**Introduction**

Funding from the Open University’s SCORE Fellowship Programme enabled these test OERs to be produced. The aim of the OERs is to encourage PGRs to self-assess their skills base at the start of candidature, but to come from a point of knowledge and understanding regarding a) the skills, and b) the PhD.

Please read the following paragraphs

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| **The PhD forms the starting and connection point for each of the activities created:**   * Cognitive Ability I and II, * Self-Management I and II, * Research Management I and II, * Communication I and II, and a * Cumulative Self-Assessment.   The exercises all focus on different aspects of the PhD; some are designed to raise awareness of certain problems, others focus on ways to solve problems and manage situations; others require you to think about the context of specific requirements, how to communicate your project, what is appropriate for specific audiences and how can you target your activities in order to reap the maximum benefit. In short, these exercises are centred around the question ‘what do I need to do when, for whom, and how’.  The skills required to complete the exercises are interrelated and they all stem from the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) developed by Vitae, which can be adapted to meet the specific training environment at your university. The exercises are categorised according to the domains set out in the RDF:  A – Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities;  B – Personal Effectiveness;  C – Research Governance and Organisation;  D – Engagement, Influence and Impact.  The exercises can be completed in any order, and you can decide whether you want to do them in one go or whether it suits you better to dip in and out when you have the time of when the exercise fits a particular need. |

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| **What is a PhD?**  We are thinking about the PhD in 3 main ways:   1. In formal terms, a PhD is a document with a specific word limit. The thesis is produced within 3 years full-time, or up to 7 years part-time. When produced, the thesis will be structured according to the requirements of your university. 2. In intellectual terms, your PhD thesis is there to demonstrate    * + 1. the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship, or of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication;        2. a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or an area of professional practice;        3. the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems; and        4. a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry. 3. But the PhD candidature is also a period during which you should undertake training which might prepare you for the wider academic/research environment, where you 4. present papers at research conferences in your subject area, 5. form networks with other researchers and practitioners in your field of study, 6. publish your research, or 7. contribute to the teaching your subject area. |

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| **Why is skills acquisition and development important during the PhD process?**  Skills assessment and development is important to enable PGR students to recognise problems that occur during their PhD candidature and to enable them to seek training, advice or help in order to solve those problems. These problems can be organisational, ethical (to do with guidelines as to what is allowed in research) or personal. Yet, the skills of recognising and solving problems are generic and can easily be transferred. As we find ourselves confronted with new situations, we encounter specific demands, not all of which are spelled out in detail (e.g. in contracts or handbooks), pressures, constraints and possibilities. Figuring out what these are, how we can manage them, how/ where we can find help, and crucially, how to manage ourselves during such a process is a key life skill. |