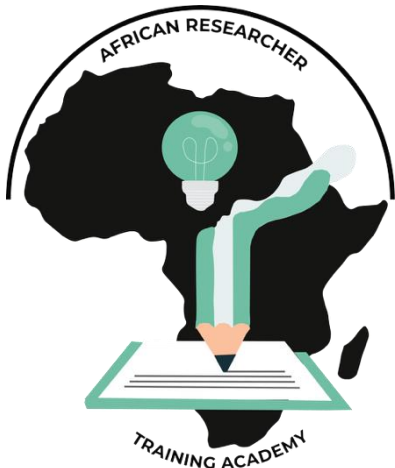


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Module 19: Career Pathing

Career Planning for Emerging Researchers and Academics (Workshop)

Presenter: Dr Thierry Luescher

Date: 30 July 2026

Time: 11am – 1 pm

Thierry.Luescher@uct.ac.za

A previous version of these slides was developed by the UCT
Researcher Development Academy (RDA)©



Research Career Planning

Dr Dheshnie Keswell
Dr Alexandra Sutherland
Dr Rolanda Julius



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Contents

Today we will answer
five questions:

1. Where am I now?
2. Where do I want to go?
3. What do I need to get there?
4. What support is available?
5. What will I do next?



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Lesson plan outline

- 5 mins: Housekeeping guidelines
- 5 mins: Introduction to session, trainer, biography reading
- 45 mins: Trainer presentation, reflective activities, questions and answers.
- 5 mins: Break.
- 30-40 mins: Workshop activities, group discussions, questions and answers.
- 5 mins: Summary of learnings and achievements.
- 10 mins: Evaluation



Learning objectives

- Understand the importance and key steps in academic and researcher career planning
- Learn to set and pursue career goals
- Set short, medium and long term career development goals of your academic journey
- Learn to draft a personal career plan for an academic/researcher career

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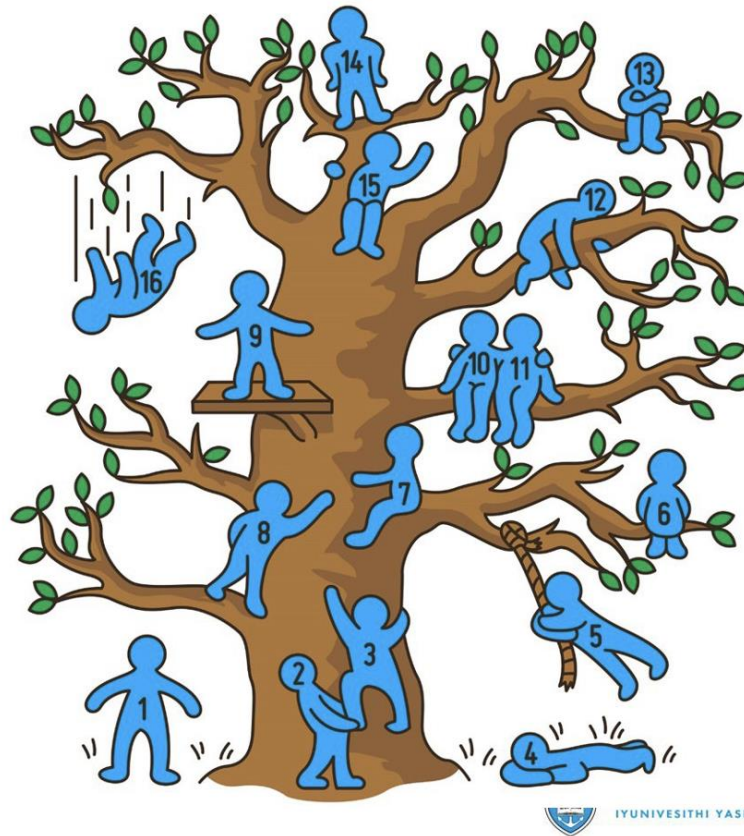


1. Where am I now?

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Which figure represents how you are feeling about your career development now?



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What do you like most
about the work you do?



What are some of the
challenges related to your
academic progress?

What actions might
you take to address
these challenges?



