



Concordat to Support the Career Development of Research Staff

European Commission HR Excellence in Research Badge

Action Plan 2015-2017

The internal evaluation of the University of Bedfordshire's Concordat Implementation Action Plan (2013-2017) was conducted, in May 2015, by the Director of Research Development and included input from Human Resources, Innovation & Enterprise, the Research Graduate School, the Centre for Learning Excellence and the Research Institutes. The internal evaluation is reported to the Research and Enterprise Committee, which in turn reports to the Academic Board.

This document sets out the Action Plan going forward, following the internal evaluation. In each section the Concordat expectations are stated, followed by a table of items for on-going monitoring or new action at the University.

This document is complemented by a short report of the internal evaluation, summarising progress in relation to the 2013-15 action plan and highlighting the key features of this 2015-17 action plan.

Abbreviations

CLE	Centre for Learning Excellence
CPCD	Centre for Personal & Career Development
DORI	Director of Research Institute
E&D	Equality and Diversity
HR	Human Recourses
I&E	Innovation & Enterprise Service
MARC	Marketing, Admissions, Recruitment and Communications
ODTU	Organisational Development and Training Unit
PI	Principal Investigator
RDC	Research Degrees Committee
R&EC	Research and Enterprise Committee
RGS	Research Graduate School
RI	Research Institute
RO	Research Office
UREC	University Research Ethics Committee
VC	Vice Chancellor
VCEG	Vice Chancellor's Executive Group



Items that are predominantly on-going monitoring



Items that are predominantly new actions with subsequent monitoring implications

A. Recruitment and Selection

Principle 1 - Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research

- 1.1 All members of the UK research community should understand that researchers are chosen primarily for their ability to advance research at an institution.
- 1.2 Employers should strive to attract excellence and respect diversity. Recruitment and selection procedures should be informative, transparent and open to all qualified applicants regardless of background. Person and vacancy specifications must clearly identify the skills required for the post and these requirements should be relevant to the role.
- 1.3 Research posts should only be advertised as a fixed-term post where there is a recorded and justifiable reason.
- 1.4 To assure fairness, consistency and the best assessment of the candidates' potential, recruitment and progression panels should reflect diversity as well as a range of experience and expertise. In order to promote these values, individuals who are members of recruitment and promotion panels should have received relevant recent training. Unsuccessful applicants should be given appropriate feedback if requested as this may be of assistance to the researcher in considering their further career development.
- 1.5 The level of pay or grade for researchers should be determined according to the requirements of the post, consistent with the pay and grading arrangements of the research organisation.

On-going Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(a)	Organisation and People Development Strategy was approved in 2013, distributed in hard copy and subsequently revised in 2014. There is also an action plan designed to deliver the strategic aims which is led by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). The action plan is reviewed regularly and revisions are endorsed through the University Resources and Employment Committee. It is also shared and discussed with trade union representatives at joint management/trade union committees. They are also involved in many of the working and project groups set up to deliver the projects in the action plan.	Director of HR
(b)	There is an e-learning training module on E&D which is mandatory for all new staff as part of induction and probation requirements. There are plans in place to roll this out to all staff as a mandatory refresher module.	HR
(c)	The Procedure for Reviewing Fixed Term Contracts was reviewed in 2014, and over the last few years, the University as a whole has reduced its reliance on fixed term contracts. The University ensures that people are, wherever possible, employed on permanent contracts.	HR
(d)	The process for making applications for additional increments to reward exceptional achievement, has been reviewed and revised and as a result, a more robust and transparent system of Achievement Awards is being introduced. The 'Promotion and Recruitment to Senior Academic Title' and the 'Pay, progression and Reward Policy further support academic progression, reward and recognition for all academic staff including researchers.	HR

