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## Creating a Virtual Research Environment to build a research Community

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How to cite:

Bruce, James; Faulkner, Dorothy and O'Dell, Lindsay (2014). Creating a Virtual Research Environment to build a research Community. In: UKCGE International Annual Conference, 2014, Dublin.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

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Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/events/international-annual-conference-2014—doctoral-training-structures—form-and-functionality-44.a>

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# Doctoral Training at The Open University

Creating a Virtual Research Environment to  
build a research community



# Our research community



- 1200 PGRs (global)
- Diverse
- Wide range of subjects



# Why build a VRE?



- We aim to provide parity of experience for all PGRs
- Support both on campus and at a distance
- Online services customised for graduate need
- Integrated research community students, supervisors, partner institutions administrators



# OU model delivers access at scale to global users

**20,000**  
research publications  
freely available

**6000**  
people in 15 countries  
participated in an  
OU-led citizen  
science project

**18 million**  
visits to OpenLearn.  
The OU's free  
learning website

**800**  
videos. The UK's  
largest university  
channel

**60,000**  
unique users  
per day on the  
VLE

**40 million**  
downloads  
on iTunes



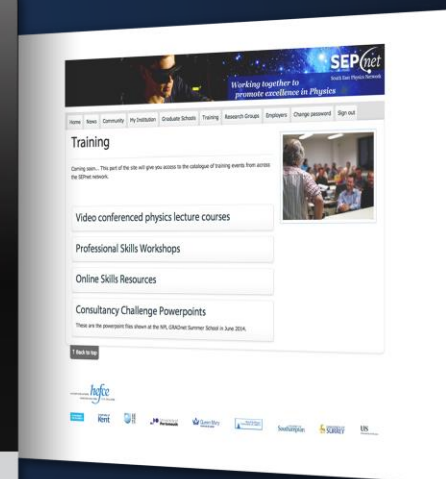
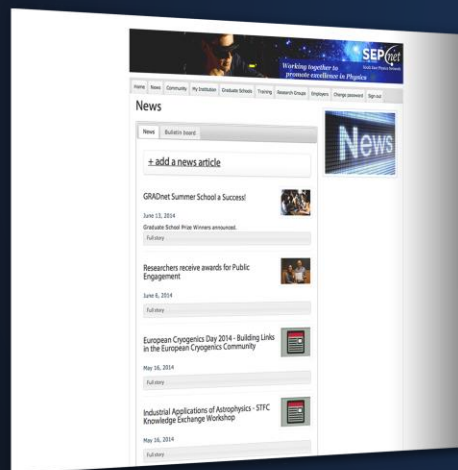
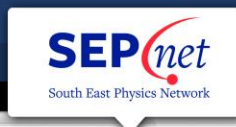


