

## **CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCHERS:**

### **UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY AND ACTION PLAN**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The University of Aberdeen fully supports and endorses the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and work continues within the University to ensure the principles are embedded in University culture.

During the last academic year, HR undertook a gap analysis exercise to assess where we are doing well and where there is room for enhancement in relation to the principles of the Concordat.

#### **GAP ANALYSIS**

The outcomes of the gap analysis, together with our ongoing work and our action plan are detailed in the following document.

In summary, the gap analysis led to a number of **immediate** projects to support identified needs, including:

Development of a researcher induction programme (detailed below).

Recruitment of a careers adviser with a specific remit for early career researchers (ECRs) and postgraduate research students.

The gap analysis however also highlighted areas for **enhancement**, such as:

Embedding researcher development into Schools and Colleges

Appraisal uptake in Schools and Colleges

Supporting PIs - responsibilities, guidance materials and highlighting the importance of professional and career development.

The University continues to monitor, review, refine and develop resources for our researchers in response to the changing and increasingly challenging funding environment.

RECRUITMENT & SELECTION and RECOGNITION & VALUE	Principle
<p>The University promotes a staffing policy that focuses on achieving outstanding appointments at the highest levels of academic excellence.</p>	1,2
<p>The University's Recruitment and Selection Policy is underpinned by the Recruitment and Selection Guidelines which support staff involved in recruitment processes by providing information relating to good practice in recruitment and selection. These guidelines are being updated to support the University's new online recruitment system (to be launched in August 2010).</p>	1
<p>To support our commitment to equality and diversity throughout the recruitment and selection process, all staff are required to have attended one of our training sessions on best practice in recruitment and selection before they can participate in a selection committee.</p>	1/6
<p>The majority of University research posts are advertised externally via the University's recruitment website. This is balanced against our need to support internal systems for redeployment.</p>	1
<p>The University has transparent pay scales which are aligned to role profiles. The promotion process is communicated to and is open to all staff, including researchers, within the University.</p>	1
<p>The University has recently changed its policy on the use of fixed term contracts and has moved towards open-ended contracts for the majority of staff. Fixed term contracts are used only in limited justifiable circumstances and staff employed on fixed term contracts are treated and perceived as favourably as those on open ended contracts.</p>	1/2/6
<p>The University has a redeployment policy and dedicated redeployment co-ordinators within the institution to advise staff whose contracts are 'at-risk' of redundancy. Staff are invited to register their details with the redeployment database where their details are matched with the essential criteria of available posts prior to them being advertised externally. College HR teams offer meetings to all staff whose post is deemed 'at risk' of redundancy to discuss future options and support available. Internal redeployment helps to minimize compulsory redundancies and is part of a strategy to grow and nurture our own talent.</p>	1/2
<p>The University has a Vice Principal for Research &amp; Commercialisation and within each of our 3 Academic Colleges we have a Director of Research. This helps inform and embed policy at College level and ensure good practice across all areas of the University.</p>	1/2
<p>The University has achieved Investors in People (IIP) status across the</p>	2/7

<p>institution, recognising and valuing the contribution of employees in accordance with the IIP Standard. Employees understand the University's ambition as outlined in the strategic plan and their role in helping to achieve this.</p>	
<p>The University policies on intellectual property and co-authorship specify which rights belong to researchers and/or, where applicable, to the University or other parties, including external commercial or industrial organisations.</p>	2/5
<p>The University also promotes health and wellbeing at work through our Healthy Working Lives Programme which the University regards as an important strand of its wider commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility.</p>	5
<p>The University has developed within the College of Life Sciences and Medicine a Management Skills Handbook that was supported by the 'Achieving the Best' project (funded by The Leadership Foundation in Higher Education, 2007). The fundamental aim of this handbook is to support excellence in research in the College by addressing leadership and management issues in two key areas: research management and people management.</p>	2/3/4/5
<p><b>ACTIONS:</b> To reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Concordat and to the 'researcher experience' within the University of Aberdeen, our commitment to the career development of research staff will be included in the Strategic Plan 2010-2015.</p>	<p><b>LEAD</b> Senior Management</p>
<p>From November 2010, the Research Staff Development (RSD) programme will deliver an induction programme to all new researchers, tailored specifically to meet the requirements of research staff. New staff will be introduced to the principles of the Concordat and how the University is promoting the importance of personal, professional and career development and lifelong learning and the responsibilities of researchers and line managers.</p>	Vice Principal (R&C)*
<p>As part of our commitment to retaining excellence and nurturing talent, the RSD programme (from October 2010) will offer information sessions (provided by HR) to research staff surrounding contracts, redundancy and redeployment.</p>	Vice Principal (R&C)
<p>In recognition of our commitment to supporting the career and professional development of our research staff we plan to review and extend our Management Skills Handbook across the University.</p>	HR/Senior Management

