



CONTRACT RESEARCHERS' CAREER DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PACK

Pack Guide

Use of the materials

This Guide is part of a training pack to support the career development of contract researchers. All original material arising from the development of this training pack has been provided under licence to EPSRC and its agents and the pack may be used freely by higher education establishments, their institutes and research units for the career training and development of their researchers. Please acknowledge EPSRC as the source of this resources pack material in delivering such training thus: Copyright © EPSRC October 2002.

However, please note that the pack does contain some material for which others may have intellectual property rights. Wherever this occurs, pre-existing rights to published material already in the public domain have been acknowledged by reference to the original source documents. If Training Designers intend to make copies of this material, they should inform the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society Ltd, 74 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1EF (email: alcs@alcs.co.uk) and make payment as required.

Contributors

EPSRC acknowledges the input from the following institutions that researched and developed this training pack during 2000 and 2002:

- Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC), Cambridge
- Continuing Professional Development Unit at University College London
- Research School, The Open University, Milton Keynes
- Careers Centre, University of Birmingham.

The final version of the pack was developed by the Research School of the Open University and the Careers Centre of the University of Birmingham.

Production team

Materials development	Dr. Wendy Stainton Rogers	Academic Co-ordinator, The Research School, Open University
	Dr. Richard Maynard	Director, Careers Centre, University of Birmingham
Administrative and secretarial support	Anna de Broize	The Research School, Open University
Editing	John O'Dwyer	Publishing Division, Open University
Design	Pat Klimetz Grace	Centre for Outcomes Based Education, Open University

Introduction to the pack

This pack has been developed to help universities and other research establishments to offer career development training for contract researchers. While the situation varies across academic fields and disciplines, the majority of research fellows working on fixed-term contracts have limited prospects for a permanent academic post, either as a lecturer or a researcher. In some fields fewer than 10 per cent can expect to make this move. For this reason, the main focus is on enabling contract researchers to gain and develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they will need to consider the option of a career move to employment outside the academic world. And, if they make this choice, it is intended to support and help them to do so in a well-informed, considered, constructive and positive manner.

Aims and objectives of the pack

This pack is intended to provide advice and guidance to help Training and Careers Officers and others involved in designing and delivering training for contract researchers (referred to in the pack as 'Training Designers') to plan and design training events and programmes directed towards the career development of contract researchers.

Specifically the pack is intended to provide the basis of training that will enable contract researchers to:

- 1 Reflexively evaluate their current situation and identify their priorities and aspirations for their future.
- 2 Develop their concept of career, and become more willing and able to take an active part in their own career management.
- 3 Broaden their career horizons beyond their current job, and become more aware of the range of alternative career opportunities that may be open to them.
- 4 Gain experience of other work environments through work shadowing, and insights into a variety of work environments through sharing experiences with peers.
- 5 Evaluate a range of options for the future, and identify what they need to do in order to be able to pursue them.
- 6 Improve their self-awareness and self-confidence.

About the pack

The pack provides resources and advice for designing and delivering training to meet these aims. It is based on a standard programme of two sessions of work shadowing, a two-day School and a Review Workshop. However, the pack is highly flexible in the ways it can be used. It is made up of modular elements that can be selected and 'mixed and matched' to suit particular circumstances, operate within specific constraints or meet particular needs.

What's in the pack

The pack consists of five main components (other than this **Pack Guide**):

- 1 **Training Designers' Guide** This offers an introduction to the experiential learning

approach used in the pack and gives detailed advice and guidance about how to plan and design training programmes and events and select and brief tutors. It also offers a detailed map of the **Resources** and advice on how to use and modify them. Finally it offers suggestions and advice on how to amend the **Trainers' Guides** and **Participants' Guides** as required.

- 2 **Tutors' Guide** A template **Tutors' Guide** is provided, designed on the basis of the standard programme. Where the standard programme is being run, the **Tutors' Guide** requires only minimal modification and then can simply be copied and given to course tutors at or before their pre-course briefing. However, if a non-standard programme is to be adopted, then the **Tutors' Guide** will need to be tailored to the alternative programme. The template is annotated to help in this process, and advice on how to do it is given in the **Training Designers' Guide**.
- 3 **Participants' Guide** Like the **Tutors' Guide**, this is provided in template form based on the standard programme. Where this is run, the **Participants' Guide** can simply be copied and sent out to participants. Note that in this case **it will need to be sent at least five weeks in advance**. This is to allow participants enough time to set up and conduct their pre-course work shadow. Where work shadowing is omitted, then the **Participants' Guide** will need amendment. Advice about how to do this is again given in the **Training Designers' Guide**.
- 4 **Resources** This part of the pack consists of sets of self-contained instructions and materials (e.g. PowerPoint/OHP slides, hand-outs) for conducting all the different sessions included in the standard programme, plus some alternative sessions that can be used in programmes that exclude work shadowing and in other kinds of training events. The PowerPoint slides are presented in outline text form within the instructions for each exercise, but also made available as PowerPoint slides on a separate file.
- 5 **PowerPoint slides** This file contains the PowerPoint slides.