# The VRE is an online portal to resources and tools





# SEPnet – A research community within the VRE





# DTP communities on the VRE







# Affiliated Research Centres

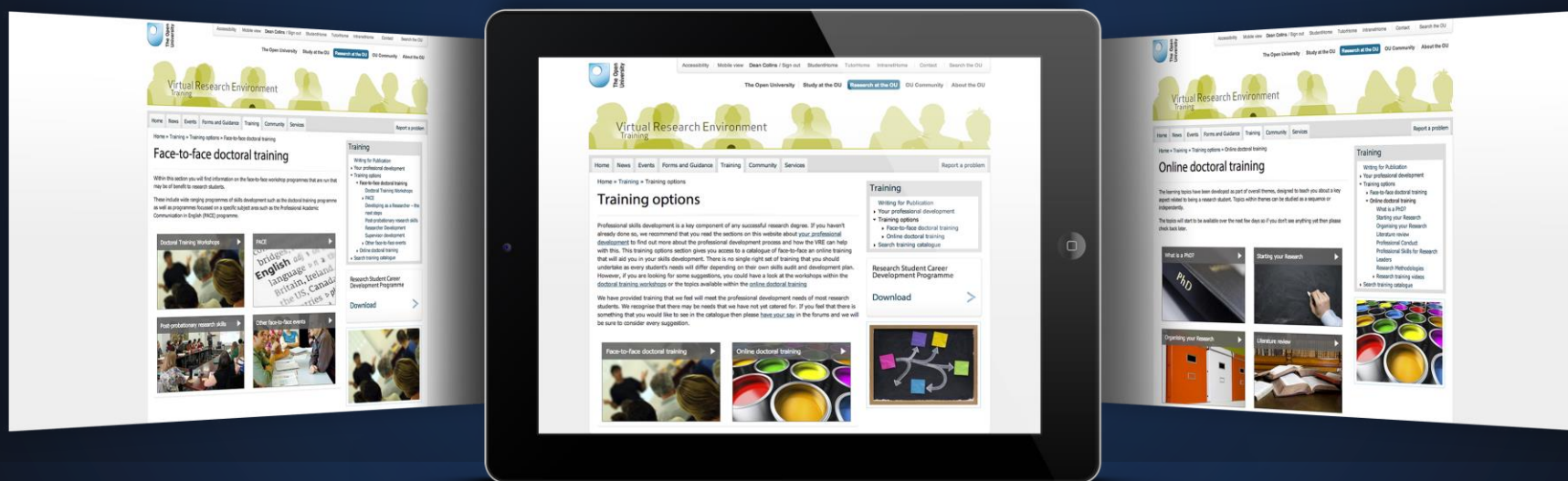
This screenshot shows the 'Affiliated Research Centre Students' page. The header includes navigation links like 'Home', 'News', 'Events', 'Forms and Guidance', 'Training', 'Community', and 'Services'. The main content area is titled 'Your registration with The Open University' and contains several sections: 'ARC Students', 'ARC Supervisors', 'ARC Research Degree Coordinators', 'Supporting students', 'Skills training and the RDF', 'Managing the Institutional Relationship', 'Resources', 'The OU ARC team', and 'Research Degree Office Academic oversight'. There are also images of students in a lab and a list of services.

This screenshot shows the main 'Affiliated Research Centres' page. It features a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Services', and 'Affiliated Research Centres'. The main heading is 'Affiliated Research Centres'. Below this, there is a paragraph: 'We are proud to work with Affiliated Research Centres to offer a high quality research degree programme to our students.' This is followed by another paragraph: 'The ARC zone brings together in one place all the resources currently available from us here at the Open University to support students during registration, to assist supervisors, and research degree coordinators. We are developing new resources all the time and will make them available to you as they come on stream.' A 'Please click on the relevant box below to explore what's available.' section contains four clickable boxes: 'Affiliated Research Centre Students', 'Affiliated Research Centre Supervisors', 'ARC Research Degree Coordinators', and 'The OU ARC team'. A 'Back to top' button is at the bottom.

This screenshot shows the 'Affiliated Research Centre Supervisors' page. The header includes navigation links like 'Home', 'News', 'Events', 'Forms and Guidance', 'Training', 'Community', and 'Services'. The main content area is titled 'Supporting a research degree student registered with The Open University'. It contains several sections: 'ARC Supervisors', 'ARC Research Degree Coordinators', 'Supporting students', 'Skills training and the RDF', 'Managing the Institutional Relationship', 'Resources', 'The OU ARC team', and 'Research Degree Office Academic oversight'. There are also images of supervisors and students in a lab.



# Training within the VRE





# Asynchronously, synchronously or “flipped” in face to face sessions

**Contents**  
Summary  
Aims  
Introduction  
Personal protective equipment  
Eye protection  
Hear protection  
Respiratory system protection  
Control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) regulations  
Biological agents  
Chemical information sources  
COSHH risk assessment  
Waste disposal  
Types of waste  
Waste segregation  
Biological waste  
Chemical waste  
Radioactive material  
Sharps  
Genetic laboratory waste  
Waste storage  
Relatives  
Types of radiation  
Pressure systems  
Electricity at work  
Fire safety  
Consent  
References  
Other resources  
View downloads  
View as single page

## Gas cylinders

Gases are usually supplied to laboratories compressed in metal cylinders of various sizes. The cylinders are marked in distinctive colours to aid identification. For example, hydrogen and some other flammable gas cylinders are red. However, the primary means of identification is to label attached to the shoulder of the cylinder.

