

Researcher Professional Development: A student-centred approach to engaging students with their own career

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“To be employed is to be at risk, to
be employable is to be secure”







Dr Peter Hawkins, The Art of Building
Windmills

Do Universities have an obligation to prepare doctoral students for employment beyond academia?

Is it feasible or sustainable to impose compulsory training programmes on PGR students?

Can we reconcile the needs of stakeholders while creating highly skilled doctoral graduates ready for a wide range of careers?

Some context:

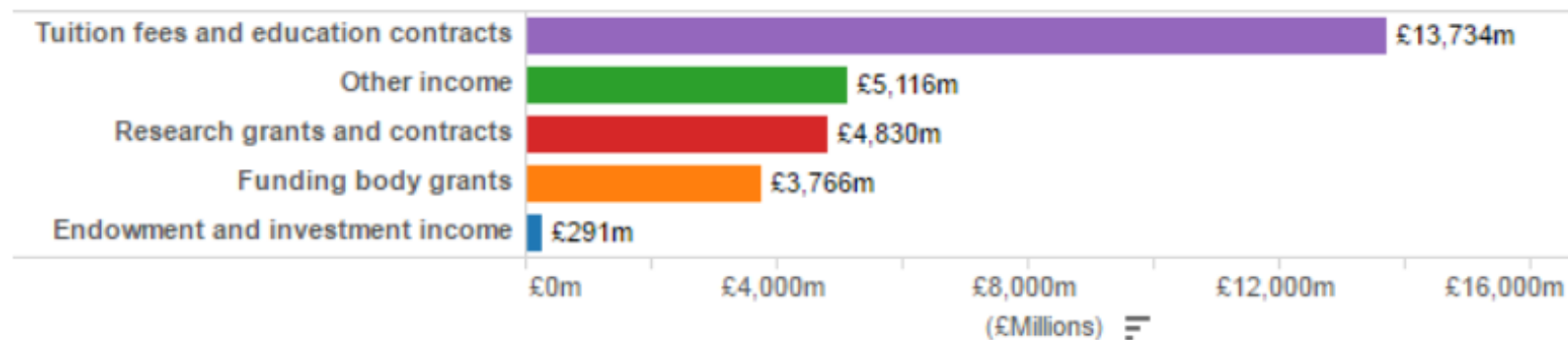
<i>UK HE Income (thousands)</i>	<i>2004/05</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>% of total</i>	
<i>Funding Council grants</i>	6969743	38%	5279035	16%	 -24%
<i>Tuition fees & education grants</i>	4358475	24%	15585517	47%	 258%
<i>Research grants & contracts</i>	2887947	16%	5912016	18%	 105%
<i>Other income</i>	3618452	20%	6062545	18%	 68%
<i>Endowment & investment income</i>	306597	2%	359559	1%	 17%
<i>Total income</i>	18141214		33198672		 83%

Some context:

