

Following the successful “Implementing the Concordat - one year on” at the Royal Institution in June 2009, the Vitae London and East of England Hubs were pleased to organise a Concordat – Sharing best practice half day event on 29 June 2010 at the Institute of Physics.

The event started with updates from the BBSRC and the UUK.

Dr Ian Lyne, Head of Skills and Careers for the BBSRC, highlighted the importance of the researchers development agenda. There is a need for researchers to develop a broader set of skills as a considerable number of postgraduate researchers will have to work outside Academia. A vast majority of BBSRC’s investment in People is therefore dedicated to Postdoctoral researchers. BBSRC actively supports the implementation of the Concordat and highlights its importance in its own strategic plan for 2010-2015. Moreover, through their Excellence with Impact Scheme, BBSRC provides a useful tool for Higher Education institutions to recognise and value the broader impact of their Researchers as well as the key role they play in taking their institutions forward. Dr Ian Lyne emphasised that UK has reached a certain level of excellence internationally in research and that highly skilled researchers are the key to success.

Dr Ian Lyne also gave an overview of RCUK support for the implementation of the Concordat. There is a strong link to the Concordat in the RCUK Excellence with Impact agenda. RCUK expect all grant applicants to explore how they will make an impact. When having a look at the guidance on the RCUK impact agenda webpage, applicants must be able to answer the following question:

“What research and professional skills will staff working on the project develop which they could apply in all employment sectors?”

IN the same document, Principal Investigators (PIs) are encouraged to get involved in the development of their researchers.

Thomas Papworth, Research Concordat Implementation Coordinator was appointed in April 2009 by UUK to assist with implementation of the Concordat in UK HEIs. As well as playing an active role in promoting the Concordat and helping to share good practice, Thomas supports the activities of the Concordat Strategy Group. This Group is in charge of the implementation strategy, and focuses on 4 main areas: knowledge building, practice sharing, consolidation and communication.

To support this implementation strategy, Thomas is managing a series of benchmarking projects aimed at understanding the different stakeholders approach to and perceptions of the Concordat. One of the projects will be looking at understanding the **research staff cohort** and their experience using CROS. Then earlier this year, a survey was sent to **HEIs** to find out more about their approaches towards the implementation of the Concordat. The results are currently being analysed. **Funders’** response to the Concordat is also being investigated. It is also important to gather the views and perceptions of **PIs** and a *Principal Investigators and Research Leaders survey* will be run in 2011. This benchmarking process will help find evidence for Higher Education institutions to demonstrate the alignment their institutions’ policies with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

A series of short presentations focusing on practical issues with personal examples from speakers who have implemented the Concordat principles in various ways within their institutions followed. Speakers gave us an overview of what works really well, what doesn’t work, what were the benefits to researchers and the institution and what they will develop in the near future.

Jo Bradford, Director of Research Development at City University London explained that the implementation of the Concordat at City University London came from an individual HR initiative. Thanks to one person, communication with the different schools was developed to identify gaps in the training and development of researchers. As a result, the appraisal form and guidance were revisited to emphasise the career and professional development section and various events aimed at

PIs and RS were developed. The key message from Jo was that communication between HR, academics and research staff should be developed. The identification of a clearer promotion route for RS and improvement of online information at City are key areas to be implemented.

Dr Anna Price, Researcher Development Adviser at King's College London highlighted that the College research Committee has recently instigated a 'Mapping and Gapping Exercise'. This will establish what policies and procedures are already in place at King's to ensure that the College is compliant with the principles of the Concordat, and where additional work needs to be undertaken to improve researcher support. This exercise was developed by the Graduate School and required the input from a variety of stakeholders – professional services departments and academic schools were invited to comment on the policies that they have in place, and post-doctoral research staff were consulted through focus group to determine their experiences of College practice. Anna emphasized that the involvement of senior management was of great help. This mapping and gapping exercise helped to highlight areas of good practice and helped increase RS awareness of the Concordat.

Dr Rebecca Wyand, Careers Development Advisor for Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) and Research Staff (RS), talked about the University's Research Staff Working Group in place at University of East Anglia. One of the 1st recommendations from the group was to develop a new code for RS. This Code provides a set of principles for the employment of research staff at the UEA to ensure that the needs of both the University and this group of staff are met. There are different sections in the new code covering, accountability, contract, status of RS, how to support RS in grant writing, acknowledgment of KT, development and career support. The big turnover among RS can damage the efforts of the RS working group. Moreover, it is hard to get RS on board as most of them still don't know what the Concordat is.

UEA still need to focus on 3 main areas:

- Implementation of a real RS induction (1 or 2 hours maximum!)
- Improvement of the appraisal process and developing links with careers development
- Improvement of a system for the recognition and value of RS

The afternoon session started with **Dr Steve Bevan**, Senior Lecturer in Stroke Genetics at St George's University of London who explained that three broad recommendations came out of a consultation with RS about implementing the Concordat at SGUL:

- 1- Appointment of a researcher to follow and be involved in the implementation of the Concordat principles at SGUL. There was a question about whether the Associate Dean for Career Development of Contract Research Staff should be a researcher or not. RS were consulted and the perception was that it could make a difference.
- 2- Enhance the programme in place for RS development:
There is a Postgraduate Certificate in Healthcare & Biomedical Education already available but RS felt the need for a more tailored programme specifically targeted at them.
- 3- Put in place a licence to supervise (this has not been implemented yet)

As stated in the Concordat principles, RS need to be proactive and to ensure this is happening, a portfolio for Continuing Professional Development has been developed.