In most cases, cylinders are fixed with a regulator to reduce the gas pressure from the cylinder to a usable working pressure for the laboratory equipment. Labels should attempt to identify gas from a cylinder unless they have been discontinued from use in regulator. Cylinders should never be moved with a regulator attached.

It is recommended that regulators are tested every two years, and are replaced every five years. As a precaution against the wrong regulator being connected, the cylinder could be marked to suit gases (for example, hydrogen and oxygen) with a 4:1 barbed thread, whereas oxygen and nit gas have a right handed thread.

Figure 11 shows good practice when transporting gas cylinders.




Figure 11 Correct transportation of gas cylinders

When moving gas cylinders, the following points should be observed by the individual:

- Cylinders should be used for transport and the cylinder must be secured on it.
- Suitable closed tie straps must be worn to prevent 'flips' when moving heavy cylinders.
- Cylinders must never be transported with their regulators in place.
- Cylinders must be properly supported at all times with a 'secure stack' used for storage.
- Gas cylinders not in use should be stored vertically outside the laboratory in designated storage areas (labelled safety vertical) away from sources of ignition or other flammable materials, and good ventilation.
- Full and empty cylinders should be segregated.
- Cylinders containing flammable and explosive gases (e.g. acetylene and hydrogen) should be stored separately from oxygen and nit gas.
- Values should be kept shut on empty cylinders to prevent contaminants from getting into the valve.

4. Non-Exhaustible at work

The Open University  
Accessibility Middle view Dean Centre Sign out Studenthome Submissions Internationals Contact Search the OU

## Virtual Research Environment Training

Home News Events Forms and Guidance Training Community Services Report a problem

Home > Training > Training options > Online doctoral training

### Online doctoral training


The learning topics have been developed as part of overall themes, designed to teach you about a key aspect related to being a research student. Topics within themes can be studied as a sequence or independently.

The topics will start to be available over the next few days so if you don't see anything yet then please check back later.


#### Training

- Writing for Publication
- Your professional development
- Training options
- Face-to-face doctoral training
- Online doctoral training
- What is a PhD?
- Starting your Research
- Organising your Research
- Professional Conduct
- Professional Skills for Research Leaders
- Research Methodologies
- Research training videos
- Search training catalogue


#### What is a PhD?




#### Starting your Research




#### Organising your Research




#### Literature review



#### Professional Conduct



#### Research Methodologies



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## Virtual Research Environment Training

Home News Events Forms and Guidance Training Community Services Report a problem

Home > Training > Training options > Online doctoral training > Professional Conduct

### Professional Conduct

When the product of the research is going to be a public document, such as a report or a thesis which will be available to the public in some form, it is vital to consider your rights and your responsibilities as a writer. Your work will be exposed to public scrutiny and, as a result, may be searched to see whether it is legal, correct, honest and truthful, in the words of the Advertising Standards Authority. However, the process of doing any research needs the close co-operation of the trust, ethical and legal standards in research, as our society currently with them, and you must also not take unacceptable risks with health (both physical and mental) either with yourself or with your team.

The topics below will help you to explore different aspects of professional conduct as a researcher.

#### Online Topics

- Introduction to professional conduct
- Ethical Approval for working with Animals and Animal Use

#### Training

- Writing for Publication
- Your professional development
- Training options
- Face-to-face doctoral training
- Online doctoral training
- What is a PhD?
- Starting your Research
- Organising your Research
- Literature review
- Professional Conduct
- Professional Skills for Research Leaders
- Research Methodologies
- Research training videos
- Search training catalogue

#### Integrity

Adherence to moral principles in ethics, integrity is key. In ethics, integrity is the honesty and truthfulness, the sincerity, the uprightness, sincerity, is



# Community tools





# The VRE listens to the community

The image displays two overlapping screenshots of the Virtual Research Environment (VRE) website. The left screenshot shows the 'PVC-Open Forum' page, which includes a navigation menu, a header with 'Virtual Research Environment Services', and a main content area with text and a small photo of a man. The right screenshot shows the 'Have your say' community page, featuring a navigation menu, a header with 'Virtual Research Environment Community', and a table of forum posts.

