



# Developing your PhD Skillset for Annual Reviews and Career Planning PDP Template Workshop

**Fiona Hayes**, Careers Consultant, Trinity Careers Service

**Martin McAndrew**, Postgraduate Advisory Service

January 2026



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

**Housekeeping:**  
**This session is being recorded**

**Can you find the chat? Drop an emoji in to prove it 😊**

**You'll need a pen and paper shortly**

# In this workshop, you will:



- Learn how and why Professional Development Planning is used in Trinity's PhD Annual Progress and Confirmation reviews
- Learn about the six skills domains PhDs in Ireland are expected to engage with
- Learn about a technique to help you prioritise skills for development in the short term
- Gain an understanding of different approaches to career planning and their relevance to one's own career

# The context for PDPs as a Trinity PhD

## PART D: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Students are encouraged to self-reflect and complete a skills audit to identify research and professional goals for achieving before the next annual review meeting. The following skills audit tools are recommended for use [Careers and Employability Skills Audit Tool](#) or [PMRP Skills Audit](#).

At the review and confirmation meetings students will be asked to detail the progress in developing their research and professional development goals as identified in their [Professional Development Plan](#).

Please refer to the guidance provided in using the tools above.

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Skills  | <b>Detail the progress in achieving the research and professional development goals (e.g., workshops completed, training undertaken, or techniques acquired)</b> |
| Skill 1 |  |
| Skill 2 |  |
| Skill 3 |  |

*Please add more rows if required.*

Trinity College Dublin, PhD annual review report form

---



SKiLLS

# Let's talk about skills

---



What are the main skills you feel you are developing as a PhD candidate?



Are there skills you are surprised to be developing?



Are there missing skills you feel you should be developing?

# The Skillset we anticipate building



"The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through **original research**.

At the same time it is recognised that doctoral training **must increasingly meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia.**"

Salzburg Principle #1

# Why a 'multidimensional' skillset?

## Doctoral awards are increasing in Ireland:

Percent of population in 2006: 1%

Percent of population in 2016: 2%

Percent of population in 2026: ?% +33% v 2016



- Ireland is in line with UK and USA, Canada
- OECD average : 1.3% in 2021
- Only 3% of doctoral award holders were unemployed. 33% worked in higher education/ education.