England

↓ 2016/17 funding cuts: 8%

Sources of income



Scotland

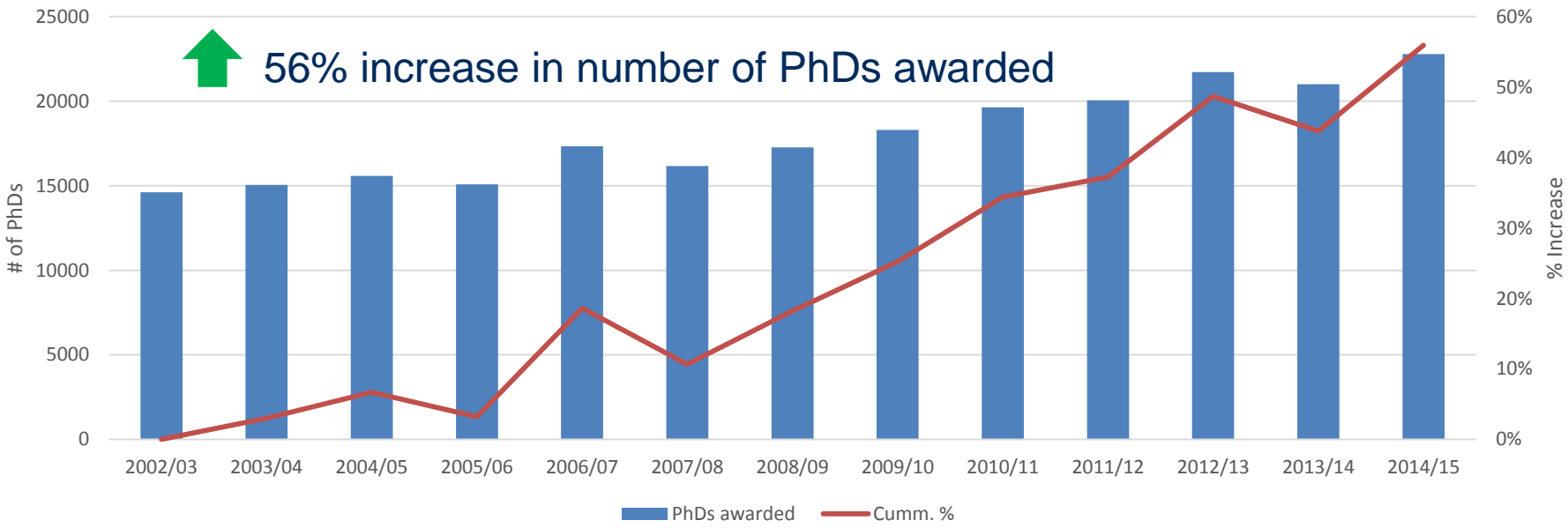
↓ 2016/17 funding cuts: 2%

Sources of income



Do we have an obligation?

PhDs awarded in the UK



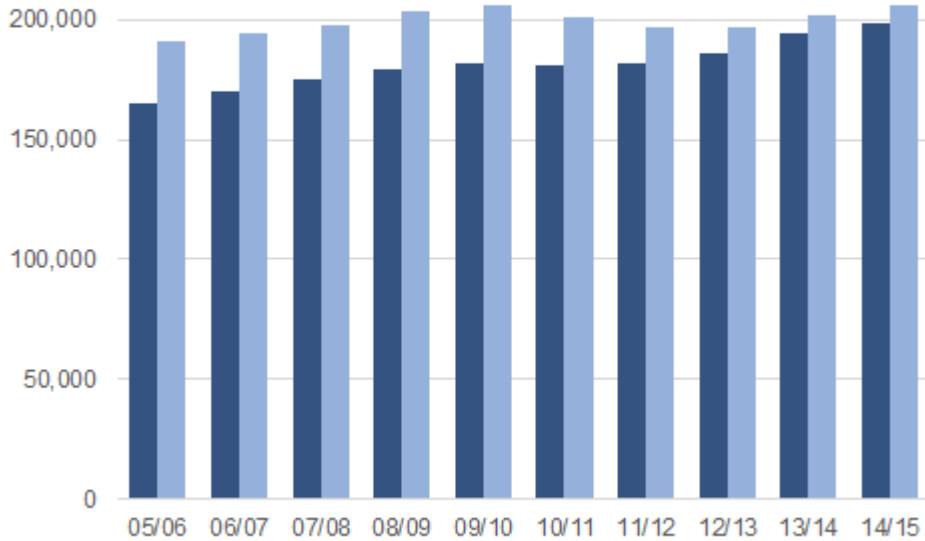
Proportion of qualifications awarded in 2014/15 by sex and domicile



