Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Vitae briefing for staff developers

About this series…

This is one of several briefing documents, developed by Vitae, for stakeholders with a role to play in implementation of the Concordat's principles. It should be read in conjunction with the Concordat itself: **www.researchconcordat.ac.uk**. The series explores emerging themes and highlights practical examples which we hope will prove useful as your institution works to implement the principles.

Vitae is a national organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in UK higher education institutions and research institutes. We play a major role in the drive for high-level skills and innovation and in meeting the UK's goal to produce world class researchers.

Vitae is working with UK institutions and other stakeholders to implement the Concordat's principles by providing information, raising awareness, and facilitating the sharing of strategies and practice.

For further information about Vitae and about UK and European policy visit **www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice**.

To view other briefings available in this series go to **www.vitae.ac.uk/concordat**.

'The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' is an agreement between the funders and employers of researchers in the UK. Sitting alongside a range of local, UK and European initiatives, this agreement represents a significant development in national policy to support good management of researchers and their careers. Through the implementation of its principles it aims to enhance the researcher workforce and thereby sustain research excellence bringing benefits to the health, economy and well-being of the UK.

The Concordat can be welcomed as continuing to raise the profile and status of professional development activity amongst research staff and employers. Many of its recommendations will build on existing practice but it may also provide an impetus for institutions to reassess, mainstream or extend support for researchers. This briefing takes each of the Concordat principles in turn, suggesting practical responses for staff developers and offering examples from UK institutions.

Concordat principles

- Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research

- Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research

- Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment

- The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career

- Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning

- Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers

- The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

Support and career development

The Concordat places personal and professional development at the heart of the experience of research staff and as key to realising the potential of the research workforce. It emphasises that researchers' professional development should be supported from the outset of an employment relationship and for all research staff regardless of their contractual status. This responsibility is shared by many across an institution rather than being the sole responsibility of staff developers.

The vision of the Concordat is for open-ended and progressive professional development, where research staff moving through their careers are continuously challenged and discovering new opportunities for development. The Concordat suggests that continued professional development (CPD) frameworks should be flexible and portable, encouraging research staff to continue to learn and evidence their learning as they move between institutions and sectors.

Areas for staff developers to consider include:

- reviewing existing institutional provision for research staff development, including seeking views of research staff and ensuring provision of professional development opportunities to support a variety of career paths

- exploring ways to work more closely with research managers and other departments to address professional development for research staff in a holistic and cross-institutional way

- reviewing induction procedures, working with all involved to ensure that these encourage researchers to engage in professional development from the start of their employment.

Business, engineering and science travel scholarships (University of Nottingham)

www.vitae.ac.uk/dop/316.html

The University of Nottingham has developed a scheme to provide bursaries for researchers (both staff and postgraduate) to work within laboratories and business environments across the world and away from the University. The placement is identified by the researcher in consultation with their manager and the scheme's project officer. Those who are successful are then funded to undertake a placement for up to two months and to receive on the job training designed to enhance the researcher's understanding of business, commercial and industrial imperatives.

Recognition and value

This principle requires employers to manage and reward researchers fairly and transparently and to provide them with recognition and opportunities for development. It encourages managers of researchers to take an active role in the development of their staff, to develop their management style and their knowledge base around institutional policies and procedures. Implementation may lead to identification of additional developmental needs for both research managers and research staff.

Areas for staff developers to consider include:

- ensuring equality of access to development oppportunities irrespective of employment status, length of service or other factors

- reviewing development opportunities for managers of researchers, including effective use of appraisal processes.

A development programme for up and coming principal investigators (PIs) (University of Aberdeen)

www.vitae.ac.uk/dop/606.html

This programme promotes excellence in leadership and management for up and coming principal investigators (PIs). It is designed to support new and aspiring PIs to ensure they are equipped to reach their full potential by expanding their understanding of the University environment; outlining their roles and responsibilities; raising awareness of the support available within the University; and developing their people management, leadership, and project and resource management skills. This programme also provides support on 'Managing your own research career and that of your team' which includes how to develop the researchers in your team, how to get the best out of appraisal and the value of developing your team's generic and employability skills.

Recruitment and Selection

The Concordat encourages employers to examine the way in which they recruit and retain research staff, focussing on transparency, fairness and consistency. Staff developers may have responsibility for training staff in recruitment and selection procedures and principles related to this may influence planning for courses including how these are targeted to staff.

Areas for staff developers to consider include:

- exploring institutional policy and processes relating to recruitment and selection
- reviewing recruitment and selection training and guidance, focussing on provision related to research staff
- effectiveness of communication about training programmes to human resources specialists and managers of researchers.

Using research staff examples in recruitment and selection training (University of Leicester)

www2.le.ac.uk/offices/staff-development/research

The University of Leicester have revised their recruitment and selection training to provide information and examples specific to different categories of staff. One strand of this training enables new research managers to explore issues around recruitment and selection using a role play exercise based on a research staff recruitment scenario.

Researchers' responsibilities

The Concordat sees research staff as sharing responsibility for their own professional development and it encourages them to be proactive in creating and taking advantage of opportunities. An important role for staff developers is raising research staff awareness of the principles behind the Concordat.

