

UNIVERSITY of CHESTER

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Self-audit and Implementation Strategy

Background

1. The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, launched in June 2008, is an agreement between the funders and employers of researchers in the UK which aims to support good management of researchers and their careers. The Concordat, together with Section 1 (postgraduate research programmes) of the QAA Code of Practice, formed the UK mechanism to deliver the objectives and requirements of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, to which the UK higher education sector as a whole is committed. The recent publication of the QAA HE Quality Code, section B11 (postgraduate research programmes), in June 2012, will no doubt replace the QAA Code of Practice as the appropriate reference point for delivery of the objectives of the Charter and Code in the near future.

2. In the Concordat, Researchers are 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”.

The University currently employs around 20-30 staff who meet the definition of Researcher as used by the Concordat. In addition, the management of academic quality and standards for around 350 research degree students is governed by the QAA Code of Practice/Quality Code.

3. The full text of the Concordat is available at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-Concordat-2011.pdf>. Vitae, the national organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education, provide briefings on the Concordat, available at <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/56351/Concordat-briefings-to-engage-stakeholder-groups-.html>.
4. To demonstrate its compliance with the Concordat and the European Charter and Code, the University is required to carry out a self-audit to analyse its current level of implementation of the Concordat and to produce and publish an action plan for how it will further improve the career development of research staff, through filling any gaps identified in the self-audit.
5. In November 2009, the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and Human Resource Management Services (HRMS) completed a self-audit against the principles of the Concordat and identified those areas where the University is already compliant and those areas where additional action was required to enhance aspects of the University's policy and practice for the support of researchers. Given the small number of Researchers at the University, the University chose to consult them (and Principal Investigators) via the Research Forum, Research and Knowledge Transfer sub-Committee and Research Committee. The Implementation Strategy was subsequently

approved by Senate in June 2010, by which time a number of the agreed actions had already begun to be implemented.

6. The updated action plan below reflects the University's current position as well placed to meet the requirements of the Concordat. It draws on the initial self-audit and action plan from 2009 and takes account of actions already implemented and changes in University policy and structure. The action plan has been circulated to all Researchers and comments invited.
7. Implementation of the action plan will be championed by the Executive Dean of Research (who reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal). Progress against the action plan will continue to be monitored by the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and the implementation strategy reviewed regularly by the Research, Postgraduate and Knowledge Transfer Committee (a committee of the University Senate), chaired by the Executive Dean of Research and whose membership includes representation of researchers as well as senior academic managers (including Deans of the academic faculties and Heads of Departments) and the research student community.
8. The policy documents referred to in the action plan can be found via the following links:
 - Diversity and Equality Policy (open access)
<http://www.chester.ac.uk/sites/files/chester/Diversity%20and%20Equality%20Policy.pdf>
 - Single Equality Scheme (open access)
<http://www.chester.ac.uk/sites/files/chester/Equality%20Objectives%202012.pdf>
 - Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure (intranet access required)
http://ganymede2.chester.ac.uk/view.php?title_id=81526
 - Policy on Fixed-Term Contracts (intranet access required)
http://ganymede2.chester.ac.uk/view.php?title_id=648929
 - Redundancy policy and procedure (intranet access required)
http://ganymede2.chester.ac.uk/view.php?title_id=80783
 - Redeployment policy and procedure (intranet access required)
http://ganymede2.chester.ac.uk/view.php?title_id=393841
 - Other HRMS policy documents relating to Freedom of Speech, Dignity at Work (addressing discrimination, bullying and harassment), Equal Pay, Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Time Off for Dependents, Flexible Working, Retirement, and Time Off for Religious Observance (intranet access required)
http://ganymede.chester.ac.uk/index.php?page_id=242909&group=2

PRINCIPLE 1 – RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

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

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Existence and implementation of institutional policies and practices for the recruitment and selection of research staff	All staff recruitment is governed by the University's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure	
Guidance on the use of fixed-term contracts, job descriptions and grading	The Policy on Fixed-Term Contracts provides guidance on the use and management of fixed-term contracts, and requires clear justifiable reasons to be given for their use. Additional guidance on the use of fixed-term and fixed-task contracts is available from HRMS, who are also able to advise on the preparation of job descriptions and role grading Standard template job descriptions for seven researcher grades are available. Guidance on costing new researcher posts as part of external grants/contracts is provided by the Research and Knowledge Transfer (R&KT) and Finance offices	
Research posts advertised as a fixed-term post only where there is a recorded and justifiable reason		
Provision of training in recruitment and selection for managers of researchers and interview panels	The University's recruitment and selection training is recommended for all staff who participate in interviews and is mandatory for all interview panel chairs	
Appropriate feedback provided to unsuccessful candidates	Requirement fully met	
Level of pay or grade for researchers determined according to the requirements of the post and consistent with the pay and grading arrangements of the research organisation	Researcher standard job descriptions conform to HERA grading system. Any researcher post which does not follow a standard template is HERA scored prior to advertisement	

