

Concordat Implementation Action Plan 2011-2015: The University of Nottingham Four Year External Review

1. Review and evaluation

The review and evaluation of the University of Nottingham's Concordat Action Plan (2011-2015) was conducted by the Research Staff Group (RSG) on behalf of the University's Research Board. The RSG is chaired by the Assistant Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and includes research staff representatives (one early career stage and one senior research staff member per Faculty), the Careers and Employability Service, the Graduate School, Human Resources, Professional Development and the Women in Science Engineering and Technology group (WinSET). The RSG 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) and consideration of the results of 2013 and 2015 Careers in Research Online Surveys (CROS).

The University currently employs around 1100 research-only staff who are distributed across each of the five faculties (and located across four campuses in the UK). They are defined as staff whose primary role at the university is to undertake research. The University of Nottingham is a global institution and has two international campuses based in China and Malaysia. However the nature of higher education appointments in these two countries mean that there are few, if any research only/postdoctoral staff on these campuses. For the purposes of this reporting only initiatives based in the UK are included. However the international nature of the University provides ample opportunities to enrich Nottingham's research environment and to support its researchers.

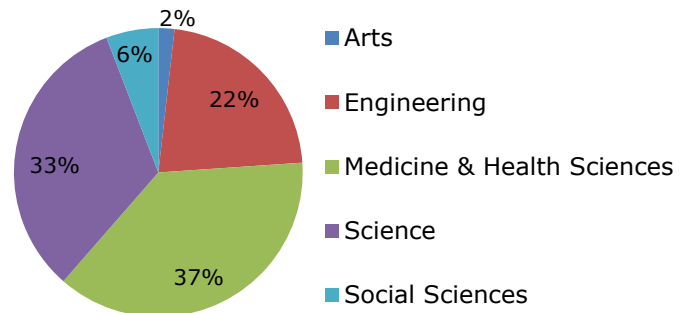


Figure 1: Research-only staff population breakdown by faculty at The University of Nottingham (September 2015)

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>

Key achievements and progress against indicators and actions identified in the review of the University of Nottingham Concordat Action Plan 2013-2015

Principle 1: Recruitment and selection

- A new [recruitment system](#) was launched in November 2013 reaffirming the University's commitment to open and transparent recruitment, selection and retention processes. Guidance and support on the use of the system for both applicants and recruiters is available on the [HR website](#). All recruiters must attend training (online and classroom based provisions) and must confirm that panel members have undergone training to HR when panels are set up.
- Attendance at the University-wide induction process for new members of Research Staff has shown a year on year increase. The content of the programme is reviewed and will be

refreshed in 2015-16 to reflect changes in the research environment and context at Nottingham.

- The University has a dedicated Research Staff website providing up to date information for incoming new members of staff and current staff. In addition, materials are available for incoming international researchers to assist with familiarisation of the UK research environment, the University and UK culture/practicalities. Web analytics demonstrate that these resources are regularly accessed.

Principle 2: Recognition and value

- All members of University of Nottingham staff are required to undertake an annual performance review. The University has a high compliance rate amongst research staff with (91% in 2013 and 89% in CROS 2015). A review of the then new PDPR process was conducted by HR in 2013 and a University-wide competency framework was introduced in Spring 2013. From 2013 the promotions' criteria were revised to include specific research activity performance indicators/standards. Further development of the Competency Framework is currently being undertaken to develop a framework specific and tailored to the needs and requirements of individual job families. An outline of the PDPR process and guidance notes for staff and reviewers is available on the [HR website](#). All reviewers are required to undertake training, which includes materials for PIs on undertaking research staff reviews. In addition, training courses are available for research staff on [how to prepare for PDPR meetings](#).
- In CROS 2015, 55.6% of respondents (compared to 52% in CROS 2013) indicated that they found the new PDPR process overall useful or very useful with 60.7% (compared to 53.1% in CROS 2013) identifying that the process assisted with focussing on their career aspirations.

Principles 3 & 4: Support and Career Development

- All Research Staff have access to training from a range of providers across the University. These are managed through the Central Short Courses system which provides a single interface to search and book activities no matter who the provider. The Graduate School and Professional Development undertake reviews of their formal and informal development activities and provision for Research Staff as part of the biennial analysis of the implementation of the Concordat with all Graduate School training provision mapped to the RDF.
- New development initiatives introduced for researchers during the review period include a Research Staff Writing Retreat (see Appendix 1: case study), mock funding panel (peer review training), fellowship writing, public engagement activities (annual Research Showcase) and Research data management training.
- 78% of respondents to CROS 2015 agreed that they were encouraged to engage in personal and career development (75% in CROS 2013). However, only 53% of respondents indicated that they had a career development plan. It is anticipated that promotion of the Vitae RDF planner and through development of the career development workshops that this may be improved. The School of Biosciences is currently piloting the linking of the RDF planner tool to annual PDPR processes.
- The University has two leadership development programmes aimed at research leaders of the future. The programmes are targeted to different career stages. The ECR Leadership Programme is a joint programme with the University of Birmingham. This allows inter-university networking and sharing of practices and experiences across the partnership. The Research Leaders Programme is for research team leaders and addresses current issues

related to management of high performance research teams. Both programmes are initiatives that form part of the people strategy in the university's Global Strategy 2020.