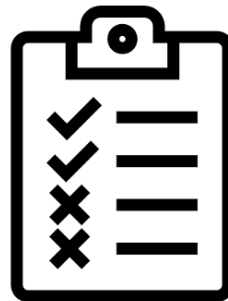
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Thinking about research career progression





Thinking about research career progression



STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE GAPS IN YOUR CV
1- FOR YOUR CURRENT POSITION,
2-FOR THE POSITION YOU ARE ASPIRING TO



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Academic CV

1. Contact Information
2. Research Objective or Personal Profile
 - Your Research Niche
3. Education
4. Professional Appointments
5. Publications
6. Awards and Honors
7. Grants and Fellowships
8. Conferences
9. Teaching Experience
10. Research Experience
 - Supervision
11. Additional Activities
 - Reviewing articles and thesis examination
 - Professional Memberships
 - Collaborations
12. Languages and Skills
13. References



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The four pillars of academic work are

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Research
3. Administration & Leadership
4. Public Service/Social responsiveness

Within the group discuss:

- ☐ In relation to your research organization or university and faculty's promotion requirements, which of the four pillars do you feel you have some experience in, and which do you need to be more intentional about building capacity in?



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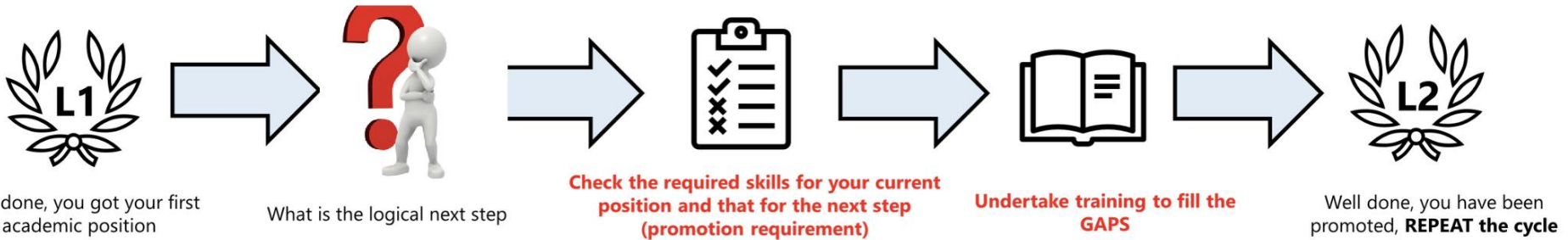
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2. Where do I want to go?

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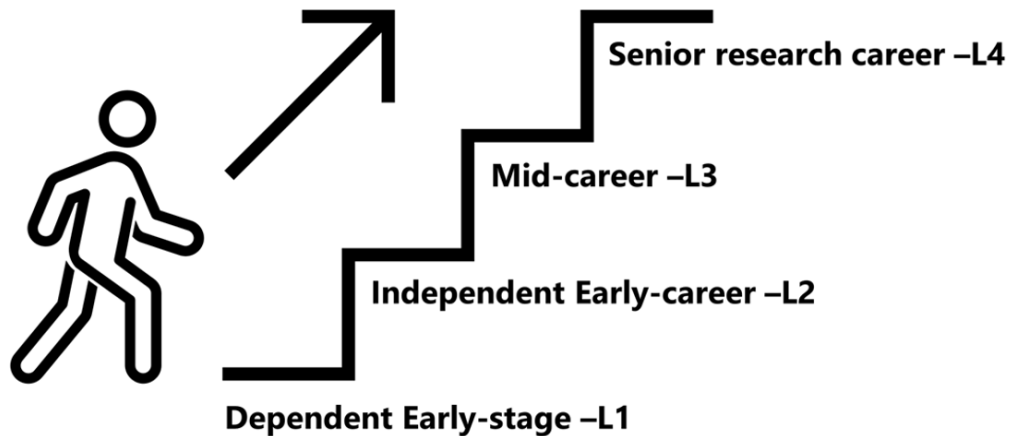