**Salzburg Principles (2005) first articulated "interdisciplinary training & transferable skills". Principle #8**

**IUA skills statements have embedded these since 2011 – current edn 2021**

# IUA framework: PhD graduate skills

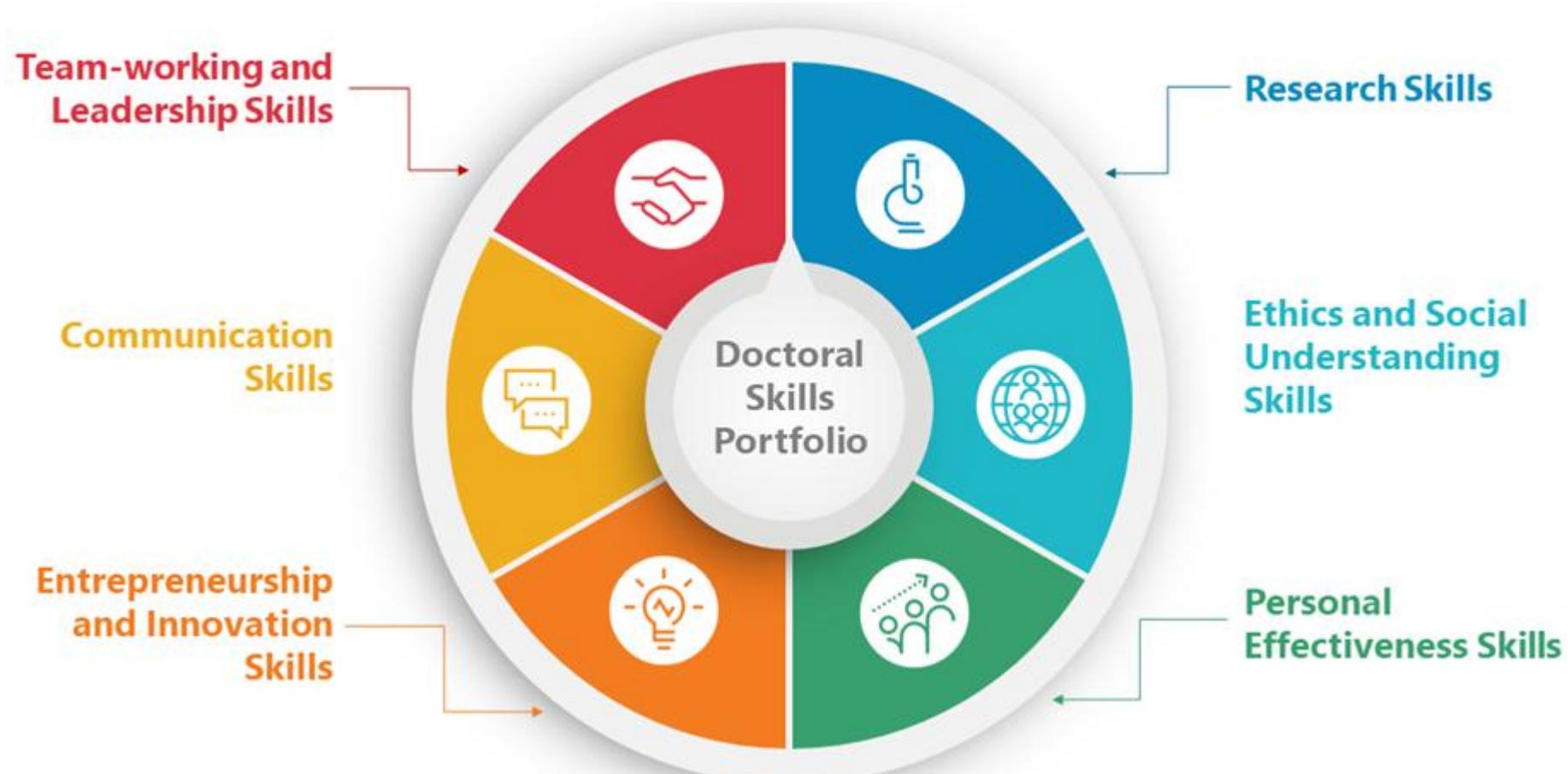
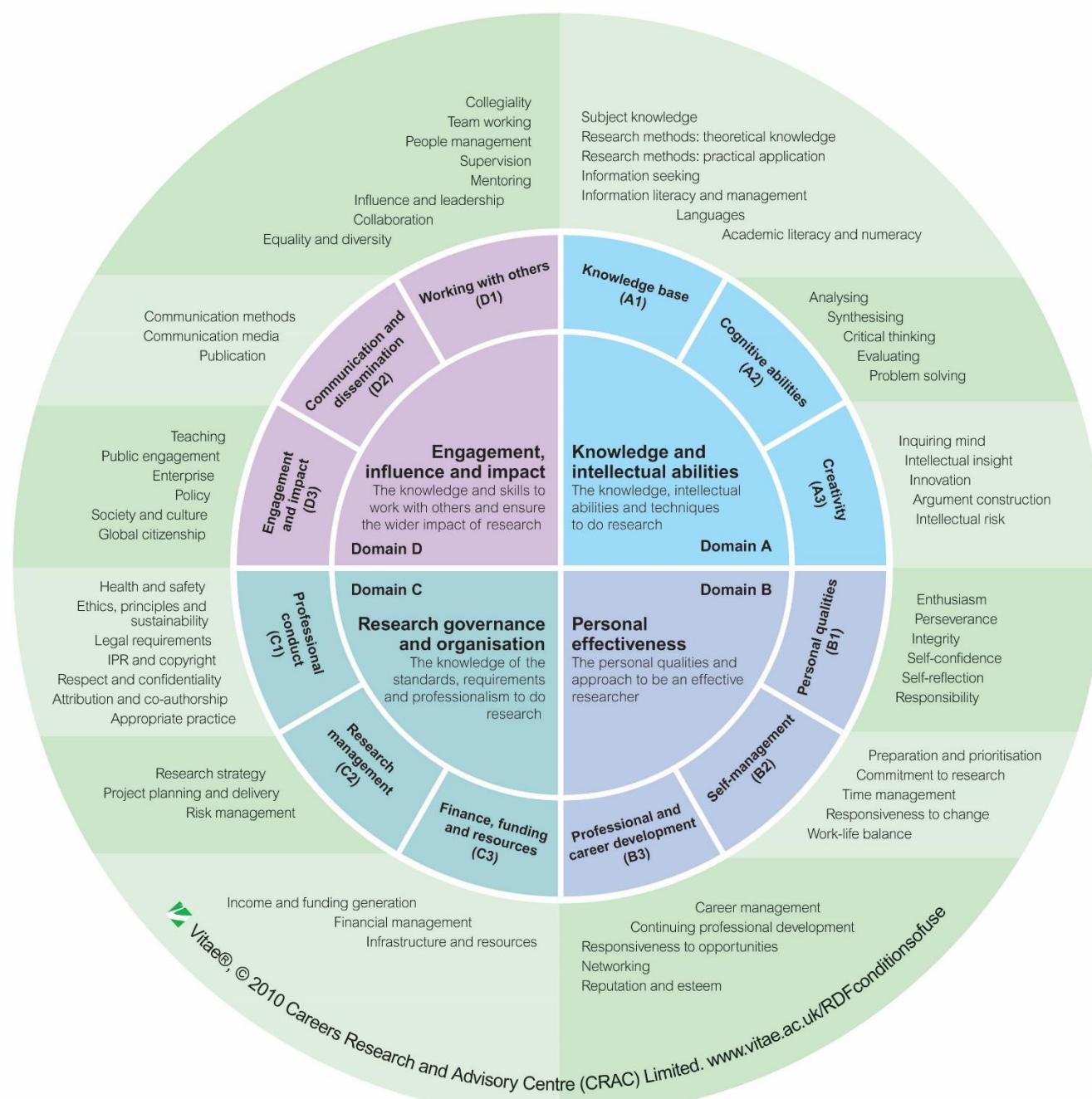