**Left Screenshot: PVC-Open Forum**

Home » Services » PVC-Open Forum

### PVC-Open Forum

Over a number of years, postgraduate research students have been able to talk directly to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) Research, Scholarship and Quality twice a year through the PVC Open Forum. Students have raised many issues either as a point of discussion with the PVC or with the intention of seeking a practical response.

The most recent and final forum was held on 12 December 2013. Whilst it has been a useful means of communicating with students, it has been limited to the number of students who have attended. The Virtual Research Environment will now be used as the platform for students to provide feedback to the University and is used to discuss matters of interest through the online site. We very much hope that students will take this opportunity to engage with those who manage the research degree programmes and with each other in order to build a vibrant and forward thinking online 'research degree' community. The conversations might be offered but also formed within the 'student consultative process' due to be launched early in 2014 – more about that later.

The recent forum was attended by 8 students from 3 faculties, at different stages of their PhD, full time and part time. Topics that were discussed were:

#### 1. Professional and career development

Students asked questions about the value of generic training opportunities as compared to discipline specific sessions and training in the use of software needed to carry out different types of research.

Key messages that emerged from the discussion and responses from relevant staff were:

##### Pre-probation training

The pre-probation training available here to face on campus in Milton Keynes is based on the 2011 book – Doing Postgraduate Research. It is assumed participants have the knowledge of the areas covered as the

**Right Screenshot: Have your say**

Home » Community » Have your say

### Have your say

To add a new suggestion, please create a new topic. The VRE Team will consider every topic posted here and a record of any decisions and action taken as a result will be posted in this forum.

Create a topic >

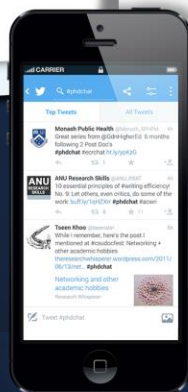
	posted	Replies	Last comment by	Last updated
<a href="#">Online BeWorks tutorial</a>	2014-03-12 23:28	1	Peter Howard	2014-03-20 10:24
<a href="#">Can we share documents via this site?</a>	2014-01-24 10:58	0	Clare Mumford	2014-01-24 10:58
<a href="#">Welcome to this forum</a>	2013-10-03 11:16	12	Pete Clarke	2013-11-28 12:34

↑ Back to top



# Social Media and other community tools

A screenshot of the OU-LIVE Science trial page. The page features a navigation menu on the left with options like 'Help with this page', 'Navigation', and 'OU-LIVE'. The main content area displays details for a 'Science trial', including the room name, description, session start and end times, and a 'Join Session' button. A note at the bottom of the trial details asks users to check for common issues and verify their setup.



A screenshot of the 'Handbook of social media for researchers and supervisors' page. The page is titled 'Virtual Research Environment Training' and features a navigation menu with options like 'Home', 'News', 'Events', 'Forms and Guidance', 'Training', 'Community', and 'Services'. The main content area includes a 'Handbook of social media for researchers and supervisors' section, dated Monday, March 3, 2014, 13:02. The page also features a footer with contact information for The Open University, including a phone number and a logo.

A screenshot of the OU Live 'Study planner' page. The page is titled 'OU Live preparation & piloting' and features a navigation menu with options like 'Help with this page', 'Study planner', and 'OU Live'. The main content area includes a 'Study planner' section, dated 23 Aug 2013, and a 'News' section with a date of 25 Jul 2013. The page also features a footer with contact information for The Open University, including a phone number and a logo.



