



# RESEARCHER CONNECT

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
FOR RESEARCHERS**

**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 *Know your Audience* 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<sup>1</sup>, 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)<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/vitae-concordat-vitae-2011.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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](http://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](mailto: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 course *Know your Audience* is the foundation for all other 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 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: **Know your audience**

#### A 2–3-hour 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 Know your Audience module provides participants with the insights, understanding and tactics to avoid such situations, and to communicate effectively whatever the situation or context. It also serves as the foundation for the subsequent Researcher Connect modules.

The unique approach delivered in Know your Audience 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:

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

#### Who is this module for?

Researchers from any discipline should benefit from this module.

#### Best taken in combination with:

Know your Audience is an essential foundation module for 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 finesse 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 different platforms. There follows a brief review of some basic 'good writing' qualities 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.





**Learning outcomes:**

- Be able to create effective abstracts for different audiences.
- Have a good understanding of the functions of abstracts.
- Have met and become aware of the different styles of abstracts in different fields and different publications.
- Have met and 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: Know your Audience (mandatory); Writing for Publication: Basics; and Writing for Publication: Getting Published; or Better Presentations.

It links well to the online Researcher Connect–Epigeum modules Getting Published in the Arts and Getting Published in the Sciences.

Links with the Vitae Research Development Framework (RDF).

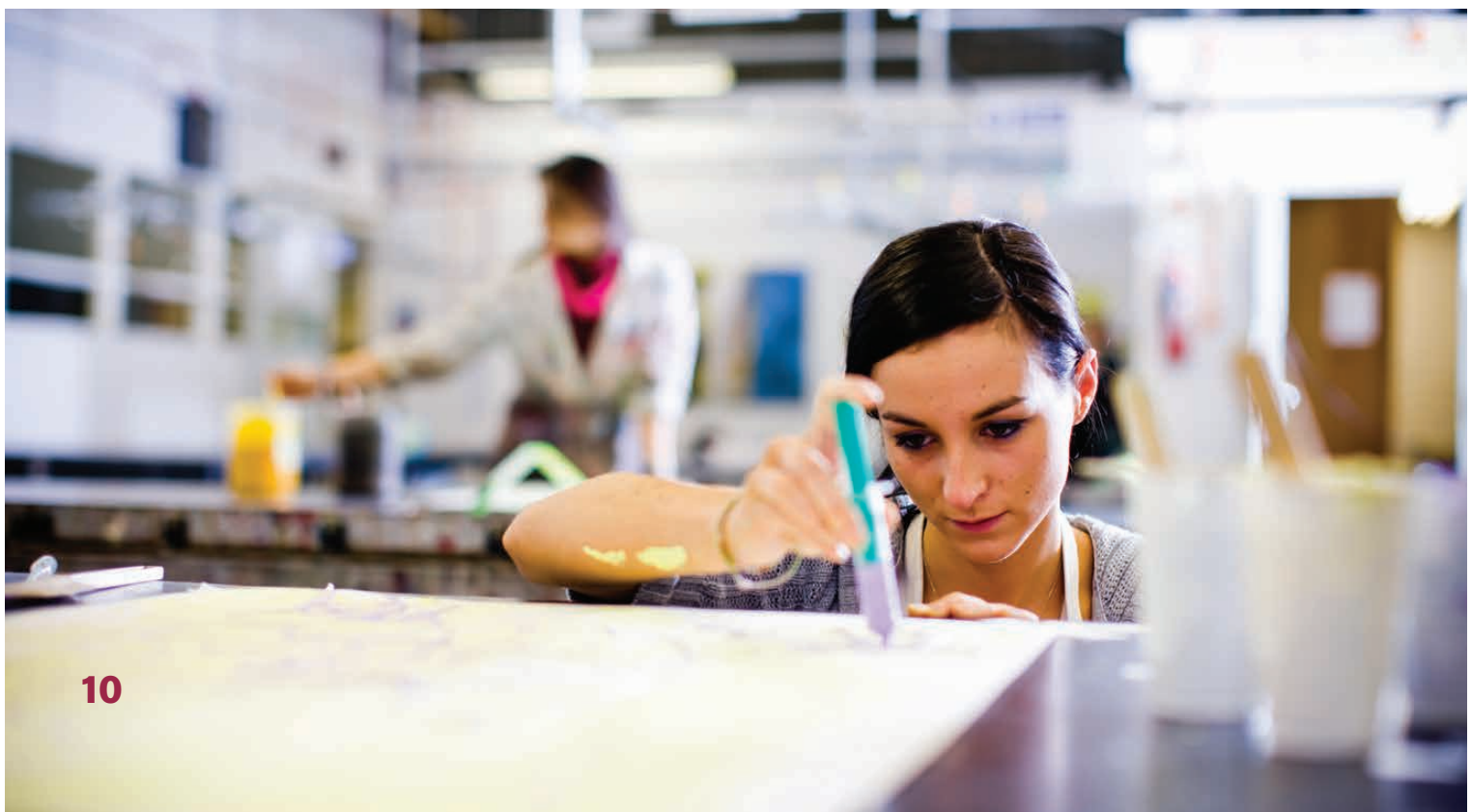
This module helps develop skills relevant to the following areas identified in the RDF:

**Primary**

- D2: Communication and dissemination.

