

What's your Research Vision?

This tip-sheet offers hints and tips to explore key questions to help you develop and map out your research vision. A clear research vision is essential as you progress on the academic career path.

1. What is a 'Research Vision'?

Your research vision states what you want your research to achieve in the future – considering what your research and career ambitions are.

Being able to define and articulate your research vision helps you to:

- Understand how your past, current and future research align together.
- Clarify the direction your independent research is progressing and its future impact.
- Have a clear strategy and focus for your research.
- Define who you are as a researcher.

An explanation or discussion of your research vision is often required in both fellowship and lectureship applications and at interview stage.

This tip-sheet provides key questions for you to answer and to explore (i) who you are as an independent researcher and (ii) what your research vision is.

2. Who are you as a researcher and future leader?

To build a clear research vision, it is important to be able to define who you are as a researcher now and what you want to be a future academic leader in.

Questions to help determine this are below.

Who you are as a researcher now:

- What are you an expert in?
- What have you contributed to the field?
- What evidence do you have of independence?
- What makes you distinct? What's unique about your skill set, your experience?

You as a future leader:

- What will you be known for?
- What will you be the 'go to' person for in 10 years' time?
- What will you be a future academic leader in?
- Why do you want to be a future leader in this field / topic?
- What will be the name/focus of your research group?
- What will you contribute to the field?
- What do you want to accomplish?

3. Key questions to help you develop your research vision

A clear research vision should articulate the key challenge being addressed, putting it in context both in terms of academic novelty as well as societal, environmental or industrial impact. Detailing your uniqueness and the niche that you occupy or want to occupy in your field.

Questions to help map out your research vision are:

What question/s or problems or challenges are you addressing?

- What is the specific question you're asking, what is your hypothesis?

Why is it important? (The Big Picture)

- Why now? Timeliness
- What is the relevance, usefulness, necessity?
- Why do we need a solution to your research question/problem now?
- What would happen if no one funds this research?

What's significant about your research/ project /approach?

- How are you solving the problem?
- What methods, data, or techniques are you using?
- What's unique? What's innovative?

Who are your collaborators and competitors?

- How do you differ from your collaborators and competitors?
- What makes you distinct? What is your unique skill set or the unique approach you're taking?

How do you/your project fit in the field?

- What is your niche?
- What space do you want to occupy in your discipline?

What will change in the field because of your work?

- Impact (academic, social, economic, environmental, industrial)
- Application (academic, policy, industrial, clinical)
- Who cares? Who benefits?
- What do you want others to do differently – in academia, policy, clinically?
- How will you maximise the impact of your research?

Contact us: pfdc-support@imperial.ac.uk

