

## Career Development and Transferable Skills Training Payments: Summary of 2007 Reporting

### Foreword

Much of the attention to and progress in supporting researcher development was prompted by the SET for Success (Roberts) Review. Largely in response to this review, funding was provided for training to improve the employability of researchers and the career planning and associated development of research staff who are typically employed on specific projects. From 2003, the Research Councils received funding for around two weeks of training a year for the researchers they fund.

The training and development of researchers represents a significant investment in our social, cultural and innovative capital. Researchers should be able to apply their research training effectively talk about their own research and research issues more generally, understand its potential for economic, social and cultural impact and manage themselves, their research and interactions with others to maximise that impact.

What we now call transferable skills for research students pre-dates the Roberts Review in many universities and the Annual Reporting to RCUK indicates the extent to which the “Roberts Money” has assisted its further development and the extent to which these skills are becoming embedded in the PhD process. Anecdotes as well as reports indicate an increasing level of attention to providing the skills that are relevant to and welcomed by research staff and their managers, although this continues to be a challenge with more progress to be made.

This year, the reporting indicates that structures to support the development of the research workforce are developing within many universities, particularly for research students; there is continuing innovation in programmes; there is much sharing of practices to enable better provisions and wider benefit from practices which have been tried and tested; the views of research students and staff are being sought in many organisations to inform or help manage programme development and; information captured through a variety of sources is being used to inform developments, with PRES and CROS standing out.

A new line of activity was started in 2007 with EPSRC making payments for Enterprise Training for which reporting was incorporated into the existing framework. A summary of this will be produced and distributed separately

Over the last three years, RCUK has worked with a range of staff within Higher Education. From Pro-Vice Chancellors to administrators, it has been a pleasure to see the commitment and enthusiasm for progress which has been demonstrated by so many of those we work with and we look forward to being able to demonstrate that all of those efforts are making a real difference to research and the careers of researchers..

Iain Cameron.

## Career Development and Transferable Skills Training Payments: Summary of 2007 Reporting

### 1. Summary and main points arising

#### 1.1. Summary

The 2007 reports offer evidence of continuing development and innovation in provisions for both research students and research staff.

Formal induction, usually including development of a training plan is mentioned by many organisations as an integral part of their support for research students.

*"...induction events [for all graduate research students and Supervisors] provide an introduction to the skills development programme..."*

The allocation of Roberts Money separately identifies the funds for research students and staff. Despite some notable exceptions, particularly amongst research centres and institutes, around half the reports indicated an under-spend of 20% or more on research staff and 22 did not report any use of the payments which had been made in respect of these posts funded through research grants. Nevertheless, it continues to be an area of growth, with 35% of organisations indicating that training and support for research staff increased in 2006/07 and 24% expecting an increase next year. This compares with 30% of last year's reports mentioning increased provisions in 2005/06.

*"we still feel we need to make significant progress with the development of our research-only employees"*

Generally, universities have reported on overall programmes and some care may be needed to ensure payments are used to add value and not to replace funding for research-specific training or conference attendance which can be supported by other means. A few reports also mentioned courses for academic members of staff. Clarification of the use of Career Development and Transferable Skills Training payments will be sought from a small number of the organisations this year.

*"Although ...Roberts funding is not provided to support conference attendance, we have put together a package to enable students to reflect on why they attend conferences and what they learn from them"*

#### 1.2. Sharing Practices

Many organisations are sharing practices (74 had entered at least one practice on the Database of Practice at 17 December 2007) and, as last year, around half the reports mentioned working with one or more other research organisations on courses or programmes or courses. Some organisations have developed practices in collaboration with others (e.g. "How to be an Effective Researcher" developed between Edinburgh and others) or materials which have since been used elsewhere. Networks such as the Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network and the Scottish Universities Physics Alliance were

*[this group of universities] "made a strategic collaborative appointment of a skills training project officer...reviewing current provision across the three universities with the aim of identifying potential areas for development of collaborative provision for research staff"*

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mentioned in reports as well as specific inter-institutional projects. However, there were also many references to universities developing their own materials, particularly for on-line personal development planning.