STEP 2: EVALUATE YOUR SKILLS LEVEL

1 – First look at your career stage

2 – Then consider your experience for each skill

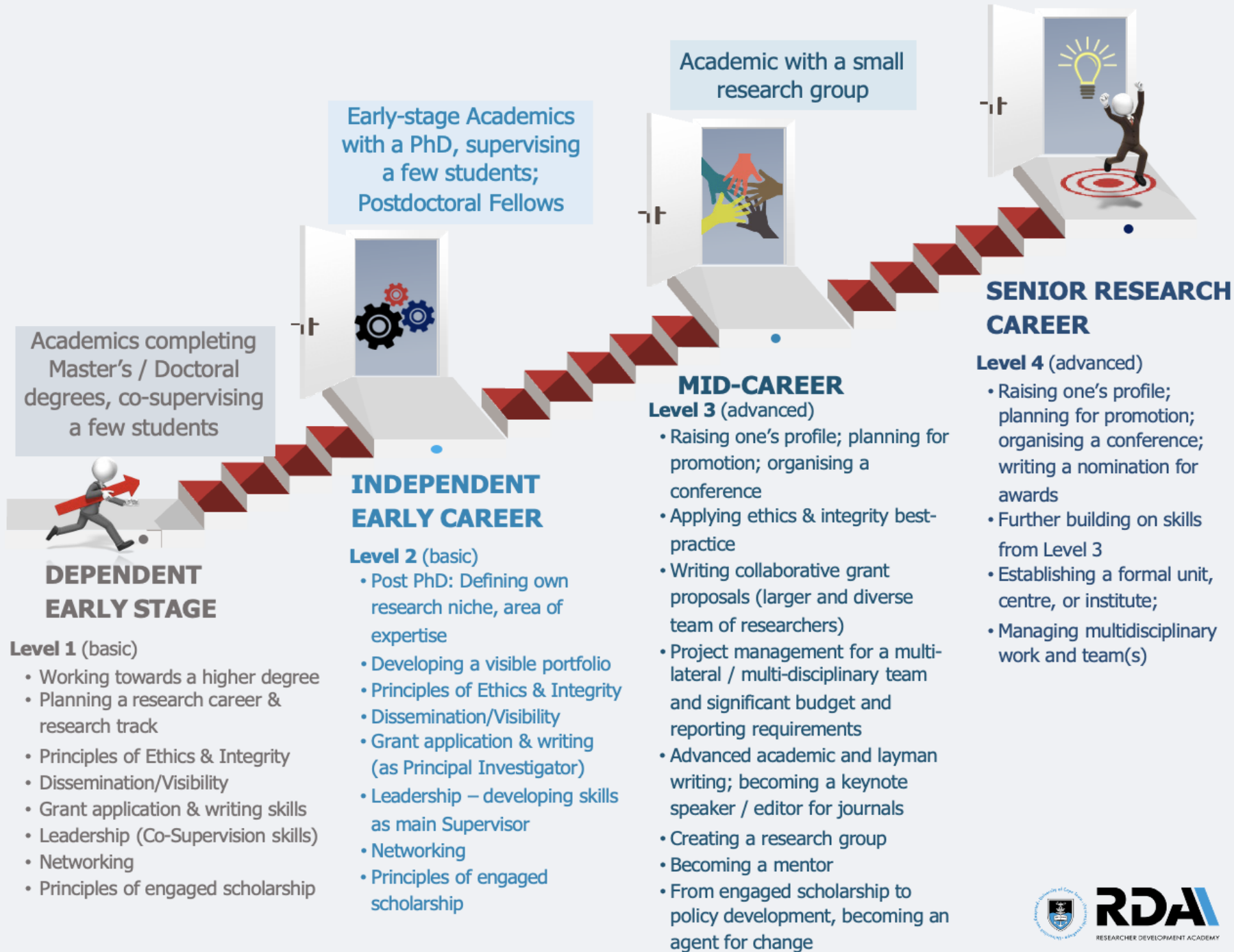


RESEARCHER'S ATTRIBUTES
RESEARCH CAREER JOURNEY & BENCHMARKING
RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY
QUALIFICATION & EXPERTISE
FUNDING
PROJECT MANAGEMENT
DISSEMINATION / VISIBILITY
LEADERSHIP
MENTORSHIP
NETWORKING
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



