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Acknowledgements

This project was initiated in partnership with UCL Doctoral School in response to a review of the original skills self-assessment function within Research Log.

The new Skills Evaluation Tool (SET) was developed by UCL academics who are experts in the field of assessment, led by Dr Gorkan Ahmetoglu and supported by Dr Sonia Koller and Josephine Andersen.

SET was piloted with Doctoral Researchers from the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment and the Faculty of Brain Sciences, who provided valuable feedback on the use of the tool.

This accompanying workbook was co-created by UCL Doctoral Researchers, Effrosyni Alexandrou and Weiwen Qi, who used insights from their own development journeys to inform the design.

We hope you find SET and the accompanying workbook helpful. Please send any feedback or questions to the UCL Academic and Researcher Experience Team at **doc.kill@cl.ac.uk**.





Welcome

Who should use this workbook?



Note to Supervisors

The Skills Evaluation Tool (SET) is designed to empower Doctoral Researchers to assess their current skills, knowledge, and abilities. Based on the [UCL Doctoral Researcher Development Framework \(RDF\)](#), it connects Doctoral Researchers with UCL training and development opportunities that best support their needs. Please see the [Core Catalogue](#) for an overview of opportunities. The evaluation can be repeated multiple times to monitor progress, enhance research skills and prepare for career next steps. This workbook provides a structured way to discuss the development needs of Doctoral Researchers you supervise.

Researcher Development Framework (RDF)

Vitae's **Researcher Development Framework (RDF)** is a national professional development framework that describes the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers.

The RDF and is an established framework used by most UK universities and was developed by researchers in consultation with employers both within academia and beyond. The framework contains four different domains which are each further divided into three sub-domains.

The UCL Skills Evaluation Tool (SET) has been developed to assess your current skills, knowledge, and abilities, and inform your decisions about which areas to develop and how you can do it. The 12 areas that you are asked to assess yourself against are aligned to the 12 sub-domains of the Researcher Development Framework.

The **UCL Doctoral Skill Development Programme (DSDP)** is also mapped to the Researcher Development Framework. Courses have been arranged into helpful collections to assist you when navigating the development programme. You can therefore use the Skills Evaluation Tool to identify the training and development opportunities that fit your specific development needs.





Step 1: Complete SET in Inkpath

This Skills Evaluation Tool (SET) has been developed to assess your current skills, knowledge, and abilities, and inform your decisions about which areas to develop and how you can do it. SET asks you to assess yourself against 12 sub-domains aligned to the Researcher Development Framework.

You are asked to assess yourself from 1 to 6 for each of the 12 sub-domains. Level 1 is where you might expect to be at the start of your doctoral journey, level 6 is where you might expect to be on completing your doctorate. The number you select indicates what knowledge, skill, or ability level you perceive yourself to be at.

To assist you with your assessment we have outlined what each number on the scale means in practice, with descriptions and examples.

Key points to consider when completing SET:



Step 2: Identify your priority development areas

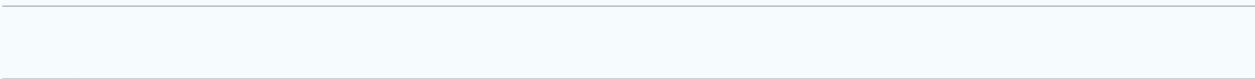
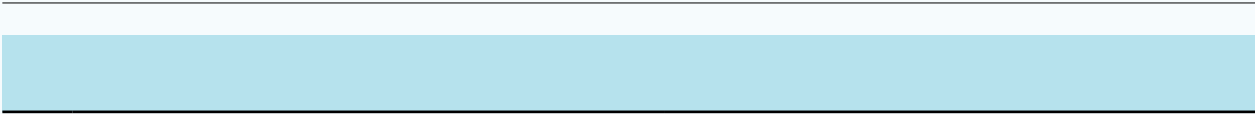
Step 3: Create your development plan

Once you have a draft of your development plan, discuss your thinking with your supervisor and other key project partners. For instance, you may discuss and agree which skills to prioritise, when to prioritise specific skills, and which skills are the most important for achieving your longer-term goals.

Use this space to write down any agreed actions following review of your development plan with your supervisor. This could include, you may



SET assessment descriptors



SET assessment descriptors

Creativity (RDF A3)

Assess your intellectual abilities and motivation related to generating new research ideas, employing novel approaches and spotting connections between different research areas.

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| 1 | You are at the start of the learning journey. | |
| 2 | You demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn and acquire knowledge, you show curiosity and open-mindedness. You understand the role of innovation and creativity in research and are willing to expose your ideas to a critical audience. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reading diverse literatures to stimulate new thinking, ▪ gathering critical feedback on new ideas by presenting your research in progress at seminars or conferences, ▪ formulating novel research questions |
| 3 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 2, but not quite as far as level 4. | |
| 4 | You are curious and ask useful, challenging questions. You develop new ways of working on a topic and have innovative ideas. You can find novel solutions to problems. You show initiative and work independently. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ regularly speaking to colleagues and academics to acquire knowledge and challenge your thinking, ▪ independently solving issues that arise in your research, ▪ assisting other researchers by thinking of ideas to overcome their research problems, ▪ having original ideas about the potential future direction of research, ▪ attending seminars or workshops promoting interdisciplinary research |
| 5 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 4, but not quite as far as level 6. | |
| 6 | You can see beyond immediate questions to unexplored areas of research. You are able to identify where your discipline/research area is going and to some extent influence other scholars and their thinking. You drive and deliver innovative research projects. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ confidently enquiring, challenging, and questioning ideas during conferences or in written publications, ▪ sharing own lateral thinking to larger audiences or through publications, ▪ being invited to share your novel ideas in conference symposia, journal special issues, or book chapters, ▪ developing an emerging pipeline of future research, ▪ overcoming significant problems in your research with a creative solution, ▪ cross-collaborating with researchers from other disciplines. |

Personal Qualities (RDF B1)

Assess your traits and attitudes that contribute to a productive and fulfilling research career.

