

Prifysgol Aberystwyth University

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: Implementation Plan for 2015/16 Review

Acronyms:

ARCG: Aberystwyth Research Concordat Group

RBI: Department of Research, Business & Innovation

ARCG: Aberystwyth Researcher Concordat Group

HR: Human Resources

CDSAP: Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice

IBERS: Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

During the two years of this plan, the departments involved in the Concordat have been operating in a challenging financial environment, and this has had an impact on the delivery of some of the objectives from the 2014-16 action plan. Despite this, progress has been made and new initiatives have been developed that are part of the 2017-18 action plan.

1 CONCORDAT MONITORING AND REVIEW				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review December 2016
1.1	To build on the evolution of the Aberystwyth Researcher Concordat Group and encourage more researchers to join the group.	Timetable three meetings per annum, and re---invite the researcher community by requiring a researcher representative from each academic Institute, representation from the PDRA community and a Welsh Cruciblee.	ARCG Chair, January 2015.	Meetings were held on the following dates: 6 March 2015 12 May 2015 1 October 2015 12 January 2016 1 March 2016 6 May 2016 6 Sept 2016 1 Dec 2016
		To review the appropriateness of maintaining the CROS survey due to the poor response rate, and explore using an alternative e.g. in-house.	ARCG sub---group (GR, IA, JA), Spring 2015	The ARCG has agreed that these surveys are too lengthy and consequently have a low response rate which significantly reduces their value. It has been agreed to develop an in-house shorter questionnaire to be run annually, but resource challenges have prevented this during this action plan time-line.

1.2	To improve internal evaluation of Aberystwyth's implementation of the Concordat.	To ensure a high success rate of CROS and PIRLS, targeted and personalised emails and direct contact to individuals; and communicated in focus groups with PDRAs.	RBI and IBERS HR Business Partner. Completed by May 2015.	Both were reviewed 6 May 2016, and the low response rate was noted. See comment above re: action.
		to include the PRES survey results for review by ARCG	Skills Development Officer, Autumn 2015	Reviewed 6 May 2016, this survey will be continued.
		To run an annual focus group of researchers from different disciplines and career stages.	RBI (GR), Winter 2015 and 2016.	PDRA focus group organised as part of the SpringForward taster course 26 July 2016. Resource challenges have prevented further focus groups within this period, but an action plan linked to another initiative will be taken forward in the next period.

2 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review December 2016
2.1	To ensure that recruitment and promotion panels are trained on the use of the new e-recruiter system (launched in January 2015) in order to recruit excellent staff within an open and transparent process.	HR project team to develop academic year training programme to support new system.	HR, January 2015	E-Recruiter launch delayed due to system issues. The system was fully launched on 3 October 2016.
		Deliver E-recruitment training programme. Minimum of 6 session per annum	HR, Commencing by February 2015, reported to ARCG at end of each academic year.	Delays resulted in the system being launched in September 2016. Five training sessions were run between September and November.
2.2	To ensure the full range of academic role expectations are clearly communicated.	To include a statement that incorporates the breadth of academic research related activities in job descriptions.	RBI & HR, Summer 2015.	All job descriptions are based on the nationally agreed role profiles and specific areas of activity in relation to research are built into the framework. All research jobs now include the RCUK statement on researcher expectations/requirements.

3 RECOGNITION AND VALUE				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review December 2016
3.1	To ensure all researchers feel valued and are part of a community at Aberystwyth University.	Further and broader communication (e.g. AberNews) of the academic and non-academic promotion processes, including any positive actions following a review of the 2014 process, to encourage applications from under represented groups.	HR, annually, Spring 2015 and 2016	Review of AICP undertaken in 2014 and 2015. Improvements were made in the form of best practice applications and guidance to assist complete each aspect of the criteria.
		Run focus groups specifically for the PDRA community to identify their specific expectations and needs.	RBI & IBERS HR Business Partner, Spring 2015.	PDRA focus group organised as part of the SpringForward taster course 26 July 2016. IBERS established an Action Learning Set for their PDRA community supported by the IBERS HR Business Partner.
3.2	To further improve communications between the University and the Researcher community.	Update the section of the RBI website that provides information on researcher development opportunities and events – improved links to Vitae and Leadership Foundation (LF) events, including awareness of the 25% discount on the LF events.	RBI, Autumn 2015	Links provided on the web site Information is being disseminated on VITAE
		University wide staff forum led by University Executive informing on different strategic issues. Q&A session provided at end of event.	3 per year minimum, Vice Chancellors Office. Reported at the end of each academic year (2015/16)	Events run on the following dates, open to all staff: 29 October 2014 10 December 2014 28 January 2015 1 April 2015 20 May 2015 1 July 2015 21/22 July 2015 13/14 October 2015 12/13 January 2016