Source: HESA Student record 2014/15

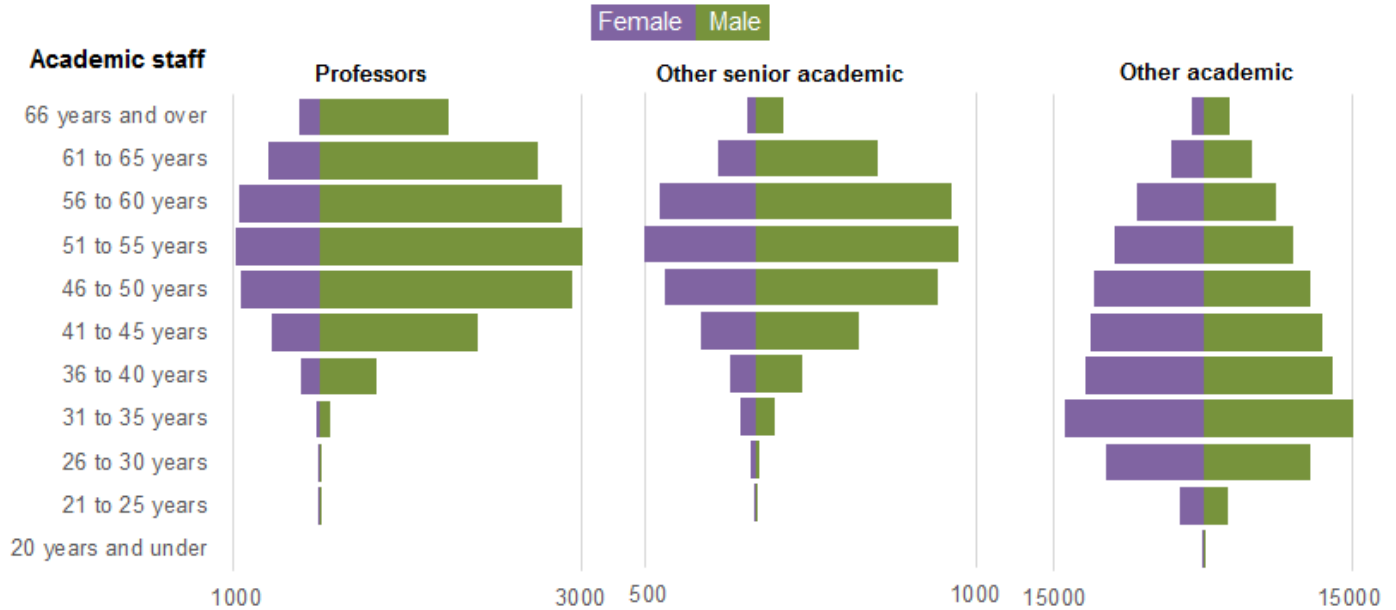
Academic and non-academic staff in UK HE

