

Bath Spa University – Concordat Gap Analysis and Action Plan: Details of Consultation Process

Background

Bath Spa University is committed to maintaining an active research portfolio. This commitment extends to concentrating on our areas of strength while also fostering new research areas. The University has research activity across all of its academic schools with particular strengths, as measured in the independent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE2008 - see www.rae.ac.uk), in Art and Design, English and Creative Writing, History, Music, and Psychology. All ten subject areas entered in RAE2008 (Biological Sciences, Geography, Psychology, Education, English and Creative Writing, Study of Religions, History, Art and Design, and Communication, Cultural and Media Studies) were judged to be contributing internationally recognised research (2* and above). In five areas (Music, Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Art and Design, History and English) some of the research was awarded a world-leading rating (4*). Research activity at Bath Spa is of comparable quality to that of the best of the post-1992 universities.

Bath Spa University has traditionally been a teaching-led organisation, gaining Research Degree Awarding Powers in August 2008. One reason for the high quality of teaching at Bath Spa is that staff are actively engaged in research and scholarship which directly informs their teaching, as evidenced in successive RAEs since 1992. There are a number of academic staff and doctoral researchers working together around common themes, and the University has approved Research Centres and Research Groups in all 5 of its academic schools.

The University has received research grants and/or doctoral bursaries from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in History, English, Creative Writing, Art and Design, Study of Religions, Geography and Music. The University has also gained research grants from other major national funders, such as the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), The Leverhulme Trust, British Academy, Arts Council, and many other charitable or commercial organisations. However, to date, funding has only been received to employ contract research staff on a small number of contracts – for example, at the current time, we have only two research assistants and two research fellows employed within the University, all internally funded and supporting School level projects and activities.

The focus of the consultation process has therefore been on research active academic staff, and, as the contract researcher community grows, it is the University's intention to set up a research staff forum, supported by an interactive site on the University intranet and a research staff blog (open to all University academic and research staff) for consultation and dissemination purposes, supplemented by CROS to inform future policies and procedures.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the Concordat across the University has been deliberately inclusive of all research active staff, aiming to give contract researchers access to an equivalent level of support and development across the University, ensuring that all are treated equally.

Consultation Process: Contract Research Staff

As stated above, the University currently has four contract research staff (2 Research Assistants and 2 Research Fellows), working actively with School level Research Centres to support the activities of academic staff. All posts were advertised in the spring/summer of 2011, during the Concordat consultation process, and commenced their posts at the start of this academic year. The postholders will be invited to research staff forums and their views on the implementation of the Concordat principles across the University will be actively sought – through one-to-one consultations and also a focus group meeting of similar posts, as the RA community within the University grows.

Prior to the consultation process, the University has employed two post-doctoral fellows linked to funded research projects. Discussions have been held with the Principal Investigators of those grants in the development of the overarching research strategy of the University, and the development of the roles and responsibilities for research staff posts, to ensure that the experiences and views of their RFs were fed into this process. Discussions will be on-going with the PIs, and with existing RAs in the development of “guidelines for the determination of the duties of research staff” – as set out in our Action Plan for 2011/12.

Consultation Process: Academic Research Staff

The University’s Gap Analysis and Action Plan has been led by the Head of Graduate School and Research Management (now Director of Academic Services) , with the documents prepared through collaboration between staff in the Research Support Office and Human Resources. Formal approval has been through the University’s Research, Consultancy and Scholarship Committee (RCSC).

Consultation and dissemination has been on-going through School level groups and Committees, in line with normal University practice. Progress has also been made on the action plan for 2011/12, which is being monitored formally through RCSC, with dissemination activities taking place both formally and informally. Discussions have also taken place with the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development to review and develop the current staff development training programme for all research staff and students to map it against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, and to identify gaps in skills provision to meet the needs of the Concordat.

Details of the dissemination, consultation and feedback processes on the development of the Gap Analysis and Action Plan are set out below. It should be noted that due to structural differences each School took a different approach to the consultation process, which is detailed in Appendix B:

Date	Committee/Forum	Action	Membership	No. research staff
31/03/2011	Research, Consultancy and Scholarship Committee (RCSC) (Appendix A)	Review of draft Gap Analysis	Director of Research Management and Directors of Research for each of 5 Schools	6
March – May 2011	School level groups (see Appendix B)	Consultation on Gap Analysis	Academic staff groups (see Appendix B)	29
12/05/2011	RCSC	Review of progress	Director of Research Management and Directors of Research for each of 5 Schools	6
May-July 2011	School level groups	Consultation on gap analysis feeds into development of action plan	Academic staff groups (see Appendix B)	85
14/07/2011	RCSC	Gap analysis and action plan approved	Director of Research Management and Directors of Research for each of 5 Schools	6
July – Dec 2011	School level groups	Dissemination of action plan and monitoring of progress	Academic staff groups (see Appendix B) and Director of Research Management and Human Resources	41
27/10/2011	RCSC	Update on progress	Deputy VC, Director of Research Management and Directors of Research for each of 5 Schools	7
2011/12 academic year	School level groups	Dissemination of action plan and monitoring of progress	Academic staff groups (see Appendix B) and Director of Research Management and Human Resources	85