Rody Bristow-Jones, Staff Development Advisor & **Lynda Agili**, Head of Research Office at Goldsmiths University explained the huge diversity of their RS and the need to implement the Concordat principles through a range of activities. From there, lots of collaborative work had been developed between the Graduate School, Research Office, Staff Development and also Business Development. As a result, Goldsmiths Research Incubation and Transfer programme (GRIT) has been developed and selected researchers now benefit from mentoring sessions.

Recently, a Goldsmiths Concordat implementation group has been created which includes internal and also external advisors as members.

Meg Tait, Head of Academic Practice at the University of Cambridge emphasized that there are already lots of transferable skills training opportunities provided to RS. After a gap analysis to highlight different practice already in place to support researchers, the University of Cambridge is entering a policy revision time and there is scope to address the Concordat issues at the same time. There is a need to create ownership of the Concordat for RS themselves. The support and involvement of careers advisers was extremely important. Clearly embedding the Concordat and enabling effective practice are at the heart of the debate.

Dr Rodney Day, Head of Science and Technology Research Degree Programmes at University of Hertfordshire is also the Chair of the Concordat Meeting Group at the University of Hertfordshire. Rodney highlighted the importance of a reality check to see if the theory works on the ground. Among other things, workshops have been developed for RS. The aims of those workshops were to raise the profile of the Concordat among the RS cohort and also to gather their views and thoughts. This has also shown what are the barriers to Concordat implementation. As a result, the HR team is looking at contract issues and new support material will be developed and provided for appraisal. This material is being developed with inputs from RS

A booklet has been created on the Concordat and the additional value of its implementation, but to maintain the momentum managers and PIs need to be engaged.

A comprehensive survey has been launched across the university which will allow analysis of the RS segment.

Meeta Bhatt, HR Co-ordinator (Research Staff) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) highlighted that what didn't work at LSE actually helped a lot for the implementation of the Concordat. One size model doesn't fit all and what worked well once will not necessarily work again 6 months later. RS are keen on sharing their views but then do not want to get involved further as they feel it is not their responsibility. They also have an issue about the destination of the information they are giving. Engagement with PIs is important and the engagement of senior management and key academic staff is crucial.

The Concordat constitutes the baseline and is referred to every time policies are implemented at LSE.

The next step will be to provide guidance to PIs on how to further develop their RS careers.

Q&A and Conclusions:

The RS cohort is not easy to understand and not easy to reach. There is still a lot of effort to be made to raise the profile of the Concordat among this segment of Higher Education Institutions. To achieve that, senior management and PIs need to engage.

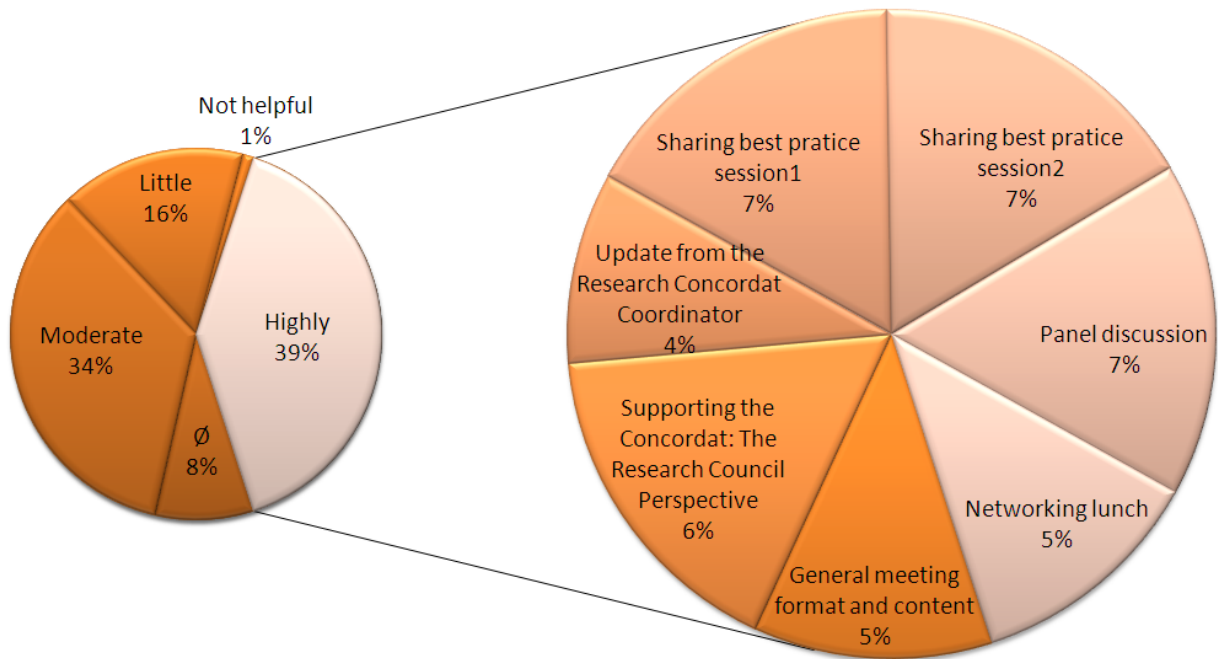
Professional, personal and career development of RS is closely linked to impact of research and therefore to the economy. According to BBSRC, there is a need to involve RS, PIs and HEIs in a debate to understand the impact of research as there is a real synergy between career development of researchers and impact of research.

Concerns were raised by the participants: are PIs equipped to be involved? and most of all, are they willing to be involved?

There is a need for researchers to see that the time they're spending to develop their skills is not wasted. In fact, it will help them be more effective researchers.

The analysis of the feedback forms provided the information on what was helpful and interesting. Findings are summarised in the figures below.

What was helpful



What was interesting

