

Concordat Implementation Action Plan 2011-2015: The University of Nottingham Two Year Internal Review

1. Internal review and evaluation

The internal evaluation of the University of Nottingham's Concordat Action Plan (2011-2015) was conducted on by the Research Staff Group (RSG) and reported to Research Board in September 2013. The RSG is chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School and includes representatives from Research Staff (faculty reps, senior research staff rep), Careers and Employability Service, Graduate School, Human Resources, Professional Development and Women in Science Engineering and Technology group (WinSET) and reports to the University's Research Board. The group have also received input from academic schools and professional services which has fed into this evaluation.

Researchers' views have been taken into account during this review through input from the research staff representatives on the RSG (who represent both school and faculty Research Staff Networks) consideration of the results of the University of Nottingham 2011 Staff Survey and 2013 Careers in Research Online Surveys (CROS).

All key documents and information about the University's implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers can be found at:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/researchstaff/concordat/researchconcordat.aspx>

2. Key achievements and progress against indicators and actions identified in the original University of Nottingham Concordat Action Plan 2011-2014

Principle 1: Recruitment and selection

- Human Resources (HR) have reviewed the general information and guidance on recruitment and selection and have implemented a recruitment toolkit. They have specifically reviewed recruitment activities for researchers. The next steps are the implementation of a new e-recruitment process which is currently under development
- All those involved in recruitment, including of research staff, are required to attend training or complete the online recruitment materials and HR confirm this when panels are set up. Information on the Professional Development website highlights that it is mandatory for those involved in the recruitment of research staff to undergo such training.
- The HR website and internal University intranet (workspace) underwent a complete redesign in 2011. This has improved access to HR information and policies (for example those addressing [Fixed Term](#), [Equal Opportunities](#) and [Redeployment](#)) and aims to improve accessibility to guidance for current and potential researchers and line manager.

Principle 2: Recognition and value

- **Activity Performance Review/Professional Development and Performance Review:** In 2011, the University replaced its Activity Performance Review (APR) with a new system [Professional Development and Performance Review](#) (PDPR). During the consultation process the RSG recommended that the new system should have a more explicit focus on professional and career development issues and that Principal Investigators and others involved in managing research staff should be expected to reflect formally on this element of their role and responsibilities as part of their own review. The new PDPR process has a much stronger focus on professional and staff development than the previous system and provides resources and training to support researchers and their managers to incorporate this into their goals and working practices.
- The University's CROS results found that 88% of Nottingham research staff respondents had taken part in appraisal/review in the last 12 months compared to 41% Russell Group, 50%

nationally. 48% considered that the then APR process was very useful or useful in 'helping them to focus on their career aspirations and how these were met by their current role'. In the CROS 2013 results the proportion of respondents who reported having participated in appraisal review in the last 2 years had increased to 92% and there was an increase to 53% in those who reported that it was very useful or useful 'in helping them to focus on their career aspirations'. These results suggest that the new PDPR process is starting to address professional and career development issues.

- **Redeployment:** Research staff engagement with redeployment processes and opportunities is monitored by HR but remains lower than for other job families/staff groups. HR have implemented measures to increase researchers' awareness of the redeployment policy and process and its uptake through workshops and presentations to research staff and school managers. An annual report on the uptake of redeployment processes is included in published equality data.