#### 1.3. Developing Processes

There is a theme in the 2007 reports that structures and connections for embedding and developing provisions continue to be developed (22% being based in structures other than graduate school, research office or staff development unit). These may bring the careers services and HR or staff support units into a clearer working relationship with those supporting the training of research students.

*"...the university has introduced a number of significant changes in its organization and management...to strengthen our capacity to respond to various strategic challenges including those that relate to research and research training"*

Around half the reports indicated a senior member of staff (such as PVC research) has responsibility for the overall programme.

*"high level "buy-in" is important in driving culture change"*

Several reports also mention attainment of broader skills being incorporated in transfer process from MPhil to PhD or that postgraduate certificates are offered en route to a PhD, such as a "Postgraduate Certificate in Research Management"

There were instances where discussion of development plans was being built into appraisal processes and staff development. A (non-university) organisation also mentioned inclusion of the development planning processes in their IiP re-accreditation. This year, just over half (51%) of the reports said PDPs were available for students and 30% available for research staff.

*"individual attendance at courses is logged on each individual's user record held at the Careers Service"*

As last year, there are references to increasing involvement of career advisors and services in provision of training, particularly for research staff. Careers services are also mentioned as providing a route for taking into account employer views in programme planning.

There are instances of specific projects engaging researchers who have not participated in taught courses under a title of transferable skills. They may include visiting schools and other types of public dialogue, industrial placements, or developing business ideas. Some involved working with existing initiatives administered and funded by other groups within the university.

#### 1.4. Feedback and Information

There is a slight increase in the reports mentioning using information drawn from the Contract Researcher Online Survey (CROS), with 19%, compared with 14% last year. Several reports also mention the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). One organisation also mentioned

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the survey piloted in 2007 by the Rugby Team, which addresses supervisors' awareness of and attitudes to skills training (STaRSS).

Seeking or incorporating employer views is variable with 35% of reports making no mention of routes for incorporating employer views or participation in the development of programmes for research students or staff a further 18% mentioned employer engagement but gave little or no details. There were 5% which mentioned involvement of RDAs or sector groups.

*"Employers are mainly involved through the work of the Careers Advisors for Research Staff"*

Most reports (72%) specifically mention using feedback from course attendance (cf 66% last year) and 29% say they invite students to discuss programme content or involve research students in programme development. It was slightly lower for research staff at 22%.

*"as recommended by the Rugby Team, we began looking more closely at the effectiveness of transferable skills training" and "we are keen to pursue research into training and PhDs in general"*

#### 1.5. Emergent issues

Several reports mention use of mentoring, particularly for research staff e.g. "Research staff are offered the opportunity to be mentored by an experienced academic in their discipline"

*"The mentoring scheme is available across all faculties and continues to be a critical activity in support of the Roberts agenda"*

There was reference in reports from some of the largest recipients about trying to embed approaches and seek means for delivery from their own resources, in preparation for "when the Roberts Payments cease" or to manage annual variations. It may be worth noting that through the Research Careers and Diversity Strategy the Research Councils have a commitment to maintain earmarked funding for skills training throughout the CSR2007 period (i.e. to 2010/2011).

*"The University is mindful of the need to ensure sustainability beyond the term of the Roberts funding"  
"We have set aside part of the budget to support development of an exit strategy should Roberts funding end or change significantly"*

#### 1.6. Financial Reporting

Payments totalling £20.076M were made to 178 organisations in 2006/07. Universities were informed of the payments in July 2006 and the payment schedules identified funds for research students (totalling £12.014M) and research posts on grants (totalling £8.061M). By 17 December, 133 reports had been received from organisations in receipt of £19.337M. Financial summaries accounted for £17.406M of spend in the 2006/07 year. The reports showed a total spend on supporting student development of £186,229 higher than the payments, whilst spend on supporting research staff was £2,117,487 lower than paid.

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The spend on research staff is lower in total (just under half the spend on co-ordination and delivery of training for research students. Overall, it is also lower as per capita spend (2/3 of that for research students).