B. Recognition and Value

Principle 2 - Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research

- 2.1 Employers are encouraged to value and afford equal treatment to all researchers, regardless of whether they are employed on a fixed-term or similar contract. In particular, employers should ensure that the development of researchers is not undermined by instability of employment contracts. This approach should be embedded throughout all departmental structures and systems.
- 2.2 Commitment by everyone involved to improving the stability of employment conditions for researchers and implementing and abiding by the principles and terms laid down in the Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (2002) and Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) guidance on the use of fixed-term contracts will provide benefits for researchers, research managers, and their organisation.
- 2.3 Research management should be required to participate in active performance management, including career development guidance, and supervision of those who work in their teams. Employers should ensure that research managers are made aware of, and understand their responsibilities for the management of researchers and should provide training opportunities, including equality and diversity training, to support research managers in doing this. Institutions will wish to consider how research managers' performance in these areas is developed, assessed and rewarded, and how effectively this supports good research management.
- 2.4 Organisational systems must be capable of supporting continuity of employment for researchers, such as funding between grants, other schemes for supporting time between grant funding, or systems for redeploying researchers within organisations where resources allow. Funders are expected to make it a priority to consider how their policies, guidance and funding can be enhanced to help employers to achieve this objective.
- 2.5 Pay progression for researchers should be transparent and in accordance with procedures agreed between the relevant trade unions and the employers nationally and locally. In HEIs, pay progression will be in accordance with the Framework Agreement, though recognising the flexibility that institutions have in implementing the Framework.
- 2.6 Researchers need to be offered opportunities to develop their own careers as well as having access to additional pay progression. Promotion opportunities should be transparent, effectively communicated and open to all staff. It is helpful if clear career frameworks for early stage researchers are outlined in organisational HR strategies.

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(a)	The University Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Policy was revised in 2014 and is under further review in 2015 to ensure that all our policies relating to training and CPD are inclusive, clear and consistent.	HR
(b)	The University staff intranet on staff development has been restructured with clear information on training opportunities, policies and guidance. All documents and policies on the intranet were reviewed and refreshed as part of the University Document Management project in 2014. The staff development intranet pages are now under further development to provide clearly signposted training opportunities and guidance.	HR Staff Development team Marketing
(c)	The University Strategy 2012 – 2017 states that all academic staff will have a minimum of five days CPD per annum, and actions to ensure delivery of this form part of the Organisation and People Development strategy.	HR Staff Development team Marketing
(d)	Monitor the effect of the recently revised Promotion and Recruitment to Senior Academic Title Policy to support development of research staff.	HR R&EC

C. Support and Career Development

Principle 3 - Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment

- 3.1 It is recognised that positions of permanent employment are limited in the UK research and academic communities and that not all researchers will be able to obtain such a position. It is, therefore, imperative that researcher positions in the UK are attractive in themselves (and not, for example, solely as potential stepping stones to permanent academic positions). This requires that they provide career development which is comparable to, and competitive with, other employment sectors.
- 3.2 A wide variety of career paths is open to researchers, and the ability to move between different paths is key to a successful career. It is recognised that this mobility brings great benefit to the UK economy and organisations will, therefore, wish to be confident that their culture supports a broad-minded approach to researcher careers and that all career paths are valued equally.
- 3.3 Employers, funders and researchers recognise that researchers need to develop transferable skills, delivered through embedded training, in order to stay competitive in both internal and external job markets. Therefore, as well as the necessary training and appropriate skills, competencies and understanding to carry out a funded project, researchers also need to support to develop the communication and other professional skills that they will need to be both effective researchers and highly-skilled professionals in whatever field they choose to enter.
- 3.4 All employers will wish to review how their staff can access professional, independent advice on career management in general, particularly the prospect of employment beyond their immediate discipline base, or offering training and placements to broaden awareness of other fields and sectors.
- 3.5 Researchers benefit from clear systems that help them to plan their career development. Employers and funding bodies should assist researchers to make informed choices about their career progression by ensuring that their own policies and processes for promotion and reward are transparent and clearly stated and that all researchers are aware of local and national career development strategies.
- 3.6 Employers should provide a planned induction programme for researchers, on appointment to a research post, to ensure early effectiveness through the understanding of the organisation and its policies and procedures. They should also ensure that research managers provide effective research environments for the training and development of researchers and encourage them to maintain or start their continuous professional development.
- 3.7 Employers and funders will wish to consider articulating the skills that should be developed at each stage of their staff development frameworks and should encourage researchers to acquire and practise those skills. For example, researchers may be given the opportunity to manage part of the budget for a project, or to act as a mentor or advisor to other researchers and students.
- 3.8 Employers also should provide a specific career development strategy for researchers at all stages of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, which should include the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers. All researchers should be familiar with such provisions and arrangements.
- 3.9 Research managers should actively encourage researchers to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity, so far as is possible within the project. It should be stressed that developmental activity can often have a direct impact on the success of the project, by distributing work, taking advantage of individual strengths and talents, and increasing the skill and effectiveness of researchers in key areas such as writing for publication or communicating with a wider audience. Funding bodies acknowledge that the training of researchers is a significant contribution to research output and they encourage employers and mentors to adopt these practices.