Image courtesy of TCD Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

Source: Irish Universities Association (IUA) 'PhD Graduate Skills Statement' 2021 (3rd Edition)

# Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) 2011

[www.vitae.ac.uk/](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/)



 4 domains

 12 sub-domains

 63 descriptors

# New Vitae RDF (2025)

## Vitae-RDF-Final-Version.pdf

The screenshot displays the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) website. At the top, a navigation bar includes links for Overview, Structure, Descriptors, Researcher, Research, and Research Communities, with the Researcher link currently active. The page is labeled PAGE 4 in the top right corner.

**Researcher Development Framework (RDF)**

The central feature is a circular diagram representing the Researcher Development Framework. The innermost circle is orange and labeled "Researcher" with a small icon of three people. The middle circle is green and labeled "Research". The outermost circle is blue and labeled "Research Communities".

**Researcher** (Orange box)

**Personal and professional values and behaviours:**

- Development-focused • Strategic • Organised • Curious
- Collaborative • Adaptable • Reflexive • Motivated • Responsible

**Research** (Green box)

**Knowledge and skills to undertake research and deliver outcomes:**

**Knowledge and practice**

- Subject knowledge • Research methods • Information and data literacy • Digital and technological capabilities • Critical thinking and analysis • Creativity and innovation

**Research management**

- Funding and finance • Project management • Risk management
- Open research • Research integrity and ethics

**Engagement and impact**

- Communication • Research outputs • Knowledge exchange and public engagement • Research translation and commercialisation • Teaching and learning

**Research Communities** (Blue box)

**Knowledge and skills to engage and work with others:**

- Research culture • Teamworking • Leadership • Supervision and people management • Coaching and mentoring • Networking

# Skills are transferable: different career paths

## Linear Progression

Postdoctoral work

Research assistant,  
associate

Lecturer/Assistant  
Professor

PhD

## Changing Emphasis

Research in industry e.g.  
Economic analyst

Campus company

Specialist adviser/  
Development officer (e.g.  
OPW, HRB)

Research Council

Publishing

Legal or Patents

Teaching

Policy work

Clinical Trials/NPD

Think Tanks

## New Direction

Accounting/Audit, Tax

Law

Marketing

Consulting

Management

Human Resources

Journalism, Media

In private sector

In public sector

In self-employment

# Multidimensional Skillset building

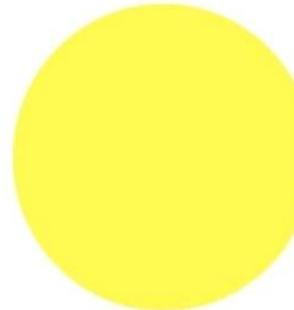
## Professional Development

**Planning** can help you to identify skills which you can use both

a. during your PhD

b. as an opportunity to leverage your PhD and differentiate yourself when starting your career