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Dependent Early-stage –L1	Independent Early-career –L2	Mid-career –L3	Senior research career –L4
RESEARCH CAREER L1: orientation and guidance; planning your research career and research track.	RESEARCH CAREER L2: orientation and guidance, developing a visible portfolio; planning and applying for your first NRF rating and ad hominem promotion	RESEARCH CAREER L3: raising your profile; renewing and improving your NRF rating; planning for promotion; organising a conference; writing nomination for award.	
RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY:	formal training in principles and policies	Ongoing development through experience... and applying best practice principles	
QUALIFICATION: working towards your higher degree ✓	POST PhD: define your own research niche and identity and establish your area of expertise.		
FUNDING L1: selecting a funder, writing a grant proposal for your higher degree or for a project with limited scope/team	FUNDING L2: selecting a funder, writing a grant proposal (PI with students and some participating members)	FUNDING L3: selecting an international funder and writing a collaborative grant proposal for involving a larger and diverse research team of researchers	
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT: project and budget	and grant management for a limited team ✓	ADVANCED PROJECT MANAGEMENT: project and grant management for an extensive (multilateral and/or multidisciplinary) team of researchers and significant budget with stringent reporting requirements.	
Basic DISSEMINATION / VISIBILITY: developing and formulating ideas; pitching to funders, basic academic and layman writing (where, how) and reviewing for journals, presenting at conferences.		Advanced DISSEMINATION / VISIBILITY: formulating and pitching to funders; advanced academic and layman writing; becoming a plenary/keynote speaker; chairing panel discussions, becoming an editor for journals	
LEADERSHIP L1: managing the relationship with your supervisors and developing supervision skills for co-supervision ✓	LEADERSHIP L2: developing supervision skills as main supervisor; attracting postgraduate students, examining theses.	LEADERSHIP L3: creating a research group; managing your team	LEADERSHIP L4: establishing a formal unit, centre, or institute; managing multidisciplinary work and team
BASIC MENTORSHIP: mentorship models; optimising being mentored & being a good mentee; identifying a mentorship framework/model, choosing a mentor		ADVANCED MENTORSHIP: becoming a mentor	
BASIC NETWORKING: why, how, what are the opportunities. ✓		ADVANCED NETWORKING: why, how, what are the opportunities; organising a conference, facilitating local and global networking	
BASIC SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: Principles of Engaged Scholarship, incorporating Engaged Scholarship in your research practice ✓		ADVANCED SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: from engaged scholarship to policy development, becoming an agent for change (government advisor...)	



Activity 1 - Identifying Research Career level



Dependent Early-stage –L1	Independent Early-career –L2	Mid-career –L3	Senior research career –L4
RESEARCH CAREER L1: orientation and guidance; planning your research career and research track.	RESEARCH CAREER L2: orientation and guidance, developing a visible portfolio; planning and applying for your first NRF rating and ad hominem promotion	RESEARCH CAREER L3: raising your profile; renewing and improving your NRF rating; planning for promotion; organising a conference; writing nomination for award.	
RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY: formal training in principles and policies		Ongoing development through experience... and applying best practice principles	
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LEADERSHIP L1: managing the relationship with your supervisors and developing supervision skills for co-supervision	LEADERSHIP L2: developing supervision skills as main supervisor; attracting postgraduate students, examining theses.	LEADERSHIP L3: creating a research group; managing your team	LEADERSHIP L4: establishing a formal unit, centre, or institute; managing multidisciplinary work and team
BASIC MENTORSHIP: mentorship models; optimising being mentored & being a good mentee; identifying a mentorship framework/model, choosing a mentor		ADVANCED MENTORSHIP: becoming a mentor	
BASIC NETWORKING: why, how, what are the opportunities.		ADVANCED NETWORKING: why, how, what are the opportunities; organising a conference, facilitating local and global networking	
BASIC SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: Principles of Engaged Scholarship, incorporating Engaged Scholarship in your research practice		ADVANCED SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: from engaged scholarship to policy development, becoming an agent for change (government advisor...)	

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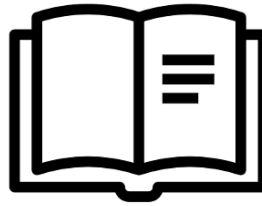


3. What do I need to get there?

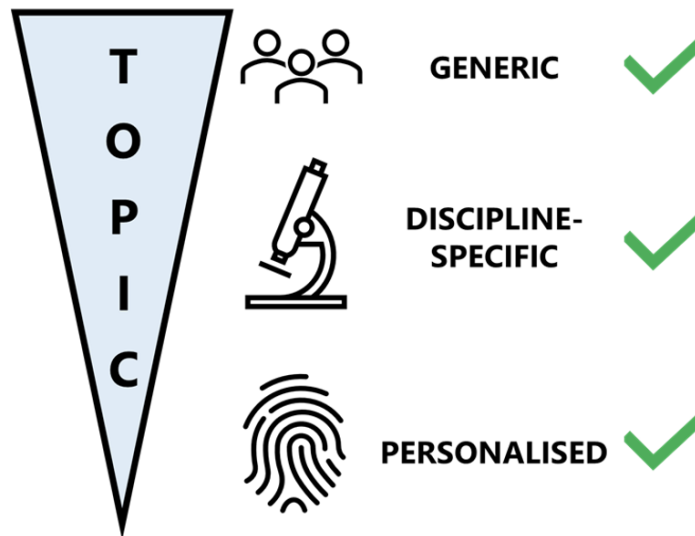
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Thinking about research career progression