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(a)	The Staff Review process was reviewed and refreshed in 2014 and further recommendations for improvements to the processes are being put in place for the 2015 round.	HR RI Directors
(b)	Review staff probation booklet to make it more user friendly and ensure the needs of researchers are clearly included.	HR supported by R&EC

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(c)	Map the RDF against: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current HR policies and guidelines • University-wide CPD provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR • HR, I&E, RGS, MARC
(d)	As stated above, the University strategy is to ensure that all academic staff have at least five days' CPD per annum, which is underpinned by the Organisation and People Development Strategy. We continue to acknowledge through analysis of staff review personal development plans, that many developments activated involve CPD such as attendance at conferences, which is additional to the formal development opportunities provided by the University through HR, CLE, I&E, RGS and MARC	ODTU RI Directors PIs

C. Support and Career Development

Principle 4 - The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career

- 4.1 Researchers should be empowered by having a realistic understanding of, and information about, their own career development and career direction options as well as taking personal responsibility for their choices at the appropriate times. Employers should introduce appraisal systems for all researchers for assessing their professional performance on a regular basis and in a transparent manner. It is important that researchers have access to honest and transparent advice on their prospects for success in their preferred career.
- 4.2 Employers will wish to ensure that developmental activities open to researchers include preparation for academic practice. Employers should take measures to ensure broad recognition of CPD schemes from other employing organisations as far as possible, so that researchers are not unduly disadvantaged when moving from one employer to another.
- 4.3 Employers will ensure that where researchers are provided with teaching and demonstrating opportunities as part of their career development, suitable training and support is provided.
- 4.4 Employers and researchers can often benefit if researchers have an input into policy and practice through appropriate representation at staff meetings and on organisation or management committees.
- 4.5 Mentoring arrangements should be supported by employers as a key mechanism for career development and enhancement.

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(a)	The policy and practices for mentoring for academic staff are under review as part of the Organisation and People Development Strategy	HR RI Directors PIs
(b)	Investigate the participation in CROS or a similar means of receiving feedback from research staff to inform their development.	R&EC

D. Researchers' Responsibilities

Principle 5 - Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning

- 5.1 Researchers are employed to advance knowledge and should exercise and develop increased capacity for independent, honest and critical thought throughout their careers.
- 5.2 Researchers should develop their ability to transfer and exploit knowledge where appropriate and facilitate its use in policy making and the commercialisation of research for the benefit of their employing organisation, as well as the wider society and economy as a whole.
- 5.3 Researchers should recognise their responsibility to conduct and disseminate research results in an honest and ethical manner and to contribute to the wider body of knowledge.
- 5.4 Researchers should also be aware that the skills and achievements required to move on from a research position may not be the same as the skills and achievements which they displayed to reach that position.
- 5.5 Researchers should recognise that the primary responsibility for managing and pursuing their career is theirs. Accordingly, they should identify training needs and actively seek out opportunities for learning and development in order to further that career and take personal responsibility for their choices. Research managers and employers also have a responsibility to provide honest advice and appropriate structures, and to equip researchers with the tools to manage their own careers. Research managers should encourage research staff under their supervision to attend appropriate training and career development courses and events.
- 5.6 Researchers should ensure that their career development requirements and activities are regularly discussed, monitored and evaluated throughout the year in discussion with their research manager and mentor, and that they commit themselves fully to all such activities. Researchers are encouraged to record their Personal Development Planning (PDP) and CPD activities, a log of which may be presented to current and future employers as appropriate.