**Secondary**

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





## Researcher Connect: Effective emails

### A two to three-hour 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 allows, or if demanded, 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 their readers.
- 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: Know Your Audience (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.

## Researcher Connect: Better presentations

### A one to 1.5-day module

Better Presentations 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, Better Presentations is highly experiential with participants developing, delivering and critiquing a brief presentation through a series of step-by-step activities.

Better Presentations also includes a short 'add-on' module to refine poster presentation skills.

### 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:

Better Presentations starts with an analysis of what makes a presentation effective or not, thus identifying the key components the group needs to concentrate on during the course. 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 meets 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 play and 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 presentation from each participant critically reviewed by the group.

Poster Presentations considers the fundamentals of poster creation, design and delivery. Participants critique multiple examples and embed their learning by building, introducing and critiquing their own posters.

**Who is this module for?**

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

**Best taken in combination with:**

Better Presentations is best taken in combination with: Know Your Audience (mandatory); Abstracts. This module also balances well with any of the writing skills Researcher Connect courses.

It links well to the online Researcher Connect–Epigeum courses Presenting at Conferences.

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:  
Professional 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, granting 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. Researcher Connect Professional Proposals enables researchers to write successful proposals; those that are clear, concise and achieve what they are asking for.



The insight and techniques gained in Professional 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 their 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 will 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: Know Your Audience (mandatory); Better Presentations and Effective Emails. It complements the academic writing skills in WfP: Basics.

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..



## Researcher Connect: Writing for publication – basics

### A one-day module

Writing for Publication: Basics is an introductory module to the principles and techniques of adapting your academic writing to become excellent publication material. We consider publication in multiple formats, not just peer-reviewed journals.

WfP: Basics is suitable for early-career researchers and anyone who wishes to refresh their academic writing skills and bring them up to date with a modern approach to publication. It is anticipated that participants in this module will have been writing academic-style pieces for some time, whether for theses, dissertations or for external readerships, but may be less adept at building papers specifically for wider audiences.

During the course participants will work on an outline paper about a specific area of their own research that they wish to publish on. They will end with an annotated structure and a completed, reviewed Introduction section.

### Learning outcomes:

- Be able to clearly distinguish excellent international academic writing, its qualities and voice.
- Be aware of the adaptations needed to develop academic writing for various publication audiences and have techniques with which to achieve this.
- Be able to write with clear purpose and from a strong ethical base.
- Be able to write persuasively using solid argumentation.
- Be able to use the voices of others ethically, correctly and appropriately in their own work.
- Have developed reflexive skills for professional development in this area.

### Module content:

The module begins with an analysis of the characteristics of good academic writing, including common features, styles and voice, and then focuses on the specific identifiers of writing for a publication audience. Next, the module will incorporate the principles encountered in Know your Audience in order to begin work on a skeleton publication paper. The final foundations are formed with a refresher on the fundamentals of academic argument, originality and the very practical consideration of publication timelines. From here the participants will spend time developing the unique structure and review the Introduction they created prior to the course, in light of their new learning. The next units focus on specific techniques common to academic writing. These are practised in individual tasks before the participants re-visit their own written work to critique, edit and improve using the newly developed techniques appropriately. The following section changes focus to bring in the voices of others ethically and using correct protocols. Finally, the module will skim through some key know-how and tactics for reviewing the draft piece.

**Who is this module for?**

Early-career-stage researchers from any discipline should benefit from this course.

**Best taken in combination with:**

Writing for Publication: Basics is best taken in combination with: Know Your Audience (mandatory); Writing for Publication: Getting Published; Abstracts. WfP: Basics balances well with Better Presentations.

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.
- A1: Knowledge base.