Table 1: Financial summary

	Students		research staff	
	Costs	number	cost	number
Employment of co-ordination staff	2,701,892	72	1,411,240	42
Co-ordination costs (infrastructure)	654,961		368,175	
Training, Development and Delivery Costs	5,821,245		2,476,449	
Employment of training staff	2,613,850	178	1,358,095	62
Totals	11,791,948	250	5,613,960	104
Payment levels	11,605,719		7,731,446	

Table 2: Co-ordination and delivery costs trend

	% 2004/05	% 2005/06	% 2006/07	Spend 2006/07
Total on co-ordination staff and costs (includes infrastructure such as web sites etc)	39	29	30	5,136,268
Total on training staff and delivery	61	71	70	12,269,640
Total				17,405,908

Table 3: Central and devolved use

Approximate proportion of spend	%
Central	69
Devolved	31

*“approximately half the total funding is used to support central training provision, with academic and support departments invited to bid for funding to provide courses/workshops etc.”*

The numbers of staff posts seems to have levelled out this year, although this may also be due in some part to more detailed reporting of posts as “full time equivalents” or fractions thereof.

Table 4: Employment of staff

To support	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Research Students	96	247	250
Research Staff	54	99	104
Totals	150	346	354

**2. Database of Practice**

The UK GRAD database of practice has been developed as a tool to allow institutions and individuals to describe their practice in all areas related to skills and career development for

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researchers. In November 2007 the search mechanism was redesigned to offer a full keyword search facility, as well as the option to limit searches by focus of practice (see categories below), audience, Roberts funding area and region. The results can be sorted in a variety of ways. On 17 December 2007, it held 459 practices, entered by 74 organisations. Around 39% of the organisations in receipt of payments in 2006/07 had entered practices and 30% had more than one entry. Charts showing numbers of practices and payment levels are at Annex 1.

In 2007, the practices were reviewed and assigned to a particular focus (a summary is at table 5 below). The “date last modified” in the DoP is the date on which the practice was updated and for 282 this shows as the date they were assigned to a focus of practice (i.e. August 2007). There are 162 with more recent dates and whilst practices can be entered at any time, there is a noticeable peak in entries and updates close to the time of reporting to RCUK in November.

Focus of Practice	Number of practices
Interpersonal skills development	204
Induction, review and reflective processes	96
Generic research skills development	194
Wider preparation for academic practice	113
Enterprise and innovation related practices	50
Internships, placements and consultancy projects	11
Knowledge transfer and outreach activities	38
Career management / developing employability	129
Evaluation, feedback mechanisms and research relating to skills and career development	53
Strategic and management approach to practice	81
Relevant to Roberts funding for postgraduate or postdoctoral researchers	117

For each of the practices flagged as “Roberts” for research staff, there are 3 “Roberts” practices for research students (65 and 217 respectively). Overall, the numbers are 222 (research staff) and 360 (research students). There are also 117 practices for audiences of research staff and research students.

**3. Background**

In 2006/07, payments of £20M were issued by the Research Councils to 178 organisations (£12M in respect of research students, £8M in respect of posts on grants). The basis for the calculation is a per capita payments of approximately £800 for each research student or staff post funded by the councils.

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The Research Councils collectively fund around a quarter of the full time home domiciled research students in the UK and perhaps a third of the research posts on projects. The research councils are, however, the largest single funder of researchers in the UK.

Payments are issued by each research council directly to the relevant research organisation and the pattern of payments is given in the table below:

<b>Payment level 2006/07 (£K)</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>% of Total Payments</b>
Over 1,000	5	28%
Between 500 and 1,000	7	23%
Between 100 and 500	30	37%
Between 50 and 100	13	4%
Between 10 and 50	41	5%
Between 1 and 10	53	1%
Less than 1	29	<1%
	178	

### 3.1. Reporting Requirements

This consisted of a summary financial table, entry of innovative or exemplary practices in the Database of Practice at [www.grad.ac.uk](http://www.grad.ac.uk) and a narrative report.

The narrative report of up to two pages outlined the processes followed and their impact on the training of researchers. The following headings were used:

1. Process for reviewing strategy and building the skills development programme. This should include reference to:
  - i. the management framework
  - ii. the involvement of employers and other stakeholders
  - iii. how researcher feedback is used
2. Commentary on the range of career development and training opportunities and approximate proportion of research students and research-only employees participating.
3. How researchers are encouraged to consider their career development and training needs and reflect on their skills.
4. Innovations in the last year and any areas for future development.
5. Any examples of sharing processes or practices with other organisations.