Principles 3 & 4: Support and Career Development

- **Review of development activities:** The Graduate School (GS), Careers and Employability Service (CES) and Professional Development (PD) regularly review and evaluate all formal and informal development activities including their provision for research staff. The GS and CES have mapped their provision to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and disseminate this as part of the Researcher Development Programme. New opportunities have been introduced to address gaps in provision and meet specific requests from researcher communities. These include an institutional induction programme for newly appointed Research Staff which was introduced in 2011, and an annual Research Staff Development Conference. In Spring 2013 the University introduced a new leadership programme for research staff in collaboration with the University of Birmingham.
- **Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and statement (RDS):** The RDF and RDS are embedded in all training materials and associated promotional materials including the research staff website and regular research staff e-newsletter. Researchers are introduced to the RDF during the research staff induction. CES and the GS have recently piloted the online Vitae RDF planner with research staff which has received positive feedback.
- **Careers Support and Guidance:** CES in conjunction with the GS offers a range of careers focussed workshops, which include promoting different career paths to researchers. A targeted marketing leaflet has been produced to promote the dedicated careers support and guidance available to research staff which is disseminated via a range of central and school-based routes. CES monitor the take-up of, and feedback on, their dedicated provision for research staff.
- **Promotion process:** All University staff are notified of the promotions process and key dates. In addition to the formal dissemination processes this is also flagged specifically to research staff through the monthly email digest and dedicated webpages. HR monitor promotion trends for research staff on an annual basis and produce a report for the RSG who flag any specific trends/issues to Research Board.
- **Employer engagement:** The University provides support for a wide range of activities to encourage researchers to network and engage with potential employers and collaborators from different sectors both within the UK and internationally. These include dedicated sandpit and networking opportunities via the University of Nottingham Interdisciplinary Centre for Analytical Sciences, Annual Research Showcase, HERMES fellowships, Young Entrepreneurs Schemes, Building Experience and Skills Travel Scholarships and other mobility schemes, and a range of programmes and opportunities for public engagement. There has been a concerted effort to promote such activities to research staff and, where possible, to ring-fence funding and places. We have seen a notable increase in take up of some schemes

as a result. The University has recently developed its Knowledge Engagement Framework (2013-2018) which explicitly addresses the opportunities for research staff.

Principle 5: Researchers' responsibilities

- The University continues to maintain a wide range of opportunities for research staff to undertake personal, professional and career development activities including an annual Research Staff Development Conference as well as travel awards. The opportunities are disseminated through the research website and regular e-newsletter. The new PDPR process actively encourages staff to identify and discuss their personal and professional development goals and aspirations with their line manager and to formalise these as part of their goal setting.

Principle 6: Equality and diversity

- **Athena Swann:** In 2012 the University received its silver award, in addition to this seven schools in STEM disciplines currently hold bronze or silver awards with a number of others seeking recognition under the scheme. Furthermore all schools currently holding Silver Awards remain on track with the implementation of their Action Plans. The University has a dedicated WinSET group.

3. Implementation and Review

Members of the RSG provide regular reports on schools and Faculty practices and implementation of the Concordat. These have been used to identify and share good practice within the institution and have been disseminated through research staff networks, school and faculty committees and senior manager's briefings. The university participated in CROS 2013 and is currently analysing the results. The results, recommendations arising from them and any good practice identified via this channel will be reported by the RSG to Research Board and disseminated to individual researchers and their Schools/Faculties using a range of different communication mechanisms.

Next steps,

The focus of the Concordat Action Plan for the period 2013 – 2015 was discussed and agreed by the RSG (June 2013) and approved by the Pro-vice Chancellor for Research (in the absence of a Research Board before October 2013). The discussion was informed by input from professional services and research staff representatives, the progress against the original Action Plan, institutional priorities and strategies and the results from CROS 2013.

New additions include,

- A review of the new PDPR process by HR and the development of a research staff focussed competency framework aligned to the RDF and institutional promotions criteria which will support research staff and their reviewers with the career and professional development elements of the PDPR process. (HR)
- Expansion and development of the pilot Research Leadership Programme for Research Staff with Birmingham (RGS and PD)
- Launch and implementation of the new Knowledge Exchange Framework highlighting the specific focus on research staff (BEIS, RGS).
- Development of the programme of training and development for research staff with new courses specifically addressing topics prioritised by research staff in CROS 2013 including research data management and research impact. (RGS)
- Maximising the promotion of the 'HR Excellence in Research' badge for recruitment (HR).
- Promotion of mobility schemes and opportunities at the University's international campuses/partners including the EU Co-fund scheme. (RGS)