\*Vice Principal for Research and Commercialisation

<b>SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>Principle</b>
<p>The University of Aberdeen Strategic Plan 2010 – 2015 is in development and one of its core goals is to promote Excellence in Research through ‘supporting professional and career development of research staff’.</p>	2/3/4
<p>The RSD programme coordinates support for research staff, both internal and external to the University.</p>	2/3/4
<p>A full programme of development opportunities for research staff, offered by the RSD programme is available to all researchers across the University from the beginning of their employment. The programme offers a wide range of courses and practical workshops encompassing areas such as career development, communication skills, management skills and computing skills which are provided to encourage pro-active involvement in career and professional development and life-long learning.</p>	3/4
<p>The University employs a careers adviser with a specific remit for research staff and postgraduate research students to provide a confidential and non judgemental service to support career planning and development for research staff at all stages of their careers. The service also provides information about external career planning information and practical tools. Career workshops are regularly held within the University.</p>	3/4/5
<p>A Research Staff Development web resource dedicated to research staff development is maintained and updated by the RSD team. Skills based training and development opportunities, internal and external development options are all provided to research staff to address their development needs in a manner appropriate to their learning style and circumstances.</p>	3/4/5
<p>All new staff are invited to a University Induction Seminar and a College specific induction day in which the support available is highlighted.</p>	2/3/4
<p>Bespoke Principal Investigators (PI) development programmes promote excellence in leadership and management for PIs and emphasise the University’s commitment to the Concordat. These programmes are designed to support new and aspiring and also experienced PIs to ensure that they are equipped to reach their full potential by enhancing their understanding of the University environment. The programme outlines their roles and responsibilities, raising awareness of the support available within the University and developing their people management, leadership and project management skills. It also provides support on ‘Managing your own research career and that of your team’, which includes how to get the</p>	2/3/4

<p>best out of appraisal, how to develop researchers and the value of developing the transferrable skills of your team(s).</p>	
<p>The staff training and development team offer a range of leadership and management development opportunities which University managers are encouraged to make use of.</p>	2
<p>Research and Innovation (R&amp;I), the research development and commercialisation department within the University of Aberdeen, offer specialist training and other development opportunities to staff on intellectual property, commercialisation, knowledge transfer and securing research funding.</p>	3/4
<p>The Public Engagement with Science Unit is part of the University's Office of External Affairs. It provides support to staff and students wishing to promote their research, or science generally, to a public audience. Research staff are made aware of planned events including the successful Café Scientifique, Café Med and Café Controversial programmes and how to become involved in public engagement activities.</p>	3/4
<p>The Career Development and Staff Appraisal Scheme within the University aims to help all members of staff develop their full potential, enhance their sense of personal fulfilment at work and their ability to take advantage of opportunities to develop their career. The University is committed to ensuring annual review meetings become a regular part of University business and provides guidance and training, by HR, on 'conducting and getting the most out of your appraisal'.</p>	2/3/4
<p>The University provides opportunities for research staff and their line managers to take part in College specific mentoring programmes to support personal and professional development.</p>	3/4
<p>The University has recently launched PURE, an online database that stores information about publications, research activities such as awards, professional activities, outreach and knowledge exchange and impact, as well as displaying other research related information from University corporate applications. Adopting Pure as our Research Information System and improving links to our institutional repository helps to strengthen the international visibility of the University's research and raise our research profile. For the first time we have one central place to store research outputs which can then be used for a variety of purposes particularly to capture many aspects of researchers work and career achievements, to help support appraisal meetings, CVs and personal web profiles.</p>	3/4/5
<p>The development of academic expectations within the School of Medicine and Dentistry in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine aims to ensure clarity in what the University expects from staff and that staff are fully</p>	3/4/5

<p>supported to meet these expectations.  <a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/medicine-dentistry/uploads/files/Wet%20Research.pdf">http://www.abdn.ac.uk/medicine-dentistry/uploads/files/Wet%20Research.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/medicine-dentistry/uploads/files/Dry%20Research.pdf">http://www.abdn.ac.uk/medicine-dentistry/uploads/files/Dry%20Research.pdf</a></p> <p>It is University policy that research staff are entitled to 3 days each year to devote to professional and career development activities.</p> <p><b>ACTIONS:</b>  To improve engagement from both research staff and PIs the RSD website is to be redeveloped and rebranded (by October 2010) to be more focused to the training and development needs of our researchers within the University. It will also include detailed induction information not only for those new to the University of Aberdeen but also those new to post doctoral research.</p> <p>As part of our commitment to retaining excellence, the RSD programme will offer information sessions on academic career paths and the annual promotions exercise (from November 2010).</p> <p>All new research staff will be contacted by email introducing them to the RSD programme and advising them of the support available (from October 2010).</p>	<p>3/4</p> <p><b>LEAD</b>  Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p> <p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p> <p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p>
--	---

