

Concordat Review and Gap Analysis

Working Group Membership

- Rodney Day, Science and Technology Research Institute (chair)
- Helen Ellis-Jones, Human Resources
- Marcella Wright, Equality Office
- Liz Nolan, University Research Office
- Tracey Goldlaing, Human Resources
- Anne-Marie Kelly, Graduate Futures

Summary

The 2008 Concordat established a series of principles that HEIs can use to ensure they provide a supportive professional environment within which researchers can work, develop and excel. The Concordat is supported by all major funders of research in the UK as well as the Government, professional bodies and learned societies. In the context of the Concordat 'researchers' are defined as those individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose. They are sometimes more locally known as contract research staff, research staff, research fellows, advanced fellows, post docs, post doctoral research assistants, etc.

It is pleasing that the review of the 2008 Concordat has identified a significant number of areas where the University fully meets the principles of the Concordat. These areas include many aspects of recruitment and selection, equality and diversity, career development and support as well as the responsibilities of researchers themselves. The review took account of the recent survey of research staff conducted by the former head of the Staff Development Unit, Linda Bryant. A number of sub areas within these principles are identified for further work, to bring the University more fully into line with the Concordat principles. These include:

- Level & consistency of pay scales for researchers.
- Compliance with Fixed Term Employee Regulations.
- Career development guidance.
- Some aspects of equality and diversity.
- Redeployment opportunities, mechanisms & support between fixed term grants.
- HR strategy and its integration with career frameworks and progression.
- The provision of an effective environment for training & development.
- Articulation of the skills researchers need and appropriate development needs.
- Researcher representation and input to policy & practice.
- Benchmarking UH provision for researchers against other HEIs as well as seeking feedback from researchers.

The University has many robust policies and procedures in place to support researchers and recent developments in the provision of a new appraisal system and the embryonic staff intranet will offer further enhancements that should benefit this group of staff. However, there are several areas where a lack of evidence and data makes it difficult to assess the state of our provision, especially in putting these policies and procedures into practice. For instance, it would be helpful to identify whether the appraisal system is working or not for researchers and the extent to which they need targeted job specific or career development support. Suggestions are made for raising awareness of the Concordat amongst various stakeholder groups, including with the Heads of School Forum, through people development unit courses and by better promoting and targeting the provisions the University already makes for researchers.

In overview, three high level activities would allow the University to more fully meet with the principles of the Concordat:

- Improved communication with, and feedback from, stakeholder groups.
- Fine tuning of Human Resources policies and procedures.
- Recognising more widely the value of researchers within the culture and operation of the University.