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(a)	The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) has a higher profile in supervisor training and the induction of research degree students. Mapping of CPD provision against the RDF has begun.	R&EC oversight of CPD provided by specialist teams
(b)	The University Research Ethics Committee has led the mapping of processes against the <i>Concordat to Support Research Integrity</i> and continues to review central and Faculty-based processes.	UREC
(c)	Monitor the impact of the Post-2014 REF Strategy and planning towards REF2020 on the recruitment and development of researchers.	R&EC supported by HR

E. Diversity and Equality

Principle 6 - Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers

- 6.1 The UK legislative framework outlaws discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, race or religion. It also requires public bodies to take positive steps to promote equality, based on evidence and priorities, and to develop specific schemes and action plans related to gender, race and disability to address specific issues of underrepresentation or lack of progression.
- 6.2 As is the case for society as a whole, UK research will benefit from increasing equality and diversity in the recruitment and retention of researchers. The Concordat encourages the recruitment and retention of researchers from the widest pool of available talent, including those from diverse backgrounds.
- 6.3 It should be emphasised that the demanding nature of research careers has a disproportionate effect on certain groups. We strongly recommend that all members of the UK research community actively address the disincentives and indirect obstacles to retention and progression in research careers which may disproportionately impact on some groups more than others.
- 6.4 Employers should ensure that the working conditions for researchers provide the flexibility necessary for successful research performance in line with legal requirements. Employers should recognise that for parents and others who have taken career breaks, including parental leave, have worked part-time, or have taken atypical routes into research, the early career period may be prolonged, and this may be a time where the risk of attrition from the research path is most acute. Working conditions should allow both female and male researchers to combine family and work, children and career.
- 6.5 It is important for employers to respond flexibly to requests for changed work patterns and to resist instant refusals on the assumption that, because research has always been carried out in a particular way, it cannot be done differently.
- 6.6 Funders should continue to ensure that their funding mechanisms and policies are adapted to changing diversity and equality legislation and guidance, for example in their provision of additional funding and duration of grant to cover paternity and adoptive leave as well as maternity leave.
- 6.7 Employers should aim for a representative balance of gender, disability, ethnicity and age at all levels of staff, including at supervisory and managerial level. This should be achieved on the basis of a transparent equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at all subsequent career stages. Diversity should be reflected on selection and evaluation committees. What is 'representative' will vary according to the nature of the institution and the academic research subject, but institutions should aim to ensure that the percentage of applicants, and ultimately appointments, from a particular group to any given level should reflect the percentage in the available pool at the level immediately below.
- 6.8 Account should also be taken of the personal circumstances of groups of researchers. Examples would include researchers who have responsibility for young children or adult dependants, researchers for whom English is not a first language, older or younger researchers, or researchers with disabilities and long-term health issues. Employers and funders should change policies or practices that directly or indirectly disadvantage such groups.
- 6.9 All managers of research should ensure that measures exist at every institution through which discrimination, bullying or harassment can be reported and addressed without adversely affecting the careers of innocent parties.
- 6.10 Employers should also consider participation in schemes such as the Athena Swan Charter, the Juno Project and other initiatives aimed at promoting diversity in research careers.

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(a)	<p>The University's Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy 2012 – 2017 is reviewed annually by the Equality & Diversity Committee. There is also information and guidance available on the staff intranet.</p> <p>The University has run E&D awareness raising training and also training on conducting equality impact assessments, and have an e-learning module which is mandatory for new starters and which is going to be rolled out to all existing staff.</p>	HR