■ Academic staff ■ Non-academic staff



Source: HESA Staff record

Inflow to HEIs can be measured in 1000s



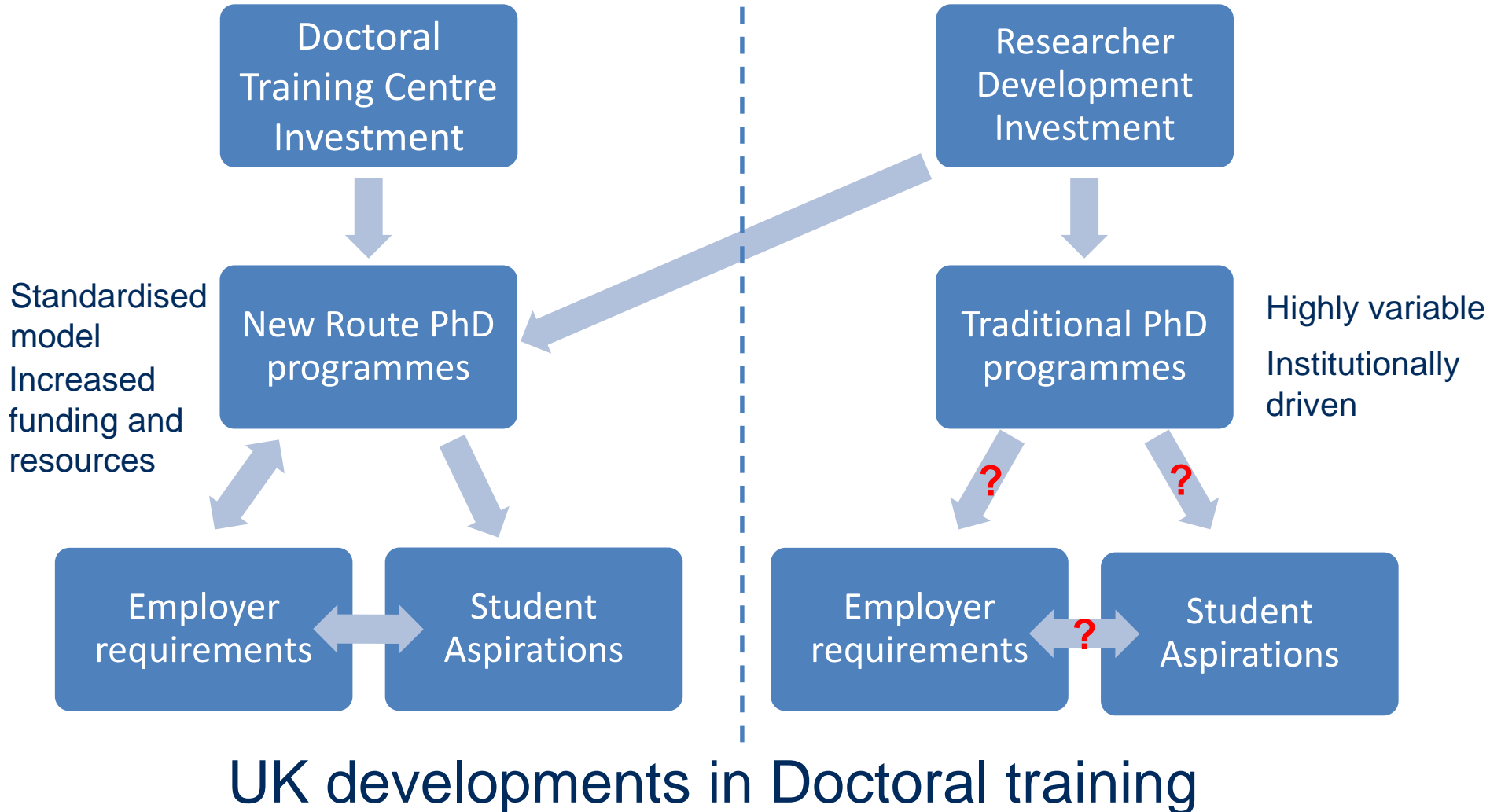
Do we have an obligation?

Majority of PhD graduates will not have a career in academia

Most National and European policies on the structure of Doctoral programmes already reflect this

The question then is, how?

Can compulsory training be imposed?



Can compulsory training be imposed?

DTC students on ownership of professional development:

“The University can provide [professional development] services but you have to grasp them and take them on. Employability always requires the self to drive it.”

DTC students on agenda-less professional development:

“When the University does [professional development], you don’t think there is ulterior motives. I think the University is the best [place for professional development] because of this trust.”

DTC students and PhD students on motivations:

“...it’s always been about a job...it’s about getting a job whilst giving yourself options.”

“I’d finally picked something I wanted to become a specialist in, I didn’t care about the jobs.”

Can compulsory training be imposed?

Do students recognise professional development?