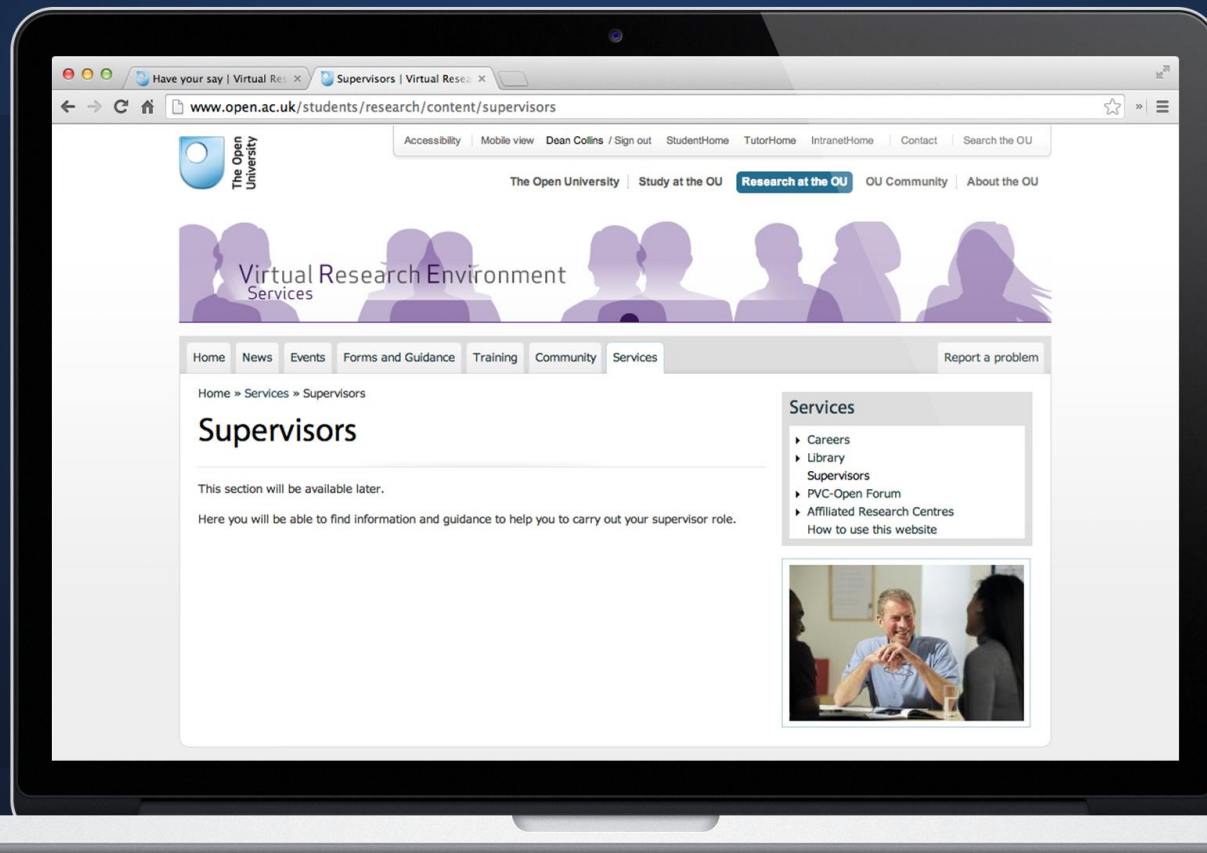
# The VRE organises existing resources for the PGR student

Careers

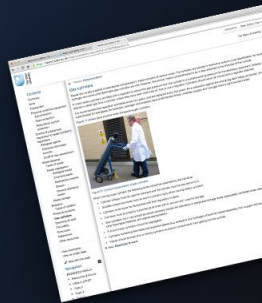
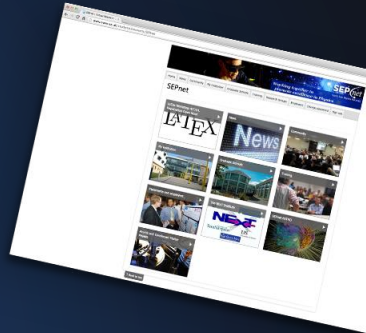
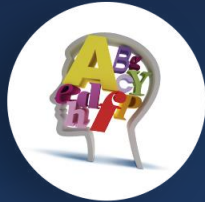




# The VRE is designed to continually evolve and adapt to the community needs







# Acknowledgments

Lindsay Odell

Dorothy Faulkner

Vivien Bacigalupo

Peter Howard

Sara Haslam

Paul Mulholland

Shonil Bhagwat

Tim Lewis

Rose Barbour

Chris High

Sue Oreszczyn

Regine Hempel

Fiona Ellis-Chadwick