STEP 3: SELECT YOUR COURSES & BUILD YOUR DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Researcher Development Framework

Our Researcher Development Framework is designed to promote long-term partnership with institutions rather than ad hoc interventions. Based on typical needs as voiced by our own researchers, this framework describes the essential skills that provide a foundation for a successful academic career, and enables institutions to jointly design face-to-face and remote programmes with the RDA team to suit the specific needs of their institution and researchers.

TOPICS	DEPENDENT EARLY CAREER – L1	INDEPENDENT EARLY CAREER – L2	MID CAREER – L3	SENIOR RESEARCH CAREER – L4
Research	Orientation and guidance; planning a research career and research track.	Orientation and guidance; developing a visible portfolio; planning and applying ad hominem promotion. ---for SA: NRF Rating	Raising one's profile; planning for promotion; organising a conference; writing a nomination for awards. ---for SA: NRF Rating	
Ethics & Integrity	Formal training in principles and policies.		Ongoing development through experience and applying best practice principles.	
Qualification	Working towards a higher degree.	Post PhD: Defining one's own research niche and identity; establishing an area of expertise.		
Funding	Selecting a funder, writing a grant proposal for a higher degree or for a project with a limited scope or team.	Selecting a funder, writing a grant proposal (Principal Investigator with students and some participating members).	Selecting an international funder and writing a collaborative grant proposal for involving a larger and diverse research team of researchers.	
Project Management	Basic: Project and grant management for a limited team and budget.		Advanced: Project and grant management for an extensive (multilateral and/or multidisciplinary) team of researchers and significant budget with stringent reporting requirements.	
Dissemination / Visibility	Basic: Developing and formulating ideas; pitching to funders; basic academic and layman writing (where, how) and reviewing for journals; presenting at conferences.		Advanced: Formulating and pitching to funders; advanced academic and layman writing; becoming a plenary/keynote speaker; chairing panel discussions; becoming an editor for journals.	
Leadership	Managing the relationship with supervisors and developing supervision skills for co-supervision.	Developing supervision skills as main supervisor; attracting postgraduate students; examining theses.	Creating a research group; managing a research team.	Establishing a formal unit, centre, or institute; managing multidisciplinary work and team.
Mentorship	Basic: Mentorship models; optimising being mentored & being a good mentee; identifying a mentorship framework/model; choosing a mentor.		Advanced: Becoming a mentor.	
Networking	Basic: Why, how, what are the opportunities?		Advanced: Why, how, what are the opportunities? Organising a conference; facilitating local and global networking.	
Engagement	Basic: Principles of engaged scholarship; incorporating engaged scholarship in research practice.		Advanced: From engaged scholarship to policy development; becoming an agent for change.	



4. What support is available?

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Researcher Development Planner

Professional & Career Development Themes & Courses 2026

The building blocks for your career development plan

Presented by the Office of Postgraduate Studies & Researcher Development
UCT Research Office

THEME 1 Career Development



- Career Development Workshop | 21 Jan
- Preparing to Apply for Promotion | 8 Apr
- Career Development for Engaged Scholars | 8 Apr
- The Ad Hom Promotion Process | 5 May
- Planning a Sabbatical | 13 Aug
- Applying for NRF Rating | 5 Nov

THEME 2 Grant Writing (GW)



- Introduction to Grant Writing | 17, 19, 24, 26 Feb
- Proposal Development | 5 March
- International Grants Hub: Grant Budget Management | 19 March
- GW for Engaged Scholarship | 9 Jul
- Advanced Grant Writing | 29 Sep & 1 Oct

THEME 3 Supervision



- Introduction to Supervision | In-person: 2 & 3 Feb | Online: 20, 21, 22, 23 Jul
- Hosting Postdoctoral Fellows | 5 March
- Dealing with Challenges & Maximising Opportunities – Panel Discussion | 22 Apr

THEME 4 People & Project Management



- Research Project Management for PI's | 18, 20, 25, 27 Aug
- Building a Research Team | 21 Sep
- Working in Multi-Disciplinary Teams | 7 Oct

