

Implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: Understanding the research staff cohort

Update on the HESA Staff Record review March 2012

Background

1. One of the six benchmarking projects in the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was 'Understanding the Research Staff Cohort'. The project recognised that the sector does not have a comprehensive view of who are research staff: numbers, their demographics, responsibilities and career paths both within and outside the higher education sector. This project will build on the work of HEFCW in analysing the HESA staff record for the annual report on research staff to the Funders Forum. The Vitae Policy Forum identified ways in which the quality of the HESA staff record could be improved to provide more useful information and actions by institutions track research staff between institutions and explore the views of research staff leavers through the use of exit interviews
2. The project was restricted to the one aim: to work in collaboration with HESA to improve data on research staff and the quality of the data. Input was provided to HESA on the improvements the Concordat Strategy Group would like to be made which included improved and/or additional fields within the staff record, eg reason for leaving and destination; grading and levels of employment; contract status etc.
3. Representatives of signatories and supporters of the Concordat (including RCUK, Universities UK and Vitae) attended an event hosted by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in September 2010 to discuss how the HESA staff record could be improved. Part of this discussion focussed on how data on research staff could be better captured and examined.
4. The Concordat Executive Group paper Understanding the Research Staff Cohort 30 March 2010 listed a number of areas/fields for HESA to consider amending in the Staff Record:
 - Improve the use of the Staff Identifier and add names/national insurance number to the record to be able to track research staff movements
 - Improve the Academic Employment Function details
 - Improve the Grades and guidance
 - Improve Equality and Diversity Data
 - Add 'Reason for Leaving'
 - Add 'Destination after Leaving'
 - Discipline of study
 - Previous country of residence
 - Registered for a qualification at the HEI
 - Country in which highest qualification awarded
 - Extended leave (maternity; study; sabbatical) taken

Review of HESA Staff Record

5. HESA have a Review Group which has membership from across the sector with an aim to review the Staff Record in particular the content of the current record, taking into account external factors eg revised and new legislation, pay and grading changes and the need for career tracking.
6. The group have been working since August 2010 and discussions have included input from the Concordat Strategy Group. The proposed changes were subject to an open consultation with the sector.
7. The revised coding framework has now been issued to HEIs for the 2012/13 data collection.

2012/13 Staff Record Coding and Manual

8. The following changes have been made to the data collection:
 - Academic Employment function - improved
 - Activity after leaving - new field
 - Current Academic discipline - improved
 - Early Career Researcher Status - new field
 - Equality and Diversity fields – all updated
 - Location after leaving – new field
 - Parental Leave – new field
 - Reason for end of contract – new field
 - REF Unit of Assessment – new field
 - Research Assistant (for the REF) – new field
 - Terms of Employment (contract type) – improved
 - UCEA levels (grade/level of employment) – new field
9. The review group agreed to postpone the collection of either names and/or partial National Insurance Numbers until the 2013/14 data collection to allow time to address the concerns of HEIs although the Coding Manual for 2012/113 states that the Funding Councils will be monitoring the reliability of the Staff Identifier.
10. The significant changes to the HESA Staff Record will now enable the provision of more useful information and actions by institutions to track research staff between institutions and sectors.
11. Details of the requests to HESA and the resultant changes are detailed in the table at Annex 1. Documentation for the revised Staff Record is available at www.hesa.ac.uk/C12025.

Action

12. To note the significant improvements to the HESA staff Record 2012/13 achieved through the input to the review from the Concordat Executive Group.