1 You are at the start of the learning journey.

2 You are able to maintain enthusiasm and motivation for your own research, and rely on peer, supervisor or leader support when encountering obstacles. You reflect on, and are able to recognise, the boundaries of your own knowledge and skills and know how and when to draw on sources of support. You are moving towards taking complete responsibility for own project and own well-being.

Examples of achievements at this level include:

- showing initiative in your own approach to research,

SET assessment descriptors

Self-management (RDF B2)

Assess your behaviours that enable effective research and career management.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | You are at the start of the learning journey. | |
| 2 | You can prepare and plan projects to meet objectives, you commit to and complete your first research project. You can manage your own time effectively (including ensuring work-life balance) and can adapt your approach when required to. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ preparing a plan for completing your first research project (or chapter of your thesis), ▪ delivering key milestones within timelines specified in your plan, ▪ using existing support and advisory resources to enhance personal well-being. ▪ You don't spend extended periods working more hours than you would choose to. |
| 3 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 2, but not quite as far as level 4. | |
| 4 | You are able to prioritise and take a strategic view of projects. You can deal with the unexpected. You evaluate and manage potential distractions and are dedicated to establishing your research credentials. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ making a plan for delivering longer-term research projects (e.g., research related to your whole PhD thesis), ▪ establishing your own time management systems, ▪ independently and proactively adapting plans depending on changing priorities and new opportunities, ▪ delivering projects on schedule. |
| 5 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 4, but not quite as far as level 6. | |
| 6 | You prepare for the unexpected. You can see gaps and opportunities in project plans and can evaluate the changes needed. You maintain and model a healthy work-life balance to your colleagues, even when under pressure. You can manage multiple or complex projects to time. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ being effectively engaged in multiple research projects (e.g., research projects not part of your PhD thesis), ▪ planning research pipelines for your future career advancement, ▪ having a balanced lifestyle and are able to focus on other pursuits after work and at the weekend, ▪ delivering significant pieces of research work on schedule, ▪ advising and providing feedback on project plans and work-life balance issues to less experienced researchers. |

SET assessment descriptors

Finance, funding and resources (RDF C3)

Assess your skills required for the successful funding and resource allocation for research.

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|---|---|--|
| 1 | You are at the start of the learning journey. | |
| 2 | You understand the processes for funding research as well as the basic principles of financial management. You make efficient use of available resources. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ knowing what finance is available for you in respect of materials, travel, and publishing costs, ▪ having some basic understanding of how to budget and account for research expenses. |
| 3 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 2, but not quite as far as level 4. | |
| 4 | You have a broad awareness and knowledge of key relevant sources and grant application procedures. You recognise the significance of income and funding generation for your own institution. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ having secured a small grant (e.g. for a conference or public engagement activity), ▪ keeping basic accounts and reconciling them, ▪ independently managing your own research expenses and making effective use of resources available. |
| 5 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 4, but not quite as far as level 6. | |
| 6 | You are aware of the wider economic context for research funding in the UK and elsewhere. You know how to access the current primary sources of funding in your area and construct a persuasive grant proposal. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contributing to the writing of a grant application to a UK Research Council or similar body, ▪ successfully managing a grant, ▪ managing a budget for your research group (e.g. for a 1-day conference, research group away week). |



SET assessment descriptors

Communication and Dissemination (RDF D2)

Assess your skills and behaviours needed for the successful communication and dissemination of research.

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| 1 | You are at the start of the learning journey. | |
| 2 | You construct coherent arguments and articulate ideas clearly formally and informally, through a variety of techniques. You have a web presence as a researcher. You understand the processes of publication and academic exploitation of research results. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ having an up-to-date profile on a professional social media website, ▪ identifying how the comms department can help you disseminate your research, ▪ regularly posting professional updates or other relevant content (e.g., blog posts, research summaries) through social media or other means, ▪ producing some materials that can contribute to peer-reviewed publications, presenting a poster or a talk at a conference. |
| 3 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 2, but not quite as far as level 4. | |
| 4 | You present work confidently, both orally and in writing. You can communicate research effectively to a diverse and non-specialist audience. You produce material of publishable standard. You disseminate your research in a range of academic and public outlets. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ constructing a UCL webpage about you and your research, ▪ presenting your work at a national-level conference in your discipline/research area, ▪ partaking in public engagement events where you communicate research findings to diverse audiences, ▪ producing research outputs that are published in a peer-reviewed journal. |
| 5 | You are slightly further ahead than what is described in level 4, but not quite as far as level 6. | |
| 6 | You are able to eloquently make the complex accessible. You actively engage in knowledge exchange with the public, business, industry, and other users of research. You confidently present research findings at international conferences and/or to industry sponsors. | <p>Examples of achievements at this level include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ regularly and proactively taking advantage of knowledge exchange opportunities, ▪ being the first author on a peer-reviewed publication, ▪ presenting your work at an international conference, ▪ engaging successfully with a group of non-academic stakeholders, ▪ having a strong web presence (large audiences and followers etc.). |