SKILLS YOU THOUGHT YOU'LL DEVELOP DURING PhD:



RESEARCH

SKILLS YOU ACTUALLY DEVELOPED:



|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| RESEARCH          | WRITING      |
| COMMUNICATION     | PRESENTATION |
| PROBLEM-SOLVING   | LEADERSHIP   |
| COLLABORATION     | ADAPTABILITY |
| DATA ANALYSIS     | LEARNING     |
| CRITICAL THINKING | REPORTING    |
| MANAGEMENT        | MENTORING    |



MARIYA TOPCHY | #DEARPHDS SERIES

# Prioritising – how to decide

## The Eisenhower Matrix

Important

Not Important

Time-sensitive

Not time-sensitive

I must do these skills/ actions soon; I will need them in the near future

I must make a definite plan to do these; I will definitely need these in the future

This is a 'nice to have' opportunity.

I can do it now, but only if I have a time alongside/ after the above

This isn't important enough and it isn't urgent time-wise.

I have to let this one go...

# Goal setting – questions that keep you accountable

Important, when making a plan, to put some focus points in place:

- What specific actions can I take?
- How will I know if I am making progress?
- When do I want/ need this to be completed?
- How am I feeling about this plan? Does that feeling change over time?

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>What positive steps or actions will I take to improve or enhance my skill?</b> | <b>Evidence – how will I know if I am making progress on this skill?</b> | <b>Timeline – when do I want to have achieved each step or action?</b> | <b>How do I feel about my progress on this skill?</b> |
|---|--|--|---|

# Using the PDP template as an accountability tool

## Personal effectiveness e.g., critical thinking, self-management

| Skill needed – what specific skill do I want to develop/improve? | Rating (1-5)<br>1=low,<br>5=high | What positive steps or actions will I take to improve or enhance my skill?                      | Evidence – how will I know if I am making progress on this skill?                              | Timeline – when do I want to have achieved each step or action? | How do I feel about my progress on this skill?                            |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Have a healthy work-life balance                                 | 2                                | Take PMRP module and attend relevant sessions.<br><br>Meet/facetime a friend for coffee weekly. | Attended relevant PMRP seminars<br><br>Scheduled weekly social time as a recurring appointment | April 2024<br><br>Feb-June 2024                                 | Exhausted, but I know it's important<br><br>Struggling to do this weekly. |

## Research e.g., data management; research methodologies

| Skill needed – what specific skill do I want to develop/improve?              | Rating (1-5)<br>1=low,<br>5=high | What positive steps or actions will I take to improve or enhance my skill? | Evidence – how will I know if I am making progress on this skill?  | Timeline – when do I want to have achieved each step or action?   | How do I feel about my progress on this skill?   |
|---|----------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| To be more organised in managing my references and notes on secondary sources | 1                                | Attend EndNote training;<br><br>Meet with Subject Librarian.               | Attended training;<br>Meeting held with Subject Librarian;<br>Built a reference database on Endnote;<br>All notes on readings now being held/ uploaded to one system | April 2025<br><br>April 2025<br><br>Feb-June 2025<br><br>Aug 2025 | This started out well, I made it to the training and had the meeting.<br><br>I am struggling with motivation to do this task; I may need to get advice |