ANNEX 1

Information Required	Reason for Gathering	Recommendation to HESA	Outcome from HESA Staff Record Review
Improve the use of the Staff Identifier and add names/national insurance number to the record	to be able to track research staff movements	Add name and/or National insurance number to the record	Postponed until 2013/14 although Funding Councils will be monitoring reliability of Staff ID
Improve the Academic Employment Function details	To monitor types of contracts eg academic research only	Improve guidance to ensure correct coding of all contracts	Valid entries: Academic contract that is teaching only; Academic contract that is research only; Academic contract that is both teaching and research; Not an academic contract; Academic contract that is neither teaching nor research. Clearer guidance on definitions
Improve the Grades and guidance	To enable comparison between grades and to monitor progression	HESA to review the extent that other fields could be used to infer grade structure	New field UCEA level of contract – full list of job functions eg VC, HoD down to researcher will be available for use
Improve Equality and Diversity Data	To enable monitoring of all the equality strands in the Equality Act 2010	HESA to collect data on all protected characteristics	Fields are now: Biological sex; Date of birth; Disability; Ethnicity; Gender identity; Parental leave; Religion or belief; Sexual orientation;
Add 'Reason for Leaving'	To inform employers and funders so that they can improve retention and help those leaving research prepare themselves for their future careers; to inform government and industry of the flow between the public and private sectors	HESA should collect separately information on the staff member's reason for leaving their current job and their next destination. This could alternatively be part of a universal staff exit survey.	New Field: Reason for end of contract: Continued employment, new HESA contract issued; Atypical contract issued; End of fixed-term contract; 4 Voluntary redundancy; Other redundancy; Resignation; Retirement (excluding ill-health); Death; Other (includes dismissal and ill-health)

Add 'Destination after Leaving'	To inform employers and funders so that they can improve retention and help those leaving research prepare themselves for their future careers; to inform government and industry of the flow between the public and private sectors	HESA should collect separately information on the staff member's reason for leaving their current job and their next destination. This could alternatively be part of a universal staff exit survey.	New Field: Activity after leaving Working in a higher education institution; Working in another education institution; Working in a research institute (private); Working in a research institute (public); NHS/general medical practice/general dental practice; Working in another public sector organisation; Working in the voluntary sector; Working in the private sector; Self-employed; Registered as a student; Retired; Not in regular employment; Not known; Information refused
			New Field: Location after Leaving England; Wales; Scotland; Northern Ireland; UK (not otherwise specified); Other EU; Non-EU; Not known; Information refused
Discipline of study	To identify variation between disciplines; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure trends in research areas by institution maybe • Identify what departments are funding different types of research 	HESA to collect under new variable codes	Cost Centre (these reflect academic departments) together with Current Academic Discipline and the New Field REF Unit of Assessment [NB HESA has a mapping table of old HESA cost centres to new cost centres to UoAs]
Previous country of residence	To monitor where our research staff base is i.e. are we making the most of our home grown researchers	HESA to collect under new variable codes	Nationality field and Previous employment field (eg HEI in overseas country, another UK HEI etc)

Registered for a qualification at the HEI	Significance of PhDs to research; Would help provide profile of qualifications needed to be a researcher and assist with future recruitment projections	HESA to collect under new variable codes	
Country in which highest qualification awarded	To monitor where our research staff base is i.e. are we making the most of our home grown researchers	HESA to collect under new variable codes	
Extended leave (maternity; study; sabbatical) taken	To identify whether research staff enjoy flexible working and other non-pay related benefits that may be necessary to retain staff; to ensure equality with teaching/academic peers; to identify potential means of retaining quality staff.	HESA to collect under new variable codes	New Field: Parental Leave Maternity leave; Additional paternity leave; Adoption leave Other extended leave types and secondments are not captured.
			New Field: Early Career Researcher status (as defined in the REF) ¹
			New Field: Research Assistant (as defined in the REF) ²

¹ Early career researchers are defined as members of staff who meet the criteria to be selected as Category A or Category C staff on the census date, **and** who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2009. For the purposes of the REF, an individual is deemed to have started their career as an independent researcher from the point at which:

- a. They held a contract of employment of 0.2 FTE or greater, which included a primary employment function of undertaking 'research' or 'teaching and research', with any HEI or other organisation, whether in the UK or overseas, **and**
- b. They undertook independent research, leading or acting as principal investigator or equivalent on a research grant or significant piece of research work. (A member of staff is not deemed to have undertaken independent research purely on the basis that they are named on one or more research outputs.)

² Research assistants are individuals who are on the payroll of and hold a contract of employment with the institution. They are academic staff whose primary employment function is defined as 'research only'. They are employed to carry out another individual's research programme rather than as independent researchers in their own right (except in the circumstances described in paragraph 81). They are usually funded from research grants or contracts from Research Councils, charities, the European Union (EU) or other overseas sources, industry, or other commercial enterprises, but they may also be funded from the institution's own funds. Individuals who meet this definition may be described in HEIs' grading structures as something other than research assistant (for example research associate, assistant researcher).