Principle 5: Researchers' responsibilities

- The University has subscribed to the Vitae RDF planner and actively encourages researchers to use this resource. The [RDF planner webpage](#) includes guidance videos on use of this tool. All Graduate School Researcher Development Programme and Faculty specific research training courses are mapped to the RDF. Other training providers are exploring mapping their provision to the. Researchers are encouraged to actively engage in professional development activities and all opportunities undertaken should be reflected and personal development plans and goals for the following year recorded in annual PDPR.
- 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 (conference working group comprise researchers from a board range of disciplines who develop the conference programme), research staff writing retreats (successful pilot ran in July 2015 and biannual retreats now scheduled), research data management training and public engagement training and events (Research Showcase).

Principle 6: Equality and diversity

- Athena SWAN: In 2012 the University received a silver award and will re-apply for Silver in April 2016 using the newly introduced guidance and application process. In addition, this all schools in STEM disciplines have applied for an Athena SWAN award. Currently, two schools remain without an award but will re-apply shortly. The University has a dedicated WinSET group who provide support for SET schools in their Athena SWAN submission and exploration of core issues related to equality and diversity within the University. The WinSET committee include representation from all faculties and job families including members of research-only staff. All non-STEM schools will prepare Athena SWAN application during 2015/16.
- The University has internal funding schemes that provide additional child support to reduce the barriers to participation in conferences and other research activities.

2. 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 managers' briefings. The university participated in CROS 2013 & 2015 and is currently analysing the results from CROS 2015 to explore issues by faculty, career stage, funding, gender and other demographic factors. 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 Research Staff Group have identified the focus of the Concordat Action Plan for the period 2015-2017 These actions have been 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 & preliminary 2015 results.

New additions include,

- Identification of new actions arising from the University's Global Strategy 2020 including the Research Strategy and Knowledge Exchange Framework. (RGS, HR, RB)

- 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 2015 including research data management, open access, research integrity, leadership and research impact. (RGS)
- Maximising the promotion of the 'HR Excellence in Research' badge for recruitment. (HR)
- Monitoring of success outcomes (research outputs, sustainability) of bridging and interdisciplinary funding schemes and the sharing of practices across the institution.(RGS)
- Promotion of mobility schemes and opportunities to research staff. (RGS)
- Retention of the institutional Athena SWAN award and continued roll out of award application preparation to non-STEMM schools. (WinSET)

Success indicators: As well as measuring achievement of the Concordat action plan items we will also use the following success measures:

- Evidence of improvement in CROS data as compared to previous years.
- Take-up of and positive feedback on new and existing training and development opportunities
- Achievement of Athena SWAN awards, both institutional and School-specific (STEMM and non-STEMM).
- Implementation of the Strategy Global 2020, including the People Strategy and Research Strategy action plan implementation.
- Sustainable research staff representation from all faculties on the Research Staff Group and improved communication plans for research staff representation.

Key developments in 2015 of the University of Nottingham's research strategy and environment

In the summer 2015, the University's Senate approved the institution's new overarching strategy (Global Strategy 2020), which includes the Research Strategy 2015-2020. This followed a year of development and consultation through Research Board, the Research Strategy Task Force and Working Groups. The key goals of this strategy are to:

1. Recruit and develop outstanding researchers at all career stages.
2. Produce and effectively share high-quality research.
3. Adopt a 'systems approach' to managing research to establish a dynamic portfolio of research priorities associated with our five global research themes.
4. Demonstrate the contribution our research makes to social improvement and the economy and the benefits to individuals, organisations and nations.

To support the implementation of Global Strategy 2020, the University has introduced a new management and organisational structure with effect from August 2015. This sees the introduction of Faculty PVCs and a change in the portfolio of the PVC with responsibility for Research (to also include Knowledge Exchange). Dame Jessica Corner has been appointed the new PVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange and will take up her appointment in January 2016. In the interim Professor Kevin Shakesheff is leading this portfolio.

It is anticipated that these key strategic developments will impact on the actions outlined in the 2015-2019 Concordat implementation action plan and that the plan will evolve. In consultation with relevant communities and under the agreement of Research Board the RSG will monitor the impact of changes and amend the action plan accordingly.