

**Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2008 Concordat to Support
the Career Development of researchers**

Introduction

This report outlines the Research and Consultancy Committee's response to implementing the 2008 Concordat, and are actions aimed at improving the support for all research staff across the University in relation to its principles.

Background

Following guidance issued by UUK in March 2010 on aligning institutions with the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the University has been engaged in a gap analysis and mapping exercise to demonstrate how far the University is aligned with the Charter and Code, and has developed an Action Plan to address perceived gaps. The work has been led by the Head of Graduate School and Research Management, with the documents prepared through collaboration between staff in the Research Support Office and Human Resources.

At the current time, the research contract staff community at the University is very small, and it has been possible to consult with individual researchers through their research supervisors, to learn lessons from their experiences of working on projects at the University. A wider consultation and dissemination of all research active staff has been undertaken across the University as follows:

- Gap analysis: consideration at University Research and Consultancy Committee, membership of which comprises the Directors of Research within each school, representing their academic and researcher communities. A full discussion was undertaken at the Committee, with representatives requested to consult within their own constituencies and to feed comments back to the Research Support Office. A revised document, incorporating feedback and comments was then approved at the subsequent meeting for dissemination amongst staff and publication on the University web site.
- Action Plan: the action plan, informed by discussions of the Gap Analysis, was discussed in draft form at Research Committee, with consultation taking place across Schools as above. The final version was then approved at a subsequent meeting for dissemination amongst staff and publication on the University web site.

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.

Content

Attached to this report is a grid which outlines the Concordat's principles, the University's current provision and proposed actions to enhance its practice in relation to research staff. This should be read in conjunction with the audit and gap analysis which was approved by the Committee at its meeting on 31 March 2011. The key aims and actions recommended are:

Actions for the implementation of the Concordat which apply across its principles

- Brief the Heads of School and key School personnel on the implications of the Concordat
- Head of Graduate Studies and Research Management to take forward and review action plan with Human Resources over the course of the 2011/12 academic year, reviews to take place at quarterly intervals. The Head of Graduate School and Research Management will take overall responsibility for the implementation of the plan.

Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection

- Ensure that building research capacity is included as one of the University's strategic aims in all documentation and publicity
- PIs to work closely with HR on job specifications and recruitment of Research Staff, and to be briefed on role profiles and indicative grades as part of the research bid application process
- New PIs and other research managers to have an induction programme set up for them which includes recruitment and selection
- Coaching to be given to new Chairs of recruitment panels on providing appropriate candidate feedback

Principle 2 – Recognition and Value

- Research staff terms and conditions to be published on the web, alongside those of academic and support staff
- Guidelines for the determination of the duties of research staff to be developed and published on the web alongside those of academic and support staff
- New PIs and Research Managers to be given individual coaching and training opportunities for the development of management and leadership skills, as well as equality and diversity training
- Research Committee to consider how the impact of good research management practices can be monitored across the University
- Process for the consideration of bridging funding to be put in place as part of redeployment of staff policy and pay threshold review policy to be amended to include research staff grades
- Research Office to ensure that Heads of Schools are fully briefed on funding body restrictions in relation to additional pay progression requirements
- Heads of Schools and Directors of Research to consider making available funds for the professional development of research staff where training is required outside of the University, and not covered by project funding or other external sources of income
- Organisational HR strategies to be reviewed to include research staff career frameworks

Principles 3 and 4: Support and Career Development

- Research staff to be made aware of and encouraged to access external training offered through professional and research networks
- Vitae Research Development Framework to be mapped against existing internal training provision to identify gaps and requirements for development, with details of revised and new courses to be circulated widely and be made open to all academic and research staff
- Access to Careers Service support to be explored for research staff, and to include access to external placements where appropriate
- Guidelines for the determination of the duties of research staff should include information about local and national career development strategies
- Schools should aim to provide research staff with opportunities to develop a wide range of skills to support their career progression
- University to review and develop a more formal mentoring programme for all staff
- Research Committee to consider how the impact of CPD for research staff can be monitored
- University to ensure that Research staff have an adequate voice and representation on School and University Committees and Research Centre/Group meetings

Principle 5: Researchers Responsibilities

- Development of training in knowledge transfer and public engagement to be considered
- Guidelines for the determination of the duties of research staff should include information about conducting and disseminating research in an honest and ethical manner
- Training to support staff in using the Vitae Professional Development Planner to be considered

Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

- As critical mass of researchers develop, review whether can include a breakdown of indicators and statistics across research as well as academic and support staff
- New PIs and Research Managers to receive coaching and training in flexible working policies and issues and to receive guidance from Research Support Office on funding issues and implications

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- University to review and evaluate implementation of Action Plan as an on-going process through quarterly meetings between HR and the Graduate School.
- Head of Graduate School and Research Management to present an evaluation report annually to the Research and Consultancy Committee, preparing an updated Action Plan for approval where appropriate.