

UK HR Excellence in Research Award

1st annual review of key progress made in supporting the University of Sheffield's implementation of the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers'.

"Researchers are broadly defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose. It is recognised that this broad category of staffing covers a wide range of staff with different disciplinary backgrounds, levels of training, experience and responsibility, types of contract (fixed or open ended, full or part time), and different career expectations and intentions. Recognising the diversity of research staff experience and expertise, it is impossible to address researchers as a homogeneous group."
(Concordat, 2008)

This review has been compiled by the Doctoral Researcher Development Committee standing group for Research Staff, whose role is to, "oversee enhancements to the University's provision for contract research staff and evaluate the effectiveness of activities."

Key themes and progress

Produce a University-wide statement on the management of research staff which includes the fact that researchers are chosen primarily for their ability to advance research at the University of Sheffield and that they should exercise and develop increased capacity for independent, honest and critical thought throughout their careers (Concordat Principles 1, 3, 4 & 5).

The University of Sheffield 'statement of expectations for world class research' has been created to detail the work environment the university wishes to see underpinning research. This document is supported by the document 'research project lifespan recommended practice', which outlines the key HR milestones of the research project process and activities to be undertaken by researcher and PI. It outlines the importance of career development discussions and the value of developing communication and other professional skills that are needed to be both an effective researcher and a highly-skilled professional in any field. It also highlights the importance of SRDS to support discussion of development needs and in identifying appropriate training and development options. The document also details the necessity of ensuring that research staff are integrated effectively into the department and faculty.

As of June 2013, the statement is ready for release. The launch will begin via DR&I breakfast meetings and full roll out across the university is envisioned to begin from September 2013, to include ensuring explicit link to faculty specific strategies in this area.

Ensure that research staff in all faculties are offered appropriate induction (Concordat Principles 3, 4 & 6).

The RPD team Support Officer has led a meeting with the faculty based RDMs to identify practice and pivotal topics to be covered. Induction practices for new RS have been made cohesive across the faculties and include; overview of SRDS, the RPD team and the framework of development, expectations regarding ongoing development, opportunities available inc. societies & online groups, signposting to key policies, an overview of E-portfolio mechanisms available, career development support available, faculty specific info re. research councils, networking, funding and faculty structure & key contacts. Details of university-wide induction activities e.g. campus tour, cake & networking, VC's welcome event, are also signposted.

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Training and Development Career Planning (Concordat Principles 2, 3 & 4).

Training

Offer dedicated training for research staff in all faculties – every faculty has a bespoke programme in place led by the RDM and which is influenced by academics, research staff and external guidance. The programme is currently under evaluation and will be honed on the basis of input from the above mentioned groups as well as results from the CROS 2013 consultation and evaluation from participants.

Ensure all training for research staff is mapped to the RDF – all provision under the university wide framework is mapped to the RDF. The RDF is also referenced at development sessions and will underpin all other interventions e.g. induction.

Extend the Sheffield Leader programme so that it is accessible for all leaders at all levels across the University, including contract research staff who have responsibility for supervising PGRs or undergraduate students - this is open to researchers and there has been some engagement.

Continue to offer support to research staff on commercialisation of research through the Commercialisation of IP Team – representatives from the Commercialisation & IP team work closely with the faculty RDM's and others and offer tailored input as needed.

Careers

Offer dedicated support in career planning to researchers in all faculties – two Researcher careers adviser are in post & working in faculties. They offer a suite of interventions, including group sessions under the DDP, 1-1 interviews, email support, CV clinics, employer liaison, careers events and support RDM's with tailored events under the framework.

Careers 1-1's are offered weekly for PGR's via the DDP and monthly in all faculties for research staff. Waiting lists, if needed, do not exceed a week. If research staff cannot attend the pre-arranged slots, they are actively encouraged to contact the careers advisers direct and frequently do so. Careers support is offered via a range of methods other than 1-1 e.g. Skype and email, to ensure people's needs can be met.

Good research practices (Concordat Principle 5).

Deliver UREC annual programme of research integrity workshops – this has been completed for PGR students in the 2012-2013 cohort. A review is currently underway to identify good practice and to ensure consistency.

Update the University's 'procedure for investigating allegations of research misconduct', taking on board good practices (e.g. UKRIO's publication 'procedure for the investigation of misconduct in research') - The procedure has been reviewed and is being revised in May-June 2013 as part of the University's wider review of TUoS's Charter and Statutes.

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HR policy and practice (Concordat Principles 1, 2, 3 & 4).

Update SRDS guidelines to include a statement about the need for all managers to be reviewed against their performance in the role of manager, in addition to their functional role - this has been done. There is a challenge in how to establish relevant methods for checking quality of SRDS across the University. HR are currently investigating an electronic SRDS system that will hopefully improve completion, maintenance and impact.

Links between the guidance on recruitment and selection and the relevant R&IS web-pages for PI's have been created.

Start to monitor recruitment and selection data for contract research staff (in order to check any equal opportunities implications) – We recognise that we need to define exactly what we are monitoring and in comparison to what, for recruitment and selection. As a university, we have access to full diversity monitoring reports for Research staff and can pull comparative data with other staffing groups, but what are we measuring?

HR faculty teams to continue to offer advice to departments on the appropriate use of fixed-term contracts. This support is ongoing, as needed.

Equality and Diversity (Concordat Principles 2 & 6).

Equality objectives were developed and endorsed by UEB in 2012. Work towards these objectives is wide-ranging and ambitious. Rather than simply adding links between plans, the University web pages have been re-written and the action and implementation plans replaced with these objectives. Full details can be found at: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/equality/focus/equalityobjectives>

Consideration to the specific situation of research staff has been given in the current review of support for women on maternity leave as part of the 'Children and Academia' event in May 2012. This work has also been extended to include:

- Embedding the 'Children and Academia' work into the ongoing 'Parents in Academia' network, which is an expansion of the researcher initiatives previously held in MDH. This includes all parents at the University, and is advertised through research groups to encourage participation from this staffing base.
- A wide-ranging maternity project that has included clarification of WARP eligibility for researchers (plus an extension of this eligibility) and clearer guidance for researchers on funding available to them throughout the maternity period, in addition to guidance on advice and support available to women and their line managers.

Retain institutional Athena Swan Charter award – the University has successfully retained the Bronze award.

Continue to work with female academic staff groups and faculties to monitor and develop actions around gender - most faculties have now set up their own equality and diversity groups, embedding this work into the faculties. This has arisen out of the preparations for departmental submissions for Athena Swan.

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Continue to monitor the number of contract researchers participating in SRDS and undertake further investigation of departments where numbers of contract research staff participating in SRDS is lower than average - Stats are available for the 2012 SRDS round by faculty and department and are being used to develop and engagement strategy.

Continue to monitor staff on fixed-term contracts as part of the University's ongoing scrutiny of redeployment and redundancy options offered to contract researchers - The University continues to closely monitor all fixed term contracts ending within the following 6 months on a rolling monthly basis. Where contracts are not extended staff are given the option of statutory or advanced redundancy (where applicable) or can opt to be included on the University's redeployment register.

Where an individual's contract is due to be extended, departments are asked to give careful consideration as to whether a fixed term contract is still the most appropriate form of engagement or whether an ongoing contract would be more suitable. This is managed on a case by case basis with Human Resources engaging directly with departments.

Complete review of University redeployment processes – completed (see <http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/change/toolkit>). The new processes have been implemented. Communication with faculties is ongoing to develop tailored training support to ensure that these are implemented effectively. The Sheffield Manager development will also be exploring how to support managers in effective implementation of policies.

Ongoing & future developments 2013-2014

(taken from the current HR Excellence action plan & new actions agreed at the DRDC Standing Group for Research Staff meeting 9.7.2013)

Action required	Prin.	Who	Deadline	Progress review
Start to monitor recruitment and selection data for contract research staff (in order to check any equal opportunities implications).	1	HR	April 2013	Data is collected but clarity is still needed regarding what to analyse and how to utilise – new action required (see below)
Pilot provision of training on coaching skills so that managers of researchers can offer effective coaching to their staff	2, 3 & 4	JG	Jun 2013	Most members of the RPD team and two HR staff have completed training in coaching, to enable them to offer coaching to RS in their areas. 2-day coaching skills course open for all staff via the SD Programme.
Encourage contract research staff in all faculties to devise a personal development plan and to maintain a log of personal and professional development.	5	RPDT	Jul 2013	RDM's promote and explain tools at induction and refer to them in sessions, where appropriate. Level of interest varies and some express dislike of Pebble+.

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Add recruitment and selection training to future core academic induction training programmes for newly appointed lecturers and for new Heads of Department.	1	HR	Jul 2013	Recruitment Checklist updated to note that all new academic appointments need to do Chair of Interview Panel training.
Investigate the feasibility of opportunities for placements with industry.	3 & 4	RH	Jul 2013	A Careers Adviser in the Careers Service has done a sample study and will have results in Aug. 2013.
Position the DRDC SG for RS more strategically, particularly an official link in to PVC's for R&I	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	RH	Sept 2013	The group is being reviewed a part of the PGR committee structure review and an extraordinary meeting of the group will take place in Jan 2014 to review ToR and membership.
Collate stats on number of RS currently undertaking or completed SL by faculty, gender, grade, ethnicity.	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	JG	Sept 2013	This has been done apart from ethnicity, which is hard to do as completion of that data by staff on the staff database is low.
Identify RS numbers on the waiting list for SL and categorise by faculty & likely place date.	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	JG	Sept 2013	There is no waiting list for SL2 (most likely course). More promotion and engagement is needed.
Increase RS participation in Sheffield Leader – need benchmarking data	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	JG	Ongoing	
Increase RS participation in SRDS – need benchmarking data	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	JG	Ongoing	Data has been collated and departments with lower completion rates identified. Need to agree a strategy of engagement.
Increase RS participation in Think Ahead induction – need benchmarking data	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	RPDT	Ongoing	
Analyse recruitment and selection data for contract research staff (in order to check any equal opportunities implications).	1	HR / BP	Nov 2013	
Review the current practices around disability and the training available to contract research staff to ensure that the framework is fully accessible to disabled staff.	6	RPDT	Dec 2013	This needs to be incorporated within Equality Impact Assessments for all RS-specific training (and any other training) as standard.

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As part of the implementation of the enhancements to the University's e-recruitment system, review and amend as necessary the web guidance and training on recruitment and selection to include specific provision for managers / PIs with responsibility for the recruitment and selection of research staff.	1	HR	Dec 2013	Guidance scheduled to be written in November 2013. This is to be included within the guidance.
Collate access and uptake stats for programmes under the Think Ahead framework (Feb 2013-July 2013)	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	RPDT	Jan 2014	
Undertake an evaluation of research staff induction across all faculties, taking into account the findings from CROS 2013, and revise as appropriate.	3 & 4	RPDT	Feb 2014	Completed and report produced in July 2013. Recommendations to be implemented 2013-2014.
Collate access and uptake stats for programmes under the Think Ahead framework (Aug 2013-Jan 2014)	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	RPDT	March 2014	
Deliver training on research ethics and integrity to all contract research staff.	5	LU	Jun 2014	
Provide all contract research staff and PGRs with access to mentors in the public, private and third not-for-profit sector (drawn from alumni) and to academic mentors within the University of Sheffield.	3 & 4	KG	Jul 2014	April 2013: RS mentoring by academics available in every faculty. Methods for mentoring by non-university staff is under consultation under the working title 'v i s t a'.
Collate access and uptake stats for programmes under the Think Ahead framework (Feb 2014-July 2014)	2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	RPDT	Sept 2014	
Get feedback from the VC Fellows and the EPSRC fellows to see their perspectives on the input they receive. CPD to identify trends, good practices, cultures, values etc. To be done during & at exit point.	3 & 4	TBC	2015 onwards	

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations used in the action plan

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CROS	Careers in Research Online Survey
DDP	Doctoral Development Programme
DRDC	DRDC Standing Group for Research Staff http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/committees/drdcstandinggroup A sub group of the Doctoral & Researcher Development Committee with responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
DR&I	Directors of Research & Innovation
ECRs	Early Career Researchers
EPSRC	Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council
HR	Human Resources
IP	Intellectual Property
MDH	Medicine, Dentistry & Health (faculty of)
PGR	Postgraduate Research Student
PI	Principal Investigator
PVC's for R&I	Pro-Vice Chancellors for Research & Innovation
RDF	Researcher Development Framework http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Researcher-Development-Framework.html
RDM	Researcher Development Manager
R&IS	Research & Innovation Services http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris
RPD	Researcher Professional Development team – university-wide based team of researcher developers
RS	Research Staff
SD	Staff Development

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- SL Sheffield Leader programme (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/sld/lmd/sheffieldleader>)
- SRDS Staff Development & Review Scheme
- ToR Terms of Reference
- TUoS The University of Sheffield
- UEB University Executive Board
- UKRIO UK Research Integrity Office (<http://www.ukrio.org/>)
- UREC University Research Ethics Committee
(<http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/committees/ethicscommittee>)
The Committee whose purpose is to promote awareness and understanding of research ethical issues throughout the University, to advise on any ethical matters in research that are referred to it from within the University and to keep abreast of the external research ethics environment and ensure that the University responds to all external requirements.
- VC Vice Chancellor
- WARP Women Academics Returners Programme