THEME 5 Research Visibility



- Personal Branding Workshop | 12 Feb
- Conference Presentations | 10 March
- Research and social media | 13 May
- Communicating Research to Non-Academic Audiences | 29 Jul
- Writing for the Conversation | tbc



Researcher Development Planner

Professional & Career Development Themes & Courses 2026

The building blocks for your career development plan

THEME 6 Writing & Publishing



- Ethics & Responsible Conduct | 12 March
- Author ID's and Profiles | 30 Apr
- Writing Workshop | 25-27 May (half day)
- Writing for a Scholarly Journal | 2 June
- Open Access Publication | 22 June
- Publishing a Book through UCT | 12 Nov
- Writing Space at Research Office | Last Friday of the month
- Master/PhD peer meeting space | Every 2nd month

THEME 7 Research Innovation & Entrepreneurship



- Using AI responsibly for research | 14 Apr
- Science Implementation | 4 Aug
- Entrepreneurship and Research | 16 Sep
- Research Contracts & Innovation | 15 Oct
- Design Thinking for Research Workshop | 2 Nov

THEME 8 Social Responsiveness & Engaged Scholarship (ES)



- Introduction to ES: Mapping Conceptions, Motivations & Practices | 3 March
- Equitable Community Partnership Building & Reciprocity | 23 March
- Career Development for ES | 16 Apr
- Research Design for ES | 19 May
- Co-Creation Approaches to Research | 9 June
- Narrating Research Impact | 18 June
- Grant Writing for Engaged Research | 9 Jul
- Engaged Scholarship in Action | 3 Sep

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Our Researcher Development Framework is designed to promote long-term partnership with institutions rather than ad hoc interventions. Based on typical needs as voiced by our own researchers, this framework describes the essential skills that provide a foundation for a successful academic career, and enables institutions to jointly design face-to-face and remote programmes with the RDA team to suit the specific needs of their institution and researchers.

TOPICS	DEPENDENT EARLY CAREER - 1.1	INDEPENDENT EARLY CAREER - 1.2	MID CAREER - 1.3	SENIOR RESEARCH CAREER - 1.4
Research	Orientation and guidance, plotting a research career and research track.	Orientation and guidance, developing a visible portfolio, planning and applying ad-hominem promotion... for SA NRF Rating	Assessing one's profile, planning for promotion, organising a conference, writing a nomination for awards... for SA NRF Rating	
Ethics & Integrity	Formal training in principles and policies.		Ongoing development through experience and applying basic practice principles.	
Qualification	Working towards a higher degree.	Post-PhD defining one's own research niche and identity, establishing an area of expertise.		
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Project Management	Basic: Project and grant management for a limited team and budget.		Advanced: Project and grant management for an extensive (multisite) and/or multidisciplinary team of researchers and significant budget with complex reporting requirements.	
Dissemination / Visibility	Basic: Developing and formulating ideas; pitching to funders, basic academic and layman writing labors, hand and reviewing for journals, presenting at conferences.		Advanced: Formulating and pitching to funders, advanced academic and layman writing, becoming a plenary/keynote speaker, chairing panel discussions, becoming an editor for journals.	
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Engagement	Basic: Principles of engaged scholarship, incorporating engaged scholarship in research practice.		Advanced: From engaged scholarship to policy development, becoming an agent for change.	

Contact the Researcher Development Team for more information.

Email:
Nocky.Bobo@uct.ac.za

<https://uct.ac.za/research-support-hub/researcher-development>

Emerging Researcher Programme 2026 (IP – in person; O = Online)