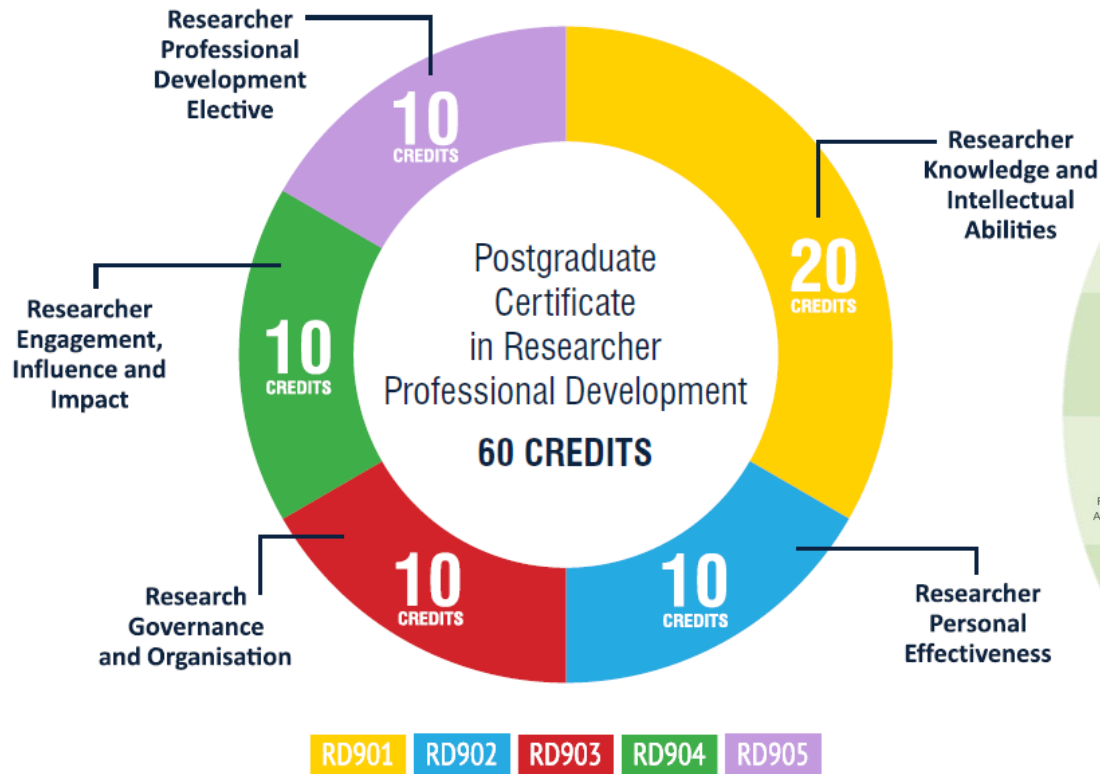
Researcher Development Programme	DTC students	PhD students
Understand the benefits	89%	75%
Improved student as a researcher	73%	59%
Will help student in future career	73%	58%
Important part of professional development	65%	56%
Support from supervisor	65%	66%

Can compulsory training be imposed?

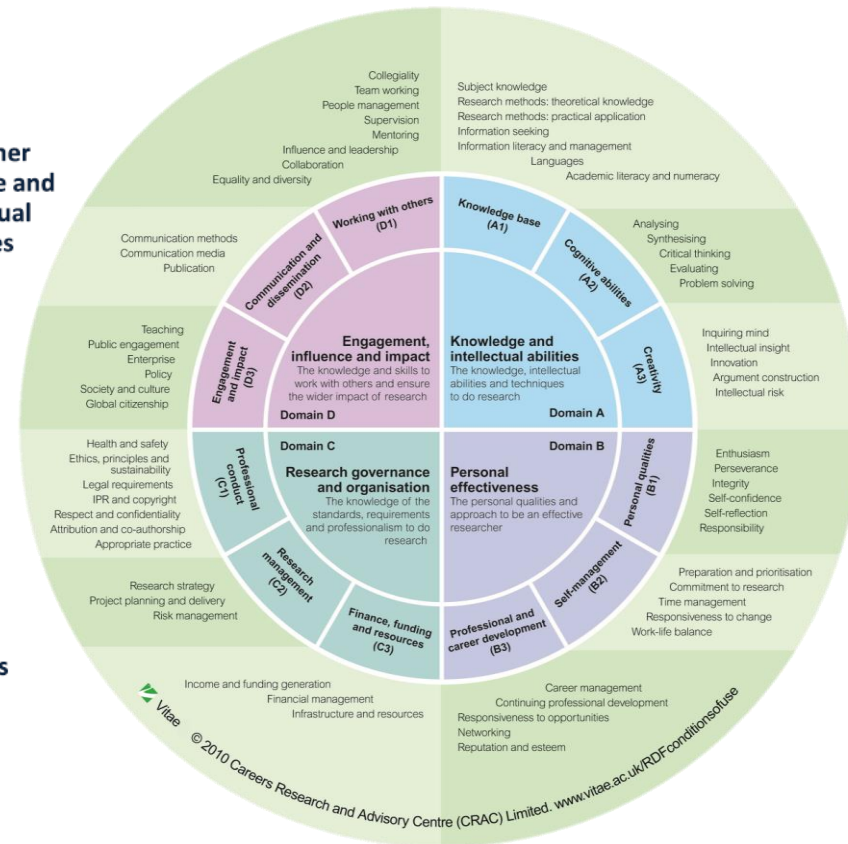
Drivers for change at Strathclyde:

- Consistency of experience
- Funder mandates
- Employer expectations
- Student expectations
- Student recruitment

Can compulsory training be imposed?



Strathclyde's Postgraduate Certificate
In Researcher Professional Development



Vitae's Researcher
Development Framework

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Strathclyde

As an Institution, Strathclyde was concerned about:

- Regulations
- Quality assurance
- Assessment and feedback
- Resources
- Academic hierarchy and ownership
- Compliance

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Supervisors

Supervisors have their own concerns:

- Additional workload (for student and supervisor)
- Conflicting priorities
- Resistance to change
- Awareness
- Relevance
- Nostalgia – if it was good enough for me...

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Students

Strathclyde students are concerned about:

- Conceptual blocks towards the PG Cert RPD
- Credit gathering
- Additional workload
- Assessment
- Access to training
- Relevance of some categories
- Support from supervisors

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Students

We want students to have these kinds of insights into their development:

“I thought that any professional development I personally needed was ‘my problem’ and that at some point I should find the time and will to (take my own measures to) further educate/develop myself. With the PGC I was able to realize that probably every young researcher has his/hers own underdeveloped areas and these can be worked upon throughout one’s career.”

“...The flexibility of the PG Cert, and the plethora of activities on offer, allow me to tailor activities to my short and medium term goals, and thereby reach my long term aspirations. It offers me the skeleton on which to build an effective career management strategy.”

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Funders, governments and policy organisations

The RCUK Statement of Expectations for Postgraduate Training states:

- *Research Organisations should have mechanisms in place to assess and monitor individual student needs and put in place appropriate development opportunities. The provision of training should be kept as flexible as possible allowing customisation to suit the individual needs of students (and the research area)*
- *The emphasis should be on enhancing the excellence and quality of doctoral training (rather than maximising student numbers)*
- *Research Councils expect the provision of transferable skills to form a fundamental part of doctoral training*

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Funders, governments and policy organisations

Salzburg II recommendations on Career Development

- *Career support for doctoral candidates must take into account individual goals and motivations and acknowledge the wide range of careers for doctorate holders*
- *While the doctoral candidate is responsible for their career choices given the situation on the labour market, it is the institution's responsibility to provide support structures for professional development*
- *Professional development of doctoral candidates includes awareness about skills attained through doing research as well as of the wide range of career choices for doctorate holders*

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Funders, governments and policy organisations

The Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training:

- *It is essential to ensure that enough researchers have the skills demanded by the knowledge based economy*
- *Business should also be more involved in curricula development and doctoral training so that skills better match industry needs*

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Employers

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

- *Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment*
- *The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.*
- *Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning*

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Employers

Most policies and guidelines point to increased employer involvement in the development of doctoral training

Employers have indicated they want increased transferable skills

- How do different employers define transferable skills?
- What level should this be defined at?
- Do Universities and employers value same skills?

Can stakeholder needs be reconciled?

Society

Are societal benefits the ultimate achievement of doctoral training?

- Under-employed and under-utilised PhD graduates are an opportunity cost
- Maximising societal benefit through advancements in knowledge created by PhD students
- Maximising impact, not academic output or improved metrics

Conclusions

Universities do have an obligation to prepare doctoral students for employment beyond academia

But students have an obligation to understand employer requirements

And employers have an obligation to communicate their requirements

The PG Cert RPD provides a framework to achieve this without major resource implications