The core component of the pack is the **Training Designer's Guide** and users should read this first – dipping into the other parts as they are covered, to see how all the different bits work together.

Different ways of using the pack

As mentioned already, the pack can be used 'straight' to run a standard programme, or as the basis of a range of different training events and programmes.

The standard programme

In designing the pack we worked from a standard training programme, comprising:

- A pre-course, short period of work shadowing.
- A two-day 'school', preferably residential, which takes participants through a structured programme of activities in which they:
 - share their work shadow experience
 - reflexively explore their career aspirations
 - identify the existing transferable skills of the group, and examine how these can be deployed in their career development
 - explore a wide range of alternative career options
 - plan and prepare for a more substantive work shadow

- review the skills they will need to pursue alternative careers.
- A further two-day work shadow.
- A one-day review workshop, in which they share and reflect upon what they have gained from their diverse work shadow experiences, further review their career options, and make plans to pursue the next stage in their career progression.

Where Training Designers follow the standard programme, the materials can largely be used as they stand – little modification will be necessary.

Modifying the components

However, it is recognised that Training Designers may want to modify specific exercises and activities – for instance, to tailor the standard programme to a specific group of contract researchers. Or they may wish to respond to changes in employment opportunities or other contextual changes. Suggestions and advice are provided in the [Training Designers' Guide](#) about how to do this.

Using the materials for alternative programmes or events

Alternatively, Training Designers may want to abandon the standard programme altogether and use the materials in a more focused way. This will be the case when there are time or resource constraints that make it is possible to undertake what is, in effect, a six-day standard programme of training (3 days of work shadowing + 2 + 1 days of training).

The materials are designed to be 'mixed and matched', and, again, suggestions are given in the [Training Designers' Guide](#) about how to construct programmes of different lengths and with different focal points. The materials also lend themselves to being used as the basis of (or even just part of) specific training events (e.g. a half-day workshop on tailoring CVs to specific job advertisements).

Experiential learning

The pack is based on an experiential approach to learning. Basically this is 'learning-by-doing'. In it, participants work together in small groups on activities designed to promote their learning. Put more formally, they carry out a sequence of tasks that have been designed to enable them to achieve specified learning objectives. In contrast to the usual lecture format, participants in this kind of learning acquire information and skills – and in some cases change their perceptions and attitudes – through the experience they gain in taking part in group activities

Not only do people learn more effectively and remember much better this way, they also find they can learn faster because this kind of learning is lively and interesting, and captures the whole of their attention. It is much more difficult to doze off during a discussion or a role-play! Crucially, experiential learning in groups capitalises upon the educational benefits arising from group processes. These include social and motivational processes within groups – such as creating common goals; and learning processes – such as when group members become important resources for each other in terms of expertise and knowledge.

However, experiential learning demands a lot of the people who design the training programme and the tutors who lead the sessions. Good experiential learning may *look* chaotic, but this is – or at least should be – an illusion. Good experiential learning is very carefully planned and highly orchestrated. It therefore needs to be carefully managed if group members are to be kept on track, so that they arrive at the insights, empathy or whatever is intended by the time a session ends.

Different users

Given these demands on both Training Designers and Tutors, the materials in the pack are quite didactic. They specify in some considerable detail precisely what should be done – for example, in terms of time allocations and the sequence of activities. However, also note that the [Training Designers' Guide](#) also offers advice about modifying the different activities and sessions and, for example, creating handouts. In other words, the didactic style is not intended to be prescriptive but **accessible**, especially to people with limited experience of training in general and/or experiential learning in particular.

We have devised the pack to be used by people with a wide range of backgrounds, including those who may, for example, have great expertise in conducting research but who are inexperienced in designing and delivering training. However, if training is your forte, we expect you will find you can often gloss over our advice and guidance and simply pick and choose from the [Resources](#), selecting the bits you think will be useful and deciding for yourself how to you will use them. If this applies to you, please do not see us as being patronising. We are merely seeking to make the pack as accessible as possible.