Dissemination and Monitoring Strategy

Action	Responsibility	Mechanism
Overall review and management of progress	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Through formal progress reviews at RCSC
Development of policies and procedures as set out in Action Plan	Director of Academic Services	Through working with Research Office and HR
Dissemination of Action Plan and Concordat principles	School Directors of Research	Through School Groups and forums (see Appendix B)
Development of training programme	Director of Centre for Learning and Teaching Development	Through University staff development programme
Publication of clear and transparent processes	Research Office and HR	Through University website and WIKI
Consultation with research contract staff	Director of Academic Services	Through one-to-one meetings and focus groups, and research fora

In 2009/10 the University adopted a new research strategy, after an institution-wide consultation exercise, designed to build on its encouraging performance in RAE2008 and enhance its research activity, while preserving the centrality of its teaching mission. The new strategy signalled a significant shift in institutional objectives; it marked an important stage in the University's growing maturity and was also designed to make the most of the talents and to support the aspirations and career development opportunities of academic staff across the institution. Central to this strategy was the development of a career-pathway for excellent researchers through the introduction of promotional readerships and professorships.

Suitably qualified academic staff were invited to apply for readerships and professorships in March 2011, and as part of this process, and in line with Concordat principles, criteria for appointment and processes and procedures for appointment were circulated to all staff. Included as part of this process is a triennial review of these posts, which will be an integral part of the University's strategy for monitoring progress against the implementation of the Concordat.

Appendix A

Research, Consultancy and Scholarship Committee

Membership

- Senior Academic nominated by the Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
- Director of Academic Services
- Head of Corsham Postgraduate and Research Centre
- Five members, one from each academic school, nominated by the Heads of Schools

Terms of Reference

- To implement policy and strategy for research, consultancy and scholarship for the University within strategic plans agreed by Academic Board from time to time.
- To advise the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Board on the provision of resources necessary to fulfil the requirements of strategy for research, consultancy and scholarship.
- To monitor the progress of the University's research, consultancy and scholarship.

One of the main roles of the Research, Consultancy & Scholarship Committee is to ensure that progress continues against the Research Strategy

Appendix B

School Level Groups

Bath School of Art and Design

Dissemination and consultation through School Board

Membership of School Board:

Chair - Head of School
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Head of Art
Head of Fashion, Textiles and Three Dimensional Design
Head of Design and Critical Studies
Student Representative - Undergraduate
Student Representative - Postgraduate
External Advisor
Elected Representative of Academic Staff (x 2)
Library representative
Student Union representative

Number of research staff directly consulted: 6

Number of research staff consulted through Departmental dissemination processes: 43

School of Education

Dissemination and consultation through School Senior Management Team

Dean of Education
Assistant Deans of Education
Head of Research
Programme Leaders – Teacher Education, Education Studies, Professional Master's
Programme
Head of EPIP

Number of research staff directly consulted: 8

Number of research staff consulted through School dissemination processes: 59

School of Humanities and Cultural Industries

Individual discussions with Heads of Department in H&CI:

Creative Writing
English Literature and Cultural Studies
Film and Media Production
Humanities

Dissemination and consultation through School research training days:

English & Cultural Studies : 16.09.11. This was attended by 12 members of academic research staff and two PhD students

A School Away Day was held on 29.06.10 at which 60 academic staff attended.

Film & Media Production held a half day meeting of the staff of the Media Futures Research Centre on 28 May 2011 at which 7 academic staff attended.

Number of research staff directly consulted: 60

School of Music and Performing Arts

Individual discussions with Heads of Department in M&PA:

Music

Performing Arts

Centre for Musical Research

Number of research staff directly consulted: 3

Number of research staff consulted through Departmental dissemination processes: 37

School of Science, Society and Management

Dissemination and consultation through School Research Committee

Membership of School Research Committee:

Dr Lance Workman (chair)

Prof Rob Mears (Head of School)

Ms Jan Hanley (School Operations Manager)

Dr Anil de Sequeira, Postgraduate Tutor/Food & Nutrition

Dr Ian Todd, Biology

Dr Heather Winlow, Geography

Dr Alison Lee, Psychology

Dr. Lu Liu Business Management

Dr Andrew Smart, Sociology/Health Studies

Dr Mark McGuinness, Social Sciences

Number of research staff directly consulted: 8

Number of research staff consulted through Departmental dissemination processes: 44