January	February	March	April
21 Career planning workshop (IP) 26-28 Writing retreat (IP)	2,3 Intro to Supervision workshop (IP) 4 eRA short intro: Populating your researcher profile(O) 6 Masters/PHD cohort meeting (IP) 9-11 Writing retreat (IP) 12 Personal Branding for Academics (IP) 17,19,24,26 Intro to Grant Writing (O) 20 eRA short intro: Award Management on eRA (O) 27 Writing space at the RO (IP)	3 Mapping Engaged Scholarship: conceptions, motivations and practices (O) 5 Proposal development for Grant Writing (IP) 11 Ethics and Responsible conduct in research (O) 12 Conference presentations (powerpoint & posters) (O) 16 Hosting Post-Docs (O) 19 International Grants Hub webinar on grant budget management (O) 23 Principles of equitable partnerships in Engaged Scholarship (O) 27 Writing space at the RO (IP)	8 Preparing for Ad Hom promotion (IP) 14 Using AI responsibly for research (O) 16 Career Development for Engaged Scholars (IP) 17 Masters/PHD cohort (IP) 24 Writing space at the RO (IP)
May	June	July	August
5 Ad Hom Promotion (O) 13 Research & social media (O) 19: Research Design for Engaged Scholarship (O) 21 Networking event (IP) 25-27 Writing workshop (IP) 29 Writing space at the RO (IP)	2 Writing for a scholarly journal (O) 9 Co-creation approaches to research (IP) 18 Narrating research impact (IP) 26 Writing space at the RO (IP)	9 Grant writing for engaged scholarship (O) 20-23 Introduction to Supervision (O) 29 Communicating your research to non-academic audiences (O) 31 Writing space at the RO (IP)	4 Science Implementation (O) 6 Masters/PHD cohort (IP) 13 Planning for a sabbatical (O) 18,20,25,27 Research Project Management Series (O) 28 Writing space at the RO (IP)
September	October	November	December
3 Engaged Scholarship in action - scholars talk about their work (IP) 16 Entrepreneurship and research (O) 21 Building a research team (O) 25 Writing space at the RO (IP) 29 Advanced Grant Writing 1 (O)	1 Advanced Grant writing 2 (O) 7 Working in multi-disciplinary teams (O) 9 Masters/PHD cohort (IP) 15 Research Contracts and Innovation (O) 20 Work/Life balance (O) 29 Networking event (IP) 30 Writing space at the RO (IP)	2 Design Thinking for research (IP) 12 Publishing a book through UCT (O) 27 Writing space at the RO (IP)	4 Masters/PHD cohort (IP)



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- Chat to colleagues
- Get a mentor

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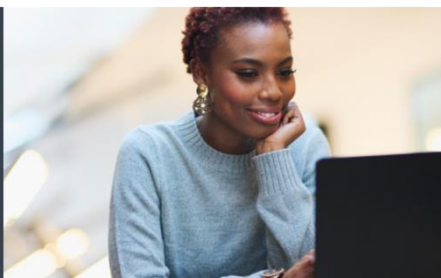
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5. What will I do next?

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CRAFTING YOUR ACTION PLAN ...

Example:

	Short term: 6 months	Medium-Term: 12 m	Long-term: Year 2-3
Admin & Leadership	GOAL: _____ ACTIVITY: A DATE: B DATE:	GOAL: _____ ACTIVITY: C DATE: D DATE:	GOAL: _____ ACTIVITY: E DATE: F DATE:
Teaching / Learning	GOAL: _____ ACTIVITY: A DATE: B DATE:	GOAL: _____ ACTIVITY: C DATE: D DATE:	GOAL: _____ ACTIVITY: E DATE: F DATE:
Research	GOAL/MILESTONE: _____ ACTIVITY:: Data Collection DATE: Apply for XY Grant DATE: Grant Writing Course DATE:	GOAL/MILESTONE: _____ ACTIVITY: Data Analysis DATE: Publish Paper 1 on... DATE: Writing for a Journal Course DATE: Attend Writing Retreat... DATE:	GOAL/MILESTONE: _____ ACTIVITY: XYZ Conference Presentation DATE: Conference Presentation Course DATE:

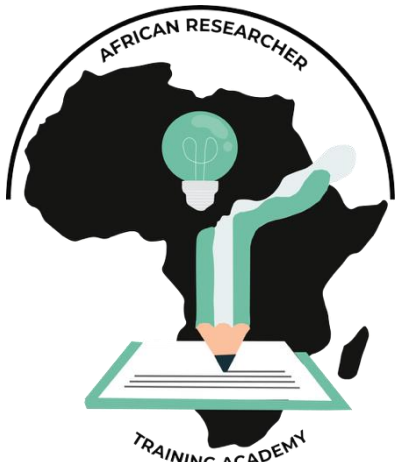


Activity 4: Plot commitments & goals in the short, medium and long term that fall under the categories used to assess career advancement.

(NB: Consider what is realistic over these time periods? What needs balancing with personal and professional commitments?)

Time Frame towards next promotion	Teaching & Learning	Research	Public Service/Social responsiveness (relate to research and/or teaching and learning)	Administration (committees, course convening etc)
short term				
medium term				
long term				

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Thank you

Any questions?

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