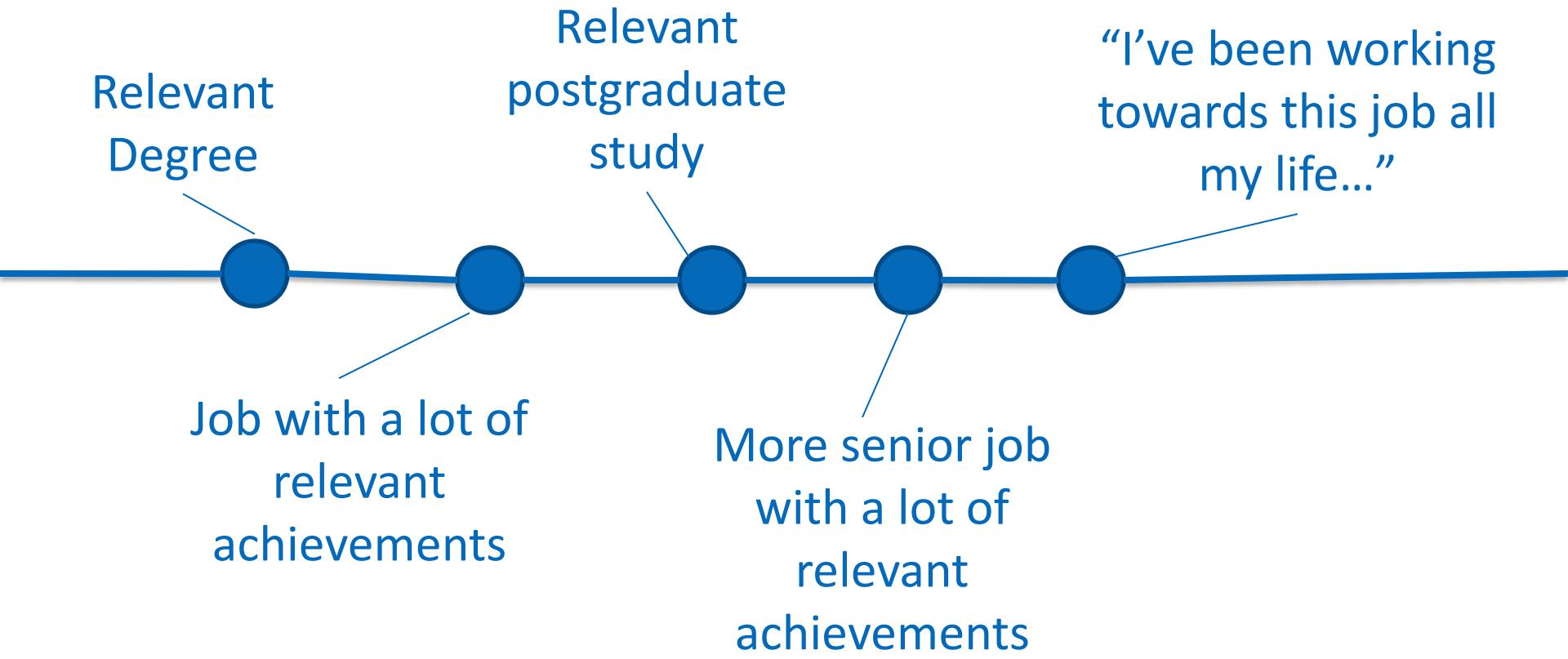
# Career Planning

# What LinkedIn / a CV usually shows...

Relevant  
Degree

Relevant  
postgraduate  
study

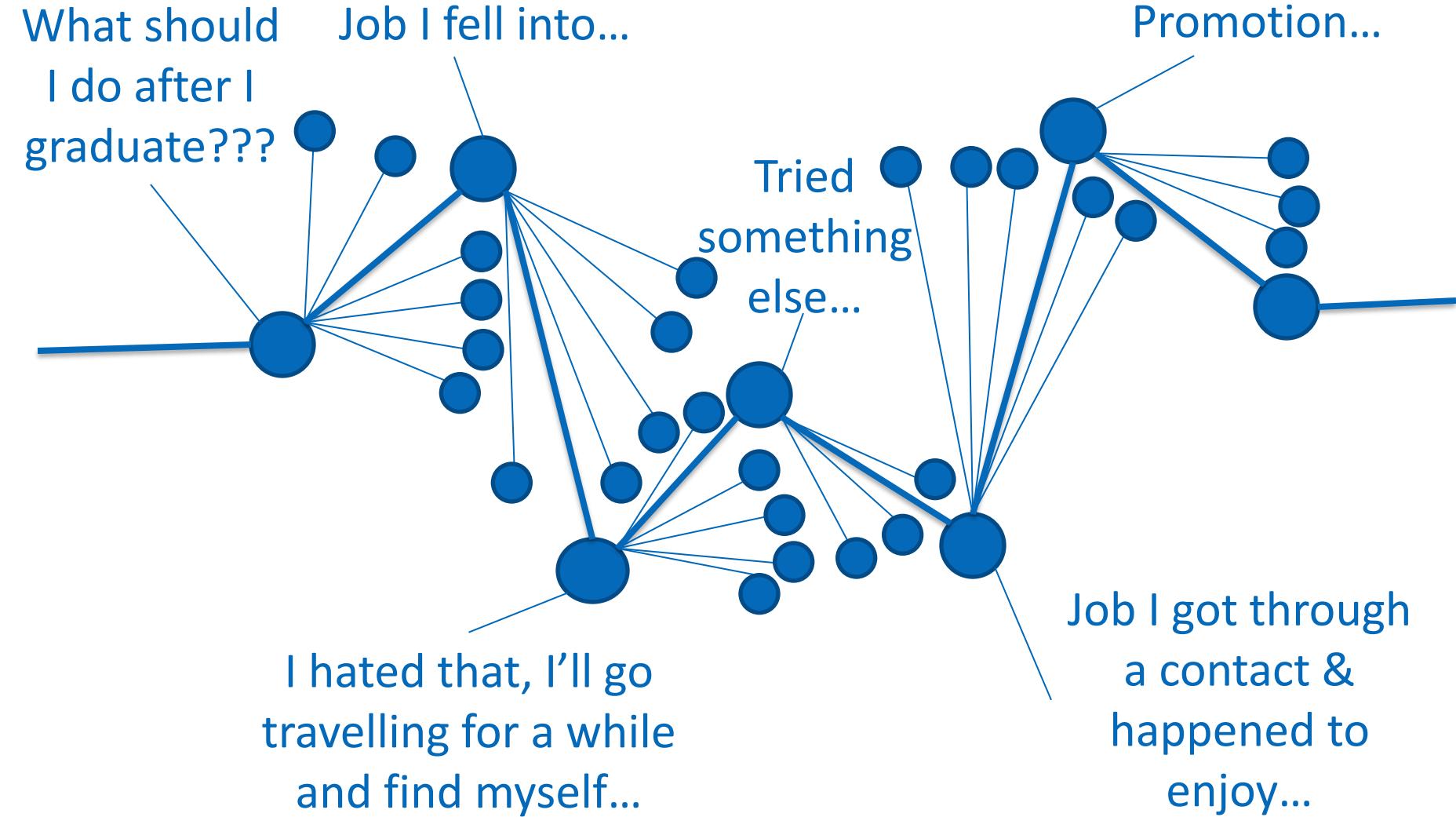
“I’ve been working  
towards this job all  
my life...”