PRINCIPLE 2 – RECOGNITION AND VALUE

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

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Organisational systems which are capable of supporting continuity of employment for researchers and which ensure staff development is not undermined by instability of fixed term employment contracts	<p>Prior to the end of all fixed-term contracts, consultation between managers and the member of staff explores alternatives to expiry (such as renewal, redeployment, etc.) and what assistance the University may be able provide to help mitigate the consequences of potential termination of contract</p> <p>The University’s policies on redundancy and redeployment apply to all staff who have been employed for a period of at least 12 months</p> <p>All relevant vacancies are circulated to Research and Knowledge Transfer administrative staff for circulation on the researcher email list</p>	
Pay progression for researchers which is transparent and in accordance with procedures agreed between the relevant trade unions and the employers nationally and locally	Standard researcher roles provide a transparent grade structure from research assistant to research fellow level	

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Tailored development opportunities to meet research staff profiles and needs	<p>The University provides a wide range of staff development and training sessions open to all staff, specific sessions have been identified and published as suitable for researchers.</p> <p>A Staff Development and Training programme and accompanying 'Recommended Training Sessions for Researchers' document is available, highlighting those training sessions which are particularly relevant to research staff. This will be replaced with an updated Learning Directory – see action plan</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> The new Learning Directory, to be published by HRMS in January 2013, will specifically highlight researcher sessions within the main document. These sessions will be aligned to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)</p>
Constructive use of appraisal and development reviews in supporting the development of research staff	All staff participate in an annual Performance and Development Review (PDR) scheme	

PRINCIPLE 3 – SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
<p>Career development for researcher positions which is comparable to, and competitive with, other employment sectors</p> <p>Clear systems to assist researchers plan their career development</p>	<p>Career development opportunities for researchers are offered on the same basis as for all University staff. The University was awarded Investors in People Bronze status in 2012</p> <p>All research staff review development needs and career aspirations during the annual Performance and Development Review, whilst PGR students complete a Researcher Development Plan (based upon the RDF) at induction which is reviewed at least annually thereafter</p>	
<p>Training for researchers to support development of communication and other professional skills, in addition to the training necessary to carry out funded projects, at all stages of research career development</p>	<p>In addition to the University-wide staff development and training programme (which includes sessions on, for example, presentation skills, negotiating, team working, and people management) a range of research and professional skills training is offered by the Graduate School and is open to research staff, research students and supervisors</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> The new Learning Directory, to be published by HRMS in January 2013, will align development and training sessions to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)</p>
<p>Independent advice on career management</p>	<p>Independent advice is available to all staff from the University careers service</p>	
<p>Planned induction programme for researchers, on appointment to a research post</p>	<p>All new staff participate in University, HRMS and department induction programmes</p>	
<p>Availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers</p>	<p>A mentor policy forms part of the vision of the new People and Organisational Development Strategy (currently in draft) to be implemented from September 2013. Roll out of the policies is expected through 2014 and 2015 according to evolving institutional priorities</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> HRMS to gain approval for the Strategy by September 2013 from SMT, including consultation with the common interest groups (including Unions) and relevant committees, and to lead on implementation thereafter</p>

<i>Concordat requirements</i>	<i>University response</i>	<i>Action Plan (where required)</i>
Active encouragement of researchers to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity	Identification of opportunities for CPD form a key part of the PDR process	

PRINCIPLE 4 – SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Appraisal systems for all researchers for assessing their professional performance on a regular basis and in a transparent manner	All staff participate in an annual PDR	
Developmental activities open to researchers to include preparation for academic practice	<p>A range of training to support staff in preparing to undertake teaching or other academic duties are provided by departments and faculties and also through the University's Learning and Teaching Institute (LTI) HEA-accredited Learning and Teaching in HE (MALTHE) programme (which offers staff the opportunity to undertake modules as part of CPD as well for academic credit leading to a PG certificate, diploma or MA)</p> <p>The LTI also provide development opportunities for researchers outside the formal programme. A two day workshop, entitled 'New to Teaching' is offered twice a year and an Action Learning Group meets termly to support ongoing development for teaching and supporting learning.</p> <p>Researchers whose role includes teaching, leadership and development of other researchers, and who have already attained Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, are eligible to apply for recognition under the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education at Senior Fellowship level</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> The Graduate School is to collaborate with the LTI on revising the MALTHE modules on mentoring and supervision to form an integral part of the University's supervisor training from September 2013</p>
Provision of suitable training and support where researchers are provided with teaching and demonstrating opportunities as part of their career development		