**Secondary**

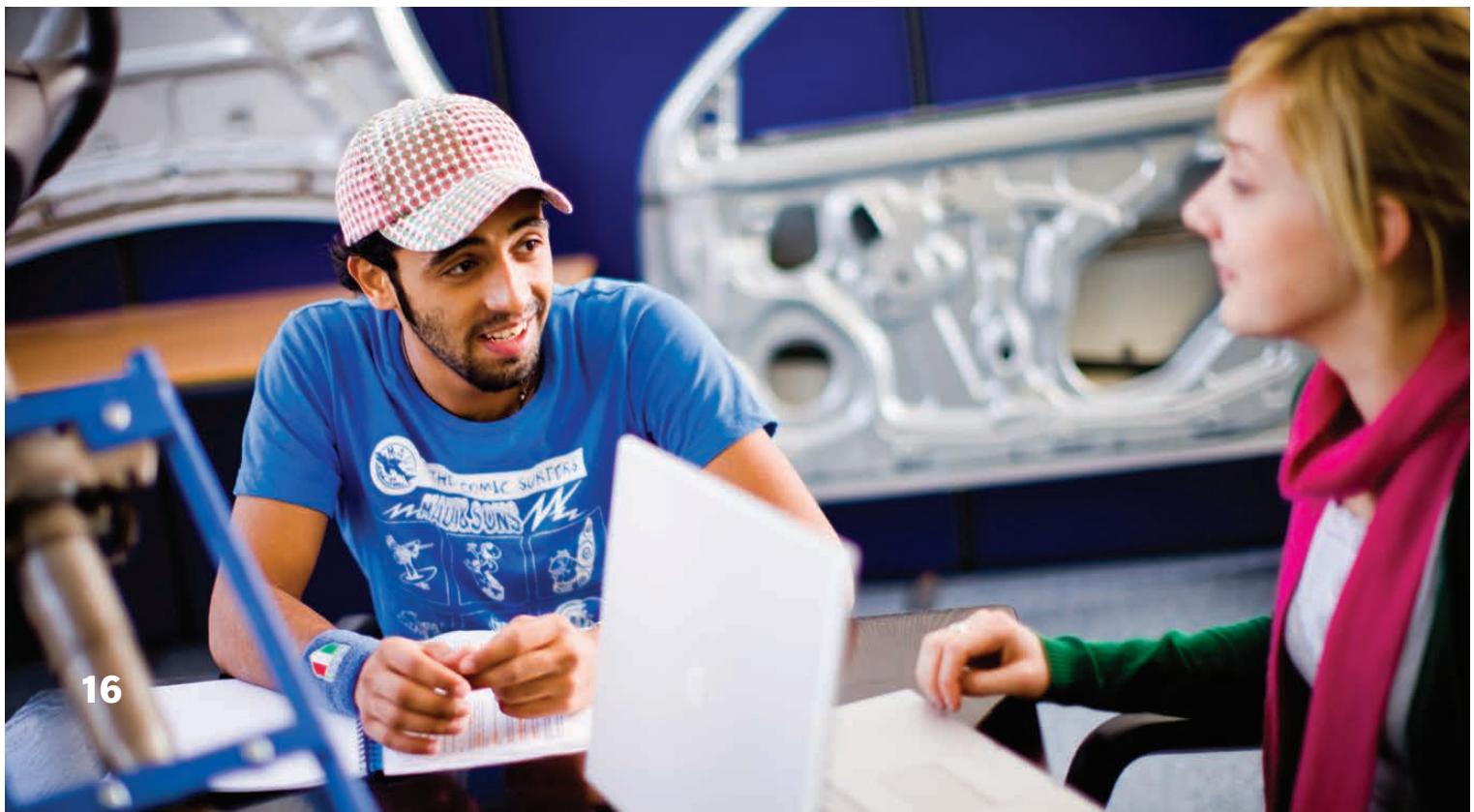
- A3: Creativity.
- C1: Professional conduct.
- D3: Engagement and impact.

**Researcher Connect:  
Writing for publication:  
getting published**

**A one-day module**

While many academics and researchers possess the writing skills to create a good publication, the art of getting published by the right platform at the right time requires strategy and know-how that go far beyond writing. Researcher Connect's Writing for Publication: Getting Published module provides an opportunity to develop these; to form a long-term view of their desired publishing career and set some goals; to consider the range of opportunities available to the connected researchers in getting themselves and their work known and talked about; to growing an understanding of the publications industry and its key players; and to developing the tactics to work with these people and platforms successfully.

Writing for Publication: Getting Published is a practical course supporting the development of tactics and a strategic



approach to international publishing in multiple formats. It contains know-how on getting through and understanding the publishing process and the authors' role in this.

This one-day module is largely discussion and activity based.

#### Learning outcomes:

- Be able to make well-informed, strategic decisions about their publishing career.
- Be able to confidently use appropriate publishing jargon.
- Understand and use metrics appropriately to assess impact.
- Be able to make clear choices about publishing formats from the wide range of options available.
- Have a strategic approach to choosing journals for publication.
- Have clear understanding of the reviewer process and their place in this.
- Have an understanding of and personal position on the ethics of publishing.
- Be able to make choices regarding the level of access to their published work.
- Understand and have tried various self-promotion techniques including social media.
- Have a plan to move their publishing careers forward.
- A self-critiquing process will run in parallel to the activities and conclude with a self- and peer-developed analysis with 'next steps' to work on.

#### Module contents:

The module begins with a brief philosophical look at the reasons for publishing before moving into the practicalities of publishing terminology

and the range of platforms and formats open to the modern international researcher. The module then considers the range of metrics that can be helpful for measuring our own success and that of the platforms, specifically journals, we publish in. Recognising that at some stage publishing in peer-reviewed journals is a must, the module will take a strategic look at selecting a journal and understanding the reviewing process that follows. There's time to consider some ethical issues and the hot topic of today – open access. Finally, participants will review the options open to them in promoting their work and then finish off a personal strategic plan by naming their 'next steps'.

#### Who is this module for?

Early-career-stage researchers and research supervisors from any discipline should benefit from this course.

#### Best taken in combination with:

Writing for Publication: Getting Published is best taken in combination with: Know Your Audience (mandatory); Writing for Publication: Basics; Abstracts. It also balances well with Better Presentations.

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.
- A1: Knowledge base.

#### Secondary

- C1: Research management.
- A3: Creativity.
- C1: Professional conduct.
- D3: Engagement and impact.

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