Job with a lot of  
relevant  
achievements

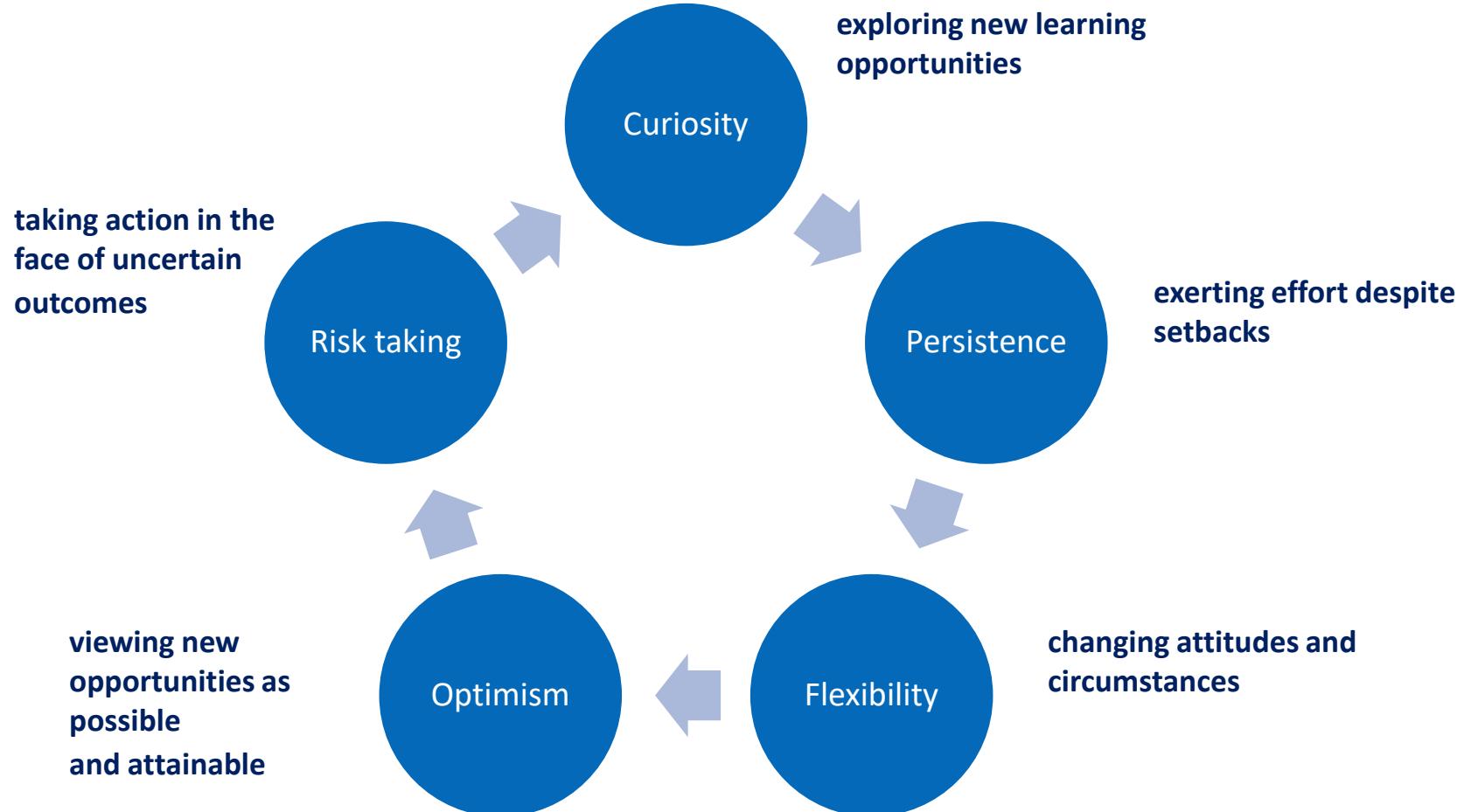
More senior job  
with a lot of  
relevant  
achievements

# What a career journey may actually look like...



# Consider the role of chance and luck

‘Chance favours only the prepared mind’ Louis Pasteur



# Map my Future.

Supporting Students and  
Recent Graduates to succeed



Consider what approach to career planning works best for you

# Pressure?

## Flavours of Career Pressure

The Noise: pressure from family, peers, society or self-doubt/lack of belief

Self-inflicted: perfectionism, hours worked, tasks taken on, unrealistic expectations etc

“They always knew”: assumption that successful people always knew what they wanted to do

Passion!: creates pressure, there is only one thing you must do, you should know it by now

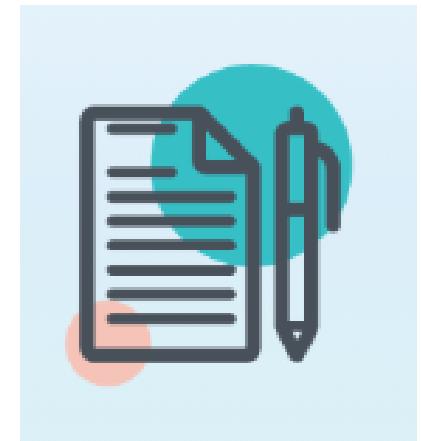
## Think about your career journey to-date..