<b>RESEARCHERS' RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>Principle</b>
<p>The University's policy for Intellectual Property and Revenue Sharing and its Policy on Good Research Practice outlines the University's expectations in relation to intellectual property and co-authorship and specify which rights belong to researchers and/or, where applicable, to the University or other parties, including external commercial or industrial collaborators or organisations. In addition this policy addresses more generally professional standards such as honesty and accountability that are expected of researchers and managers of researchers.</p> <p>The RSD website encourages researchers to assume responsibility for their own professional and career development through awareness raising and highlighting development opportunities internal and external to the university.</p> <p>The RSD programme has made links with and supports external organisations such as Vitae and our research staff are made aware of the support they offer.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>3/4/5</p> <p>3/4/5</p>

<p><b>ACTIONS:</b> As part of our commitment to retaining excellence, the RSD programme will offer information sessions on academic career paths and the annual promotions exercise (from November 2010).</p> <p>Promotion of PURE as a PDP tool for research staff to help support appraisal and career and professional development. Redeployment coordinators and careers advisor for ECRs to be made aware of this web tool (from November 2010).</p> <p>Promotion of Research Staff Societies (with possibility of financial assistance) to enable researchers to form local peer support networks.</p> <p>The new research staff induction programme will highlight the opportunities across the University for professional and career development and raise awareness of researchers' responsibility to fulfil their research potential (from November 2010).</p>	<p><b>LEAD</b> Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p> <p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p> <p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p> <p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p>
---	---

<b>DIVERSITY and EQUALITY</b>	<b>Principle</b>
<p>The University of Aberdeen is committed to equality of opportunity for its students and employees. As well as implementing our legislative duties we are striving to become a Higher Education Institution which is recognised for its good practice in this area. Our Vice Principal and Head of College of Arts and Social Sciences leads policy and strategy on all issues relating to staff and students.</p>	6
<p>In the employment context we are developing and implementing a range of policies and procedures that promote equality and diversity to ensure our employees, irrespective of their type of contract, are treated fairly, are aware of their duties and have equality of opportunity throughout their career with us.</p>	6
<p>The University has developed a body of Equality and Diversity Policies and Schemes and Action Plans including flexible working practice, disability (including dyslexia), equal pay, leave, religion and how the University is meeting requirements of equalities legislation. The policies can be viewed on the Policy Planning and Governance and HR websites. <a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg">http://www.abdn.ac.uk/ppg</a> <a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/policies">http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/policies</a></p>	6
<p>The University has a bullying and harassment policy and new harassment advisers have been recruited and trained.</p>	6

<p>The University offers access to English Language training for international researchers with the possibility of subsidised fees (at the discretion of individual Schools).</p>	6
<p>The University recognises the need to support wellbeing at work and has a number of policies relating to employment wellbeing in addition to offering a Counselling service and access to the Occupational Health Service.  <a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/policy/staff-information/well-being">http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hr/policy/staff-information/well-being</a></p>	6
<p>The Equality Impact Assessment (piloted in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine) benefits all members of staff as it aims to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and their role, performance standards, objectives and development needs/opportunities. All staff can benefit from training opportunities to support them in their roles and to ensure that mechanisms and tools for performance management are developed to ensure that the University has the ability to manage their careers effectively.</p>	5/6
<p>An online guide for staff relocating to Aberdeen is provided on the HR website.</p>	6
<p>The Esslemont Group is a Women's network within the College of Life Sciences and Medicine. The impetus for forming the Esslemont Group arose after the huge success of the 'Women on Top' symposium. The aims of the Esslemont Group are to: highlight the contribution of female staff in the College through networking, promotional events and support activities, create an awareness of gender issues and ultimately redress gender imbalance at all levels of staff and to provide support for activities related to gender and science for women.</p>	6
<p><b>ACTIONS:</b>  The RSD program plans to develop its online induction resources for research staff to compliment the online guide for staff relocating to Aberdeen that is provided on the HR website.</p>	<b>LEAD</b> RSD
<p>The University aims to ultimately secure a Women in Science Ambassadors Award for the College of Life Sciences and Medicine.</p>	Esslemont Group

<b>IMPLEMENTATION and REVIEW</b>	<b>Principle</b>
<p>The University conducted an initial gap analysis through an internal HR working group.</p>	7

<p>The University took part in CROS for the first time in 2010 and will continue to use it in future to monitor researchers' experience within the University and our implementation of the Concordat Principles.</p>	<p>7</p>
<p><b>ACTIONS:</b> The University will continue to use CROS in the future to assess researchers' experience of working in the University.</p>	<p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p>
<p>The University intends to take parting the proposed CROS Research Leaders (PIRLS) survey in 2011.</p>	<p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p>
<p>An internal Concordat monitoring group (in addition to the University's Management Group (UMG) will be set up to provide updates for senior managers ensuring continued monitoring across all levels of the University.</p>	<p>Vice Principal (R&amp;C)</p>