Areas for staff developers to consider include:

- encouraging research staff to take responsibility for their own professional development, inspiring them to develop their skills and consider their careers
- informing researchers of relevant institutional and national policies and resources relating to career development
- exploring ways to support research staff in creating their own development opportunities.

Researchers' Forum (University of Stirling)

www.vitae.ac.uk/dop/502.html

The University of Stirling's Researchers' Forum is an 'open space' for early career researchers to meet and discuss issues of relevance and significance to their personal and professional development. The Forum meets once every three months and is facilitated by a different internal facilitator each time. The discussion is led by participants who are encouraged to be open, share ideas and issues and to provide peer feedback and guidance.

Diversity and equality

The Concordat encourages the recruitment and retention of researchers from the widest pool of available talent with the expectation that the research base will be enhanced by diversity. It also recognises that institutions need to be aware of issues associated with a more diverse workforce and to take account of these in the way in which research staff are managed and supported.

Areas for staff developers to consider include:

- checking understanding of institutional policy and UK Law relating to diversity and equality issues
- reviewing existing diversity and equality training and guidance, ensuring it is tailored to the needs of research managers and research staff
- investigating the diversity of their institution's research workforce and considering how provision might best be developed in light of findings.

Premia resource base

www.premia.ac.uk

The Premia website is home to a range of awareness and development materials of value to all those involved in supporting researchers, including research staff with or without a disability. The aim of the materials is to make the research environment more accessible to researchers with a disability. Much of the information is useful in creating an inclusive research environment.

A related resource is Farrar and Young, Supervising Disabled Research Students (SRHE Postgraduate Guides Series Two, Number Three), which also provides practical advice on supporting researchers with disabilities.

Implementation and review

The Concordat highlights the value of reviewing progress in implementing the Concordat principles both at institutional level and across the UK. Sharing of good practice between institutions is strongly encouraged. A high level Strategy Group will oversee UK progress and will undertake an initial benchmark process and subsequent review. The Concordat advocates the use of existing sources of data and information, including a revised version of the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS).

Staff developers may already have had direct involvement with CROS and have collected a range of other data such as course evaluations, requests for training and training needs analysis. This data can be extremely valuable in informing the way the Concordat's principles are implemented within your institution. The Concordat strongly encourages the sharing of good practice between institutions. Local knowledge about the implementation of the Concordat principles can be useful input in compiling a UK view of progress and case studies of good practice.

Areas for staff developers to consider include:

- championing participation of your institution in CROS
- reviewing evaluation processes for researcher development provision against the 'Rugby Team Impact Framework' (www.vitae.ac.uk/rugbyteam)
- reviewing your processes for communicating with and getting feedback from research staff.

Exploring CROS results through focus groups (Heriot-Watt University)

www.vitae.ac.uk/dop/528.html

Feedback from research staff is sought regularly on the provision of development programmes and resources using a range of techniques including the CROS. These results offer a valuable resource in identifying the needs of research staff. Heriot-Watt University explore and increase their understanding of the results of CROS by following up with targeted focus groups. The information provided by this research enables the University to develop practice, allocate resources more effectively and to target appropriate areas.

Other Vitae resources

Vitae works alongside policy makers and staff supporting the development of researchers. We support a growing network and offer a range of tools and events to help with the sharing of practice and expertise. Find out more by visiting our website at **www.vitae.ac.uk**, in particular the following sections:

- Policy and practice (**www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice**) designed for staff developers and other HE professionals who wish to develop their understanding and practice around issues relating to researcher careers and development

- Careers (**www.vitae.ac.uk/careers**) provides career development resources and information for researchers.

Vitae database of practice

Most of the examples of practice given in this briefing are drawn from institutional entries in the Vitae database of practice (www.vitae.ac.uk/dop). The examples are intended as a starting point and you are encouraged to explore the database of practice further as you consider your institution's response to the Concordat. The database can be searched by the Concordat principles making it easy to find relevant examples. Please engage in sector-wide practice sharing by entering your own practices onto the database.

Other useful links:

- Concordat website (**www.researchconcordat.ac.uk/**)
- European Charter and Code (**http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index_en.cfm?l1=0&l2=3**)
- CROS (**www.survey.bris.ac.uk/support/news/cros2008-09**)
- Leadership Development for Principal Investigators programme (**www.le.ac.uk/researchleader/**)
- Prospects (**www.prospects.ac.uk**)
- Rugby Team Impact Framework (**www.vitae.ac.uk/rugbyteam**)
- SEDA (**www.seda.ac.uk/**)

The Concordat
to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was launched in June 2008. It aims to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK and to improve the quantity, quality and impact of research for the benefit of UK society and the economy.

The Concordat provides a single, unambiguous statement of the expectations and responsibilities of research funders and institutions with respect to the management of researchers. The Concordat also aims to demonstrate internationally – including to researchers considering coming to work in the UK – the high standards of management and support that can be expected by UK researchers. By adopting its principles the UK also adopts the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

www.researchconcordat.ac.uk