---

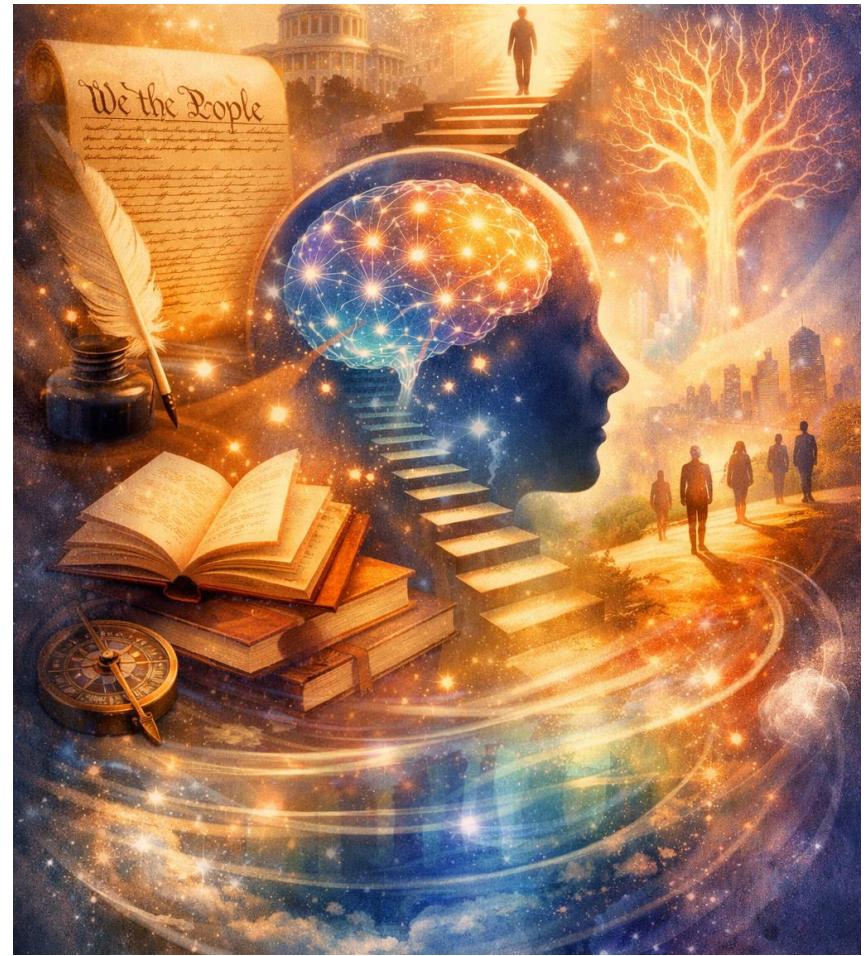
What approach to career planning can you recognise in your own career decisions? E.g. choosing to undertake a PhD

What are the flavours of career pressure that you can relate to?

What will you consider when making choices about your future career?



# Your unique values



# Exploring your values

---

Your values are those elements of your life which you find personally important.

They are core beliefs which guide you on how to conduct your life in a way that is meaningful and satisfying for you.

**Consider your answers to these questions:**

- What do I need from my career to feel fulfilled/happy/motivated? Why?
- What experiences have motivated me in the past?

# Exploring your values exercise

---

- Free writing task
- You will need a pen and paper
- You won't have to share your work!

## **In my career it's important to me that....**

- **Write for 2 minutes**
- **Use full sentences**
- **Don't worry about spelling/grammar**
- **Don't stop writing!**

## Debrief

---

- How did you find this exercise?
- Look at keywords, phrases and highlight these.
- Journaling can also be a very effective way to clear the cloud and get to know ourselves better.

# How the PDP template and skills audit can help you with career planning

---

- Identify your strengths and areas for development
- Plan how and when you can develop your skills further
- See your progress each year...increase your confidence
- Skills mapping: reflect on the kind of roles that require the skills you are good at and that you enjoy doing
- Use for applications e.g. on CV/application form/LinkedIn profile or discuss at interview

# Preparing for a discussion around career planning with your supervisor

---

- Review PDP template and skills audit before meeting supervisor and highlight key points
- Request **advice** on developing skills and link this to potential career paths
- Request **support** with developing skills further:
  - funding for training/certifications/conferences/events
  - knowledge as to where or how to apply for appropriate training
  - time to attend relevant training
  - access to a network for future advice and support



# Resources

# Credit bearing modules for PhD students

---

Careers, Employability & Work-based Learning modules

10ECTS/5ECTS/Audit (no assessment), hybrid

Led and delivered by Trinity Careers Service.

Planning and Managing your Research Process (PMRP) 5 ECTS,

in-person or online

Led by Student Learning Development and delivered by Student Learning Development, the Postgraduate Advisory Service, Student Counselling and the Library.

# Please give us feedback!

Thanks so much for taking part

Please take the 1-2 minutes to let us know what you thought and how we can improve

The form is confidential and anonymised

Developing your PhD Skillset for Annual Reviews and Career planning





**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

**Thank You**