

Career Development and Transferable Skills Training Payments: Summary of November 2006 Reporting

Staff from each of the councils and the Research Careers and Diversity (RCD) unit each read a range of research organisation's reports and completed a template so that the proportions of organisations mentioning particular features could be given. This document provides a brief summary of the information from this and the financial tables.

1. Overview

The volume of reports received (and received on time) might in itself be an indicator of how well skills development is becoming part of "normal" practice. All those receiving more than £3,600 reported.

All reports mention new training practices being put into place, existing courses being updated or whole programmes under development. Many mention the joint skills statement¹, working with local hubs and involving researchers in developing the programmes.

There is variation in what is reported. There continue to be reports where things we might have expected do not feature eg feedback from course attendance is widespread but there are reports where there is no mention of how this is used. Involvement of major employers of researchers in determining the shape of the programme was mentioned by some as essential, but around a third don't mention any employer involvement.

2. Figures and Specific Points

Most programmes are based within graduate schools (34 per cent) although reports which mention programmes being lead from staff development or HR is now 30 per cent.

Interaction with employers did not come out consistently. Whilst a total of 42 per cent mentioned interaction with employers (24 per cent), or gave information on the process for involving them in programme development (18 per cent), there were 34 per cent which did not mention any employer input or said there was none.

Two thirds of reports mentioned using feedback from course attendance and more than a quarter (28 per cent) have student or researcher representation on their programme management. 18 organisations (14 per cent) mention using CROS. It is under a fifth, but 18 per cent made no mention of how, or whether, they use researchers feedback in developing courses and programmes.

Nearly half (48 per cent) of reports mentioned training opportunities for researchers although less than a third (29 per cent) estimated percentages for participation.

Personal Development Plans, Professional Development Logs etc are in wide use for students with 55 per cent of organisations saying they are either available (35 per cent) or **all** students have/will have them (20 per cent). This compares with PDPs for research-only staff in only 32 per cent of organisations (26 per cent where its available and 6 per cent where its in place for

¹ Appended to the QAA code of practice for assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: section one - Research degree programmes, which is available at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp>

all). This leaves just over two thirds where there is no mention of PDPs being either available or required for research staff.

Around a third of organisations expect an increase in provisions for research-only staff (30 per cent increased last year and 36 per cent expect increase next year).

Sharing of practices is a strengthening theme with nearly half (49 per cent) working with one or more organisations to develop all or part of their programme. There are also 39 per cent mentioning working with the local UK GRAD hub and 17 per cent which mention entering practices on the Database of Practice.

2.1. Financial Tables

A summary from the financial tables is at annex 1. This reflects information provided by research organisations.

The figures show increases in the numbers of staff who are delivering training and those co-ordinating programmes. There are some caveats, in that information was requested as FTEs (eg 0.5 for someone who was employed half-time to plan/deliver training practices). Not all reports used a format obviously in line with this and there were a few figures excluded from the summary as they appeared to be in hours or other units.

3. Illustrative Quotations and References

3.1. Development of practices and programmes

“Last year we completely revamped our Induction Programme for new Graduate students”

“A new area is the development of on-line skills training”

“Another focus is the development of training specifically for postdoctoral researchers”

“Whilst we feel that we are making significant progress with the development of research students, our development practices for research-only employees is still in its infancy”

“Considerable effort has been invested in the “engagement phase” of the strategy to improve communication throughout the institution, supporting our commitment to the skills agenda”

3.2. Career Service involvement

“A specific initiative is enabling the Careers Service to take the lead on researching and developing essentially new training provision for researchers.”

“Innovations in the last year include...the funding of two advisors for CRS in the Careers Service”

“The Development Adviser and Careers Adviser for PhD students and research staff work together to involve a variety of stakeholders in the core Roberts programmes and activities”

“Building working relationships with graduate employers, research students and academic members of staff is fundamental to the successful development of skills training and development” and “The Careers Advisor for Contract Research Staff used personal contacts with local, national and international employers and works to raise awareness amongst CRS of employer perceptions of university researchers”.

3.3. About networking and UK GRAD

“The Database of Good Practice is an excellent mechanism to share processes and practices with other Universities. This gives [us] an opportunity to benchmark [this organisation] against other innovative practices and helps to identify possible developments.”

“We have been active in the establishment of the [local hub] with opportunities to visit other establishments and find out about practices there....This has been very useful”

“Developing relationships with local institutions via the fledgling [local] hub was a particular feature throughout 2005-6”

“internal research supported by the annual CROS survey identified that the majority of development activities required by Early Career Researchers were already available but the key barrier to take-up was a lack of awareness.”

“Our local UKGrad course (Moving Ahead) encourages students to think of their future and the Enterprise Skills Summer School promotes student reflection on enterprise and business skills.”

“The University's Centre for Innovation and Knowledge Transfer is now fully staffed and can provide expertise to assist in the delivery of the planned sessions on enterprise and marketing of research.”

“The [local] Hub and membership of UKHERD have proved to be excellent forums for learning and sharing ideas and has helped to build good working relationships.”

3.4. On other issues

A few universities mentioned use of in-house expertise: *“The Roberts monies enable us to “buy out” staff time to deliver courses”*.

EMPRESS and PRES were mentioned as were UKHERD.

In some reports there was mention of covering all aspects of the joint skills statement (JSS). For all councils except AHRC, Roberts payments are for the sections of the JSS which cover transferable skills and not those which cover research skills (ie Roberts payments are for sections C-G of JSS). Funding for research training is subsumed within DTAs or within the research training support grant (RTSG). Only payments from AHRC (up to and including 2006/07) cover all areas of JSS.

The need for further work regarding research staff in posts funded through grants was mentioned by several. The following quote highlights two of the most common themes around identifying the main headings for training or learning requirements and being able to track non-academic research staff within the university:

“There is a lack of information on the RCUK website on the support expected for CRS (there is no section dedicated to CRS on the UK GRAD web site or, so far as we can tell, anywhere else) and more crucially, identifying those CRS supported through each of the Research Councils is a challenge”

Annex 1: Summary from the Financial Tables

	What organisations told us in 2006				What organisations told us in 2005			
	Research students		Research only employees		Research students		Research only employees	
Employment of co-ordination staff: costs and numbers	2,363,082	114	1,025,950	104	1,817,570	49	1,098,275	24
Co-ordination costs (infrastructure)	623,441		317,043		305,906		124,691	
Training development and delivery costs	5,164,531		2,489,571		2,292,034		1,264,626	
Employment of training staff: costs and numbers	1,776,861	247	916,405	99	944,807	96	827,497	54
Subtotals	9,927,915	361	4,748,969	203	5,360,317	145	3,315,089	78
Total reported on		14,676,884				8,675,406		
Approximate proportion of funding spent on central or devolved activity (as per cent)								
a) centrally organised activity	70	(note that these are averages of the figures as provided by ROs)						
b) devolved activity	36							
	Amount	per cent	Staff	Staff increase	Amount	per cent	Staff	
Total spent on co-ord costs	4,329,516	29 per cent			3,346,442	39 per cent		
Total spent on delivery	10,347,368	71 per cent			5,328,963	61 per cent		
Total on students	9,927,915	68 per cent	361	150 per cent	5,360,317	62 per cent	145	
Total on postdocs	4,748,969	32 per cent	203	159 per cent	3,315,089	38 per cent	78	
Co-ordination staff	218				73			
Training Staff	347				150			