

UKRSA statement supporting the UK position on European organisations HR Excellence in Research implementation

The UKRSA supports the UK's response to the European Commission study that will be undertaken by Technopolis; 'Feasibility study for the development of a certification mechanism for genuinely good HR management in the public research sector in Europe'. It is vital that fundamental research be carried out to clarify the concept of "good human resources management", and to determine ways in which this can be measured. Consultation with a range of stakeholders is important in enhancing understanding of how HR processes can be made transparent to staff members, including research staff, so they feel valued and fairly treated.

The UKRSA supports this exercise if it will be used to enhance good practice and policy, rather than resulting in the implementation of prescriptive, tick-box processes, and bureaucracy. We recommend that this process should recognise institutional diversity, and provide an appropriate level of resources and support to HR teams that will enable them to formulate institutional strategy. Any proposed scheme should also integrate seamlessly with existing examples of best practice, such as the UK's Concordat and the EC's existing HR Excellence in Research badge. The UKRSA hopes that this consultation process will not have the effect of detracting institutions attention away from their commitment to existing schemes such as the HR Excellence in Research badge or Athena Swan accreditation, which are beginning to deliver real benefits.

The UKRSA recommends that institutions should be encouraged to engage with their research staff and have mechanisms in place to respond to the needs and concerns of research staff. It is important that any such process is an iterative one by which institutions can refine their policies to better respond to sentiment in the research staff community, recognising and accommodating the temporary and transient nature of research staff positions. Similarly, the UKRSA strongly recommends that the external assessment that gauges institutional compliance should involve consultation and engagement with research staff from the accredited institute.

At this point, it is unclear if accreditation to this scheme will affect future funding opportunities available to researchers to support their career development and mobility. The UKRSA would like to see this position clarified.