<i>Concordat requirements</i>	<i>University response</i>	<i>Action Plan (where required)</i>
Ensure broad recognition of CPD schemes from other employing organisations	The People and Organisational Development Strategy recognises the importance of CPD and provides opportunities for all staff to undertake professional development (either within the University or at other institutions) and to apply for financial support for this from their department	
Opportunity for researchers to have an input into policy and practice through appropriate representation at staff meetings and on committees	Membership of the Research, Postgraduate and Knowledge Transfer Committee, which reports directly to the University Senate, was revised in 2011/12 to include representation of researchers as well as senior academic managers. The Committee continues to include representation from the research student community	
Mentoring arrangements for career development and enhancement	A mentor policy forms part of the vision of the new People and Organisational Development Strategy to be implemented summer 2013	

PRINCIPLE 5 – RESERACHERS’ RESPONSIBILITIES

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

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Structures which enable research staff to be informed and engaged in institutional decision-making	All staff have the opportunity to attend Open Staff Meeting meetings to put questions or concerns to SMT and all staff have the opportunity to liaise directly with SMT though the staff suggestion scheme An email list of research staff is used regularly by the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office to circulate information on relevant developments, opportunities and vacancies	<i>Action:</i> The Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and Graduate School will be introducing regular departmental e-newsletters from November 2012 to provide an update on new initiatives and to highlight the research support services offered by the University
Effective communication with research staff to ensure that they recognise their responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop their ability to transfer and exploit knowledge to the benefit of the University and the wider society and economy • Conduct and disseminate research results in an honest and ethical manner • Identify their own training needs and seek out opportunities for learning and development in order to further their career 	The Research and Knowledge Transfer Office intranet site provides access to all policies, procedures and guidance relevant to researchers All researchers are required to abide by the University’s Research Governance Handbook and participate in the annual PDR process	
Provision of advice and appropriate structures to equip researchers with the tools to manage their own careers	Independent advice on career management is available to all staff from the University careers service	

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
<p>Encourage research staff to attend appropriate training and career development courses and events</p>	<p>Identification of opportunities for training and career development form a key part of the PDR process and the University provides a wide range of staff development and training sessions open to all staff</p> <p>Consultation is undertaken prior to the expiry of fixed term contracts and includes consideration of the additional staff development or training which might assist the member of staff in securing further employment</p> <p>A Staff Development and Training programme and accompanying 'Recommended Training Sessions for Researchers' document is available, highlighting those training sessions which are particularly relevant to research staff</p>	<p><i>Action:</i> The new Learning Directory, to be published by HRMS in January 2013, will specifically highlight researcher sessions within the main document. These sessions will be aligned to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)</p>

PRINCIPLE 6 – DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

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

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Existence and implementation of institutional policies and practices relating to diversity and equality for research staff	<p>The University's Diversity and Equality Policy relates to all staff and all aspects of the University's operation including, for example, advertisement, recruitment and selection; pay, terms and conditions of service; training and staff development; probation and promotion; and grievance and disciplinary procedures</p> <p>The University's Single Equality Scheme addressing age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation applies to all staff and students.</p> <p>Policy documents provide additional guidance relating to Freedom of Speech, Dignity at Work (addressing discrimination, bullying and harassment), Equal Pay, Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Time Off for Dependents, Flexible Working, Retirement, and Time Off for Religious Observance</p> <p>All new University policy and procedural documents are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) as part of the development and implementation process and EQIAs have been completed for all existing policies</p> <p>A dedicated section of the University intranet provides access to all equality and diversity policies and guidance</p>	
Working conditions for researchers which provide flexibility and which respond flexibly to requests for changed work patterns		
Transparent equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at all subsequent career stages		
Measures through which discrimination, bullying or harassment can be reported and addressed without adversely affecting the careers of innocent parties		

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Consider participation in schemes such as the Athena SWAN Charter, the Juno Project and other initiatives aimed at promoting diversity in research careers	The University commenced work on the Athena SWAN charter in May 2012.	<i>Action:</i> The University's Women in Science group, which is led by a faculty Dean and supported by HRMS, will continue to lead on the ongoing implementation of the Athena SWAN charter

PRINCIPLE 7 – IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

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

Concordat requirements	University response	Action Plan (where required)
Institutional policies informed by regular review and evaluation of progress	All University policies and procedures are monitored by the relevant department and are subject to either on-going or a formal triennial review by the University Council	
Regular review of the profile, needs and experiences of research staff	The profile of staff is monitored by HRMS through the annual reports of the Single Equality scheme Following the recent restructuring of committees and revisions to the annual review of research process, there is a need to identify alternative ways in which the needs and experiences of researchers are reviewed	<i>Action:</i> The Research and Knowledge Transfer Office will seek advice from the Research, Postgraduate and Knowledge Transfer Committee by November 2012 on suitable mechanisms for monitoring the needs and experiences of researchers, e.g. via periodic focus groups with research staff, and implement the recommendation