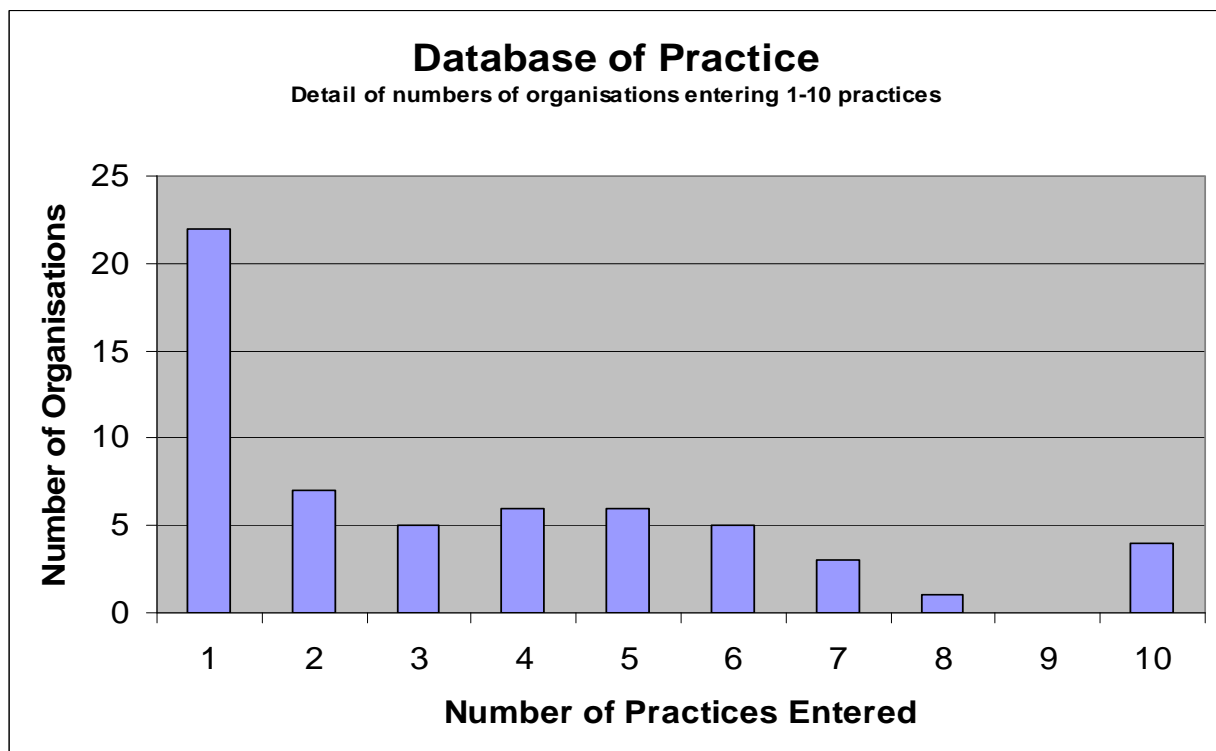
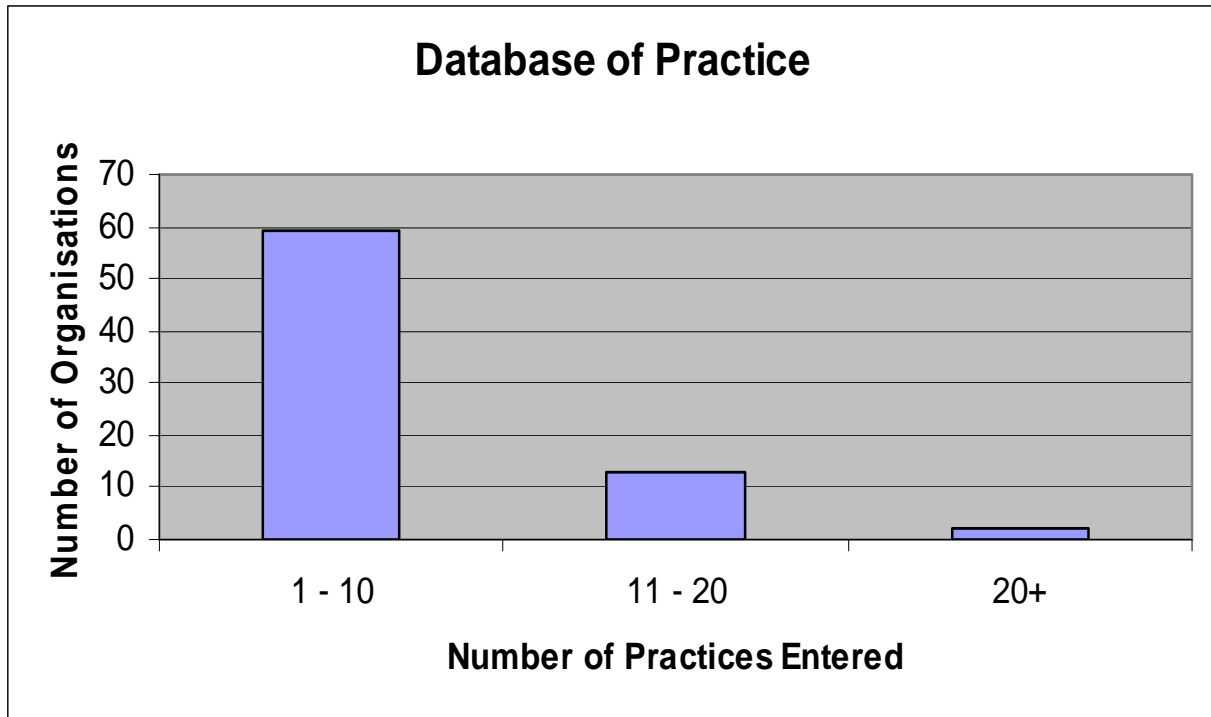
There were up to three additions:

- organisations with payments over £1M were asked how they ensured minimum levels of provision across the organisation
- organisations in receipt of payments for entrepreneurial skills development were asked to include a paragraph on this

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- organisations in receipt of AHRC payments were asked to append a short summary (up to 1 page) to outline any practices or programmes specifically for research skills for Arts and Humanities researchers.

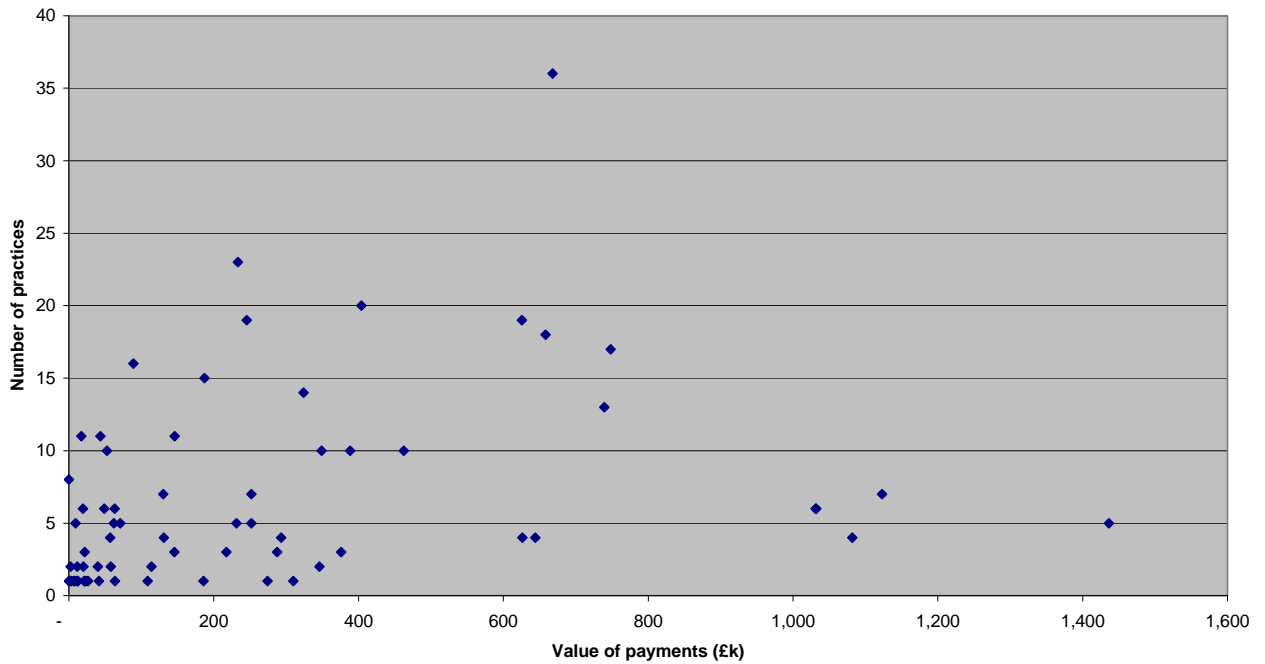
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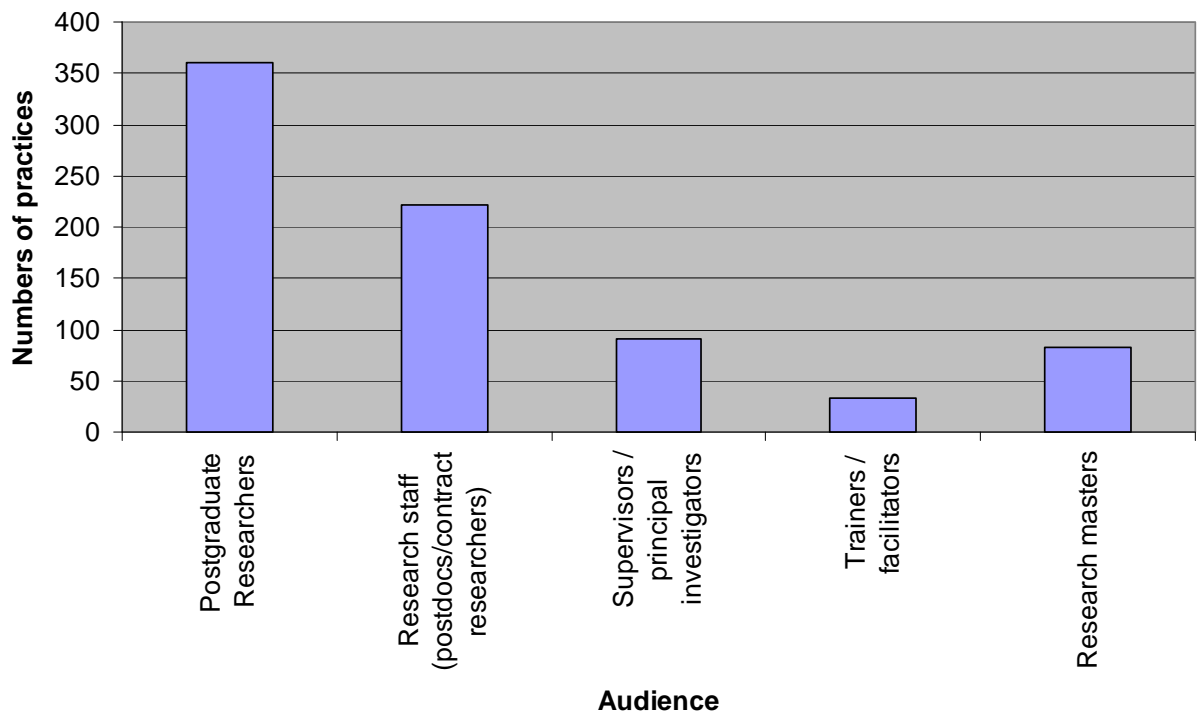
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## Annex 1: Database of Practice

Relationship between number of practices entered in Database of Practice and level of Roberts Payments



Database of Practice: Audience for Practices



Roberts funding	Number of Practices
Postgraduate Researchers	217
Research Staff	65