders are keeping a secret while looking for jobs outside academia. Do you have suggestions to overcome this? 【研究員・ポスドク相当の方より】

【A12】

- Some researchers are concerned that if they tell their mentor that they are looking at jobs outside of academia they are judged as not interested in academic research. However, it is sensible to consider a wide range of jobs and the data shows that the large majority of PhDs will end up working outside of academia. It can feel like an uncomfortable decision whether to tell your mentor/line manager—even if you are looking for another position in academia. However, academics are used to having staff move on and usually it helps if you're open about this because you never know what contacts your mentor or other members of the research group may have which could help you in your search for employment both inside and outside academia. But everyone's situation is different and you have to make your own judgment in terms of whether this is right for you.

【Q13】 Thank you for holding this event. Can we get RDF on JST website or elsewhere to improve our competency? 【研究員・ポスドク相当の方より】

【A13】

- The RDF is available at the Vitae website (<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework>). We will also add a Japanese version to the JST website.

【Q14】 Thanks for the quite interesting lecture. I'm a rather aged postdoc and now working at a university to support the doctoral students (mainly the global students) to find jobs. In Japan, most of the permanent academic positions at the public/national organization are available for the candidates who have Japanese citizenship/nationality (for the sake of the national confidential?). I hope those jobs will be opened for anybody with good enough potential. How is the general situation in the UK/Europe? 【研究員・ポスドク相当の方より】

【A14】

- In the UK we have a very open academic system. People come from all parts of the world to work in UK universities and research institutes. Currently, around 20% of academic staff in the UK come from Europe and around 15% come from the rest of the world. There are a few research areas where jobs are restricted to UK national—mainly related to specific areas of defence. I think it is a similar in many countries e.g., in Europe, USA, Canada, Australia. In Japan there are more international researchers coming into doctoral programmes and postdoctoral positions: hopefully, this internationalisation of the Japanese academic system will continue.

【Q15】 公募に応募する際の研究業績や CV の効果的な書き方などを教えてほしいです。大学での常勤や非常勤での経験がまだない場合、TF (teaching fellow) での経験を教育歴として、どのように書くのがよいのでしょうか。また、研究業績が少ないのが悩みです。よろしくお願いいたします。【大学院生の方より】

【A15】

- If I understand the question, it's about writing a CV and trying to make the most of small experience to apply to. So the first thing I would say is to use the time that you still have to get in as many different kinds of experiences as possible, even if it's just a little taste of teaching or writing, for example, a blog post or more informal articles just to supplement any journal articles and book chapters that can take a long time. Also, think about the experience that you have from the

rest of your life, for example, from social activities or from volunteering. And all of these experiences can be used to demonstrate the kind of competencies that you have, such as working with people, leading a group of people. And if you haven't had these kinds of chances, starting something like a journal club or coffee morning can demonstrate that you are proactive and interested in developing yourself. I think one of the key things to demonstrate to an employer is not just what you have done already, but your potential, what other things that you can do. And sharing that enthusiasm and proactivity for developing yourself is important. And the final thing I would say is most of the time when employers are looking for a candidate, they don't find the perfect match. They don't find somebody who ticks every box. So if you don't have every single experience, still put yourself forward because you may be the best candidate.

【Q16】社会人経験のある大学院生（30～40 代）から将来について相談を受けることがあります。どのようなアドバイスが有効でしょうか。【URA の方より】

【A16】

- If I understand the question, it is how to give career advice to mature researchers who have worked in other employment sectors before doing their PhD. These researchers will have a unique breadth of competencies as a result of their experiences that they need to recognise and value. Assessing their range of competencies against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework>) would help them identify how their experiences helps them be a better researcher and how to build on these abilities and evidence them to others in their CVs and interviews.

【Q17】 I was wondering as a Molecular Biologist, other than the Pharma sector, what kind of other career opportunities would be available for researchers in my field? 【大学院生の方より】

【A17】

- As a researcher, you are likely to have a range of competences and knowledge that would be valuable to employers from different sectors. To understand your own strengths you could start by assessing yourself against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework as Janet described in the video. Being a researcher involves taking on a variety of roles, some of which you may enjoy more than others, for example project management, scientific writing, data analysis. Any of

these (any many more) could form the basis of a new career direction. To find out about the types of jobs that might be open to someone with your research background, you could ask where people from your research group or department have moved on to.

【Q18】 What is a good/acceptable reason to give employers when they ask why we left science/research/changed fields? 【大学院生の方より】

【A18】

- There is no right or wrong reason for changing career direction, though some individuals may have personal opinions about this. Therefore, it may be helpful to stay close to the truth with your response. The recruitment and interview process is an opportunity for you to learn about your prospective employer as well as for them to learn about you, so an honest answer might help you to understand if they are a good fit for your career aspirations.

【Q19】 アカデミックの分野で働くことに憧れが強かったため、博士課程まで進学したのですが、論文や業績など強くアピールできる結果がまだありません。自分の研究スキルに限界を感じ、強かった憧れも薄れてきた場合、自分のできるスキルの範囲で新しいキャリアを考えたほうがよいですか？ 【大学院生の方より】

【A19】

- This is such a personal question, that it is difficult to answer specifically. For example, you do not say at what stage you are at—the majority of PhD students go through—the ‘second year blues’ when they are struggling to get their results and wonder why they started their PhD. For the majority, this passes. Or maybe in the long term academic research is not for you. My advice is to find someone how you can talk to about your situation: your mentor, or a colleague, or friend that you can talk openly with; maybe the university has some counselling support. Talk to your peers—maybe others are feeling the same and just realising that you are not alone will help you find a sense of perspective. Passion for research and perseverance are both important attributes to enjoy an academic career!

【Q20】 Should I use the title Dr. in job applications or my CV? Or should I omit this? 【大学院生の方より】

【A20】

- You are entitled to use Dr in all aspects of your life. You can also decide what you want to include in your CVs and job applications, so the decision is yours to make

whether you include it in your title. I'm proud of achieving my PhD and have always used included it on my CV and job applications and I have working in a range of different employment sectors. However, I am aware that many people do not understand what is involved in doing a PhD and the range of competencies you develop through doing research and you should consider how you can counter this lack of knowledge—or preconceptions up front. For any job it is important that the application and the CV is customised for that job. Do your research: look at the job specification; customise your CV so it best demonstrates the attributes that the organisation is looking for and how your PhD contributes to this. The covering letter is equally important. This is where you can highlight how well you meet the job specification and what you can bring to the organisation. This is where you can acknowledge your PhD up front and describe how it has shaped the person you are. You can answer the 'un-asked questions'—why are you leaving academic after doing a PhD? why are you applying to this company for this job?