		To provide updated researcher (different career stages) email distribution list to the Department Research Business & Innovation and CDSAP	HR, March 2015, Quarterly updates. (note delay from previous plan is due to on-going work on the new self service staff system AberPoblPeople).	Unfortunately, the University HR system has continued to be challenged by this requirement. However, following considerable effort initiated by RBI and supported by HR, the data for all researchers is being cleansed and the Universities database and categorizing research staff appropriately. Expected conclusion March 2017.
3.3	To ensure all PIs and line managers are aware of the Concordat and their responsibilities.	Continue to run the 'Top Tips for Managing Your Research Grant' training	RBI, run both programmes a minimum of twice per annum. Reported at the end of each academic year (2015/16 and 16/17)	15 April 2014 14 May 2015 11 January 2016. Next one planned in January 2017.
		Develop and run the 'Top Tips for Managing your researchers' course, both of which include the Concordat and its requirements.	RBI & HR Business Partner (IBERS), new programme developed May 2015, piloted in June 2015, launched in the new 2015/16 academic year.	Pilot programme run, but disappointing attendance from academics. However, HR is developing new management and leadership provision. It is expect that managing people will be captured in this. A new leadership development programme for newly appointed managers has been launched. This commenced 5 October 2016 and comprises of 10 monthly half day units capturing a range of leadership and management subjects.

		Continue compulsory 121 induction meetings with new academic starters and their relevant Research Development Officer.	RBI and IBERS RDOS, January 2015. Measured at the end of each academic year, reporting October 2015 and 2016.	<p>RBI team: 16 new starters in 15/16 that were 'lecturers' or above. 12/16 have been offered an induction meeting 3/16 made no response or were postponed 9/16 have had the meeting 4/16 still need to be followed up.</p> <p>IBERS have their own Research Development Team and 8 induction meetings were conducted.</p>
3.4	Provide a clear and equitable academic promotion criteria and process.	Annual review of revised promotions process for SL/Readers and Professorial staff introduced.	HR, Reported annually, March 2015 & 2016	Completed.
		To review 'research' promotion criteria to ensure the threshold is high enough to demonstrate its value.	RBI and HR, Winter 2015/16	Criteria was reviewed in early 2016 and amendments made. A new foundation level academic promotion level has been introduced and took effect in the 2016/17 round of academic promotions.
3.5	Ensure Research is viewed as valued by the researcher community	Review the monetary value of the University Research Fund, in the context that achieves a sevenfold return on investment.	PVCR, RBI and Finance Department (Winter 2015/16)	Planning round and a challenging University financial environment have prevented an investment in this. But other approaches to the strategic use of QR are being explored, which may support this fund in the future.
3.6	Provide opportunities for promoting different researcher career stages.	Invite articles or diaries from different researcher career stages for the AberNews publication; e.g. 'a day in the life of ...'	Summer 2015.	Due to a lack of resources within RBI, this action has not been achieved.

4 SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review December 2016
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4.1	To Implement a comprehensive career development programme for all researcher career stages.	Agree proposed joint programme with Bangor University	RBI, CDSAP and Bangor Researcher Development and Concordat Group, July 2015.	Delayed due to BU processes. Review of approach at AU with compulsory training for ECR and PDRAs to be introduced in next action planning period.
		Launch new programme	Spring 2016	Further development of a broader researcher development prog at AU dependent on funding and resources. The Research Committee has agreed formalise ECR researcher and PDRA training as a compulsory element of probation with a range of core subjects (e.g. research ethics, research data, sources of funding etc.).
		Phased introduction of modules / training sessions.	2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years	A range of unstructured sessions have been introduced by RBI, and these are being formalised and rebranded as per the point above.
		Develop a Masters Level version of the CDSAP Leadership Development Programme, 'Leading Universities', specifically aimed at academic staff.	CDSAP, March 2015.	First cohort completed in 2016.
		Develop programmes specifically for the PDRA community: Public engagement; Impact; Career Management (including application form and interview techniques)	RBI, Graduate School, CDSAP and IBERS HR Business Partner. Summer 2015 to Winter 2016 (depending on feedback from focus groups (3.1))	Opportunities for programmes have been offered, including Spring Forward, but a lack of engagement from PDRA community has prevented this progressing. This could be partially because of the inability to target all PDRAs directly because of the limitations of the HR system. <i>Resolution is an action of the next</i>
4.2	Ensure effective induction for all	Continue to invite new research staff to the University's induction programme and offer an optional researcher induction add-on session.	HR and RBI, April and October annually. Attendance figures of different groups (e.g. PDRA, ECR) to be reported to ARCG after each event.	RBI staff offered an optional researcher induction session twice, however the attendance was very low for both, now a stand is present at the staff induction. However note intervention identified in 4.1(2).

4.4	research staff.	Update the induction pack for researchers and promote via email and media such as AberNews	RBI, February 2015.	completed and available at http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/humanresources/pdfs/researcher-induction-pack-high-def-final-(English).pdf
		121 induction programme (see 3.3)		See 3.3
4.4	Ensure effective support for researchers through the development of coaching and mentoring support.	To get the joint Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities' Coaching and Mentoring Policy agreed at the Professional Development and Staffing Committee	HR, Summer 2015	Coaching and Mentoring policy agreed by PDSEC on 21 May 2015. We have recently developed a panopto (online video) training session to accompany it and this has been introduced with a welsh version available.
		Develop an implementation strategy	HR, RBI and CDSAP Winter 2015/16	see above.
		Continue to ensure PIs are included within University initiatives and the University's leadership and management programmes, (see 4.1)	CDSAP, reporting attendance annually to ARCG	Academics/researchers have been invited to attend all CDSAP programmes. Data is not available in a form that identifies the different categories of staff who attend courses.
		