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(b)	There is an annual E&D workforce monitoring report which is considered by the Equality & Diversity Committee and which identifies any gaps and causes of concern for action planning.	HR
(c)	There is a programme of equality impact assessment whereby the priority policies have been identified for assessment and all new policies, procedures and services are impact assessed as part of their development.	HR
(d)	As part of the work programme of the E&D Committee, apply for Mindful Employer and the Gender and Race Equality Charter Marks in 2015. Also revisit the unsuccessful 2013 Athena SWAN application submitted and submit a fresh application.	E & D Committee
(e)	The University policies on flexible working, childcare vouchers and maternity, parental, paternity and adoption leave are all under review in 2015 along with the introduction of a new Shared Parental Leave Policy in 2015.	HR
(f)	The Research Degree Studentship Policy has been reviewed in 2015 with the aim of ensuring that the terms and conditions for externally funded studentships at the University are no less favourable than those of RCUK studentships.	RGS
(g)	The University has recently introduced e-recruitment which will enable us to more effectively monitor the whole recruitment process from application to appointment.	HR
(h)	The University monitors its workforce by staff group and grade to identify any gaps and sets out action plans where concerns are identified. We also report on E&D issues to HEFCE on an annual basis in addition to reporting to the internal University E&D committees and to Governors through the Resources & Employment Committee.	HR
(i)	Guidance for staff and managers in managing people with disabilities is under review and HR staff work with other staff who support students with disabilities and trade union representatives to ensure that best practice is followed. The University has an Occupational Health service which was reviewed and retendered in 2014 and which advises and supports staff. The University also encourages and supports staff to take up the support offered by 'Access to Work' to ensure that staff with disabilities are able to remain in work.	HR
(j)	The University's Bullying and Harassment, Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures were reviewed in 2014. They are all still fit for purpose, but in practice the HR Department is moving towards a more facilitative, mediated style of resolving grievances and complaints of harassment and bullying, so that where possible issues are addressed informally and quickly, which is proving effective. Where issues cannot be dealt with informally they are resolved using formal procedures, and all staff are assured that complaints will not affect career prospects. All complaints of bullying and harassment are monitored as part of the employee relations caseload and this is reported to the Resources and Employment Committee and the E&D workforce report.	HR
(k)	As part of the Organisation and People Development Strategy, the University is creating a new Behavioural Framework which will underpin the values around treating others with dignity and respect. This will complement the new Partnership Agreement which also sets out expectations for students and staff.	HR

F. Implementation and Review

Principle 7 - The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK

- 7.1 The implementation of the Concordat's principles will lead to greater integration of researchers into the mainstream management and career development structures of their employing organisations. The aim of this section is to promote implementation through a collective commitment to reviewing its progress.
- 7.2 The signatories agree:
- to constitute a steering group under an independent chair to oversee the implementation and review of the Concordat with appropriate representation of the funders and sector bodies including the Professional Institutions. This group will inform the UK Research Base Funders' Forum of progress.
 - to procure an independent benchmarking study to assess the state of the sector at the launch of this Concordat.
 - to contribute an appropriate share of the costs of supporting implementation and review, including the benchmarking report.
 - to draw up an implementation plan for the Concordat, to ensure a coherent and sustained approach by organisations operating in the sector and the appropriate use of survey and monitoring tools such as the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS).
 - to undertake and publish a major review of the implementation of the Concordat after three years reporting to the signatories and taking account of progress against the benchmark report and the views of researchers and employers (both outside and within the HE sector).
- 7.3 The signatory funders will ensure that their terms and conditions of, for example, project grants include the expectation that the Research Organisations that they fund will adopt the principles of the revised Concordat.
- 7.4 The signatories recognise the value of innovation in practices and of sharing practice between institutions and aim to promote these throughout the implementation and review process. The funding signatories will consider aligning their support for transferable and career development skills. It is expected that Vitae, the national programme dedicated to realising the potential of researchers, funded by the Research Councils, will play a major role in innovating, sharing practice and enhancing the capability of the sector to implement aspects of the Concordat, as well as establishing strategic partnerships between funders.
- 7.5 Under public sector equality schemes, employers are required to monitor equality and diversity indicators for their researchers. This section focuses on the co-ordination and enhancement of existing information collection and not on the creation of additional data. There is a strong presumption that in implementing the Concordat, significant emphasis will be placed on the use of existing data and information sources and on the sharing of good practice between institutions and to provide evidence of its impact.

Ongoing Monitoring and New Actions		Lead
(a)	The University continues to engage with Vitae regionally and locally supporting the refocusing of the East of England hub activities.	RGS
(b)	The Director of Research Development and her deputy participate in the UKCGE network for directors and researchers in order to contribute to debates and share good practice.	RGS
(c)	The University benchmarks key E&D data with other HEIs as part of the DLA Piper annual benchmarking report and also reports this to the Resources & Employment Committee.	HR
(d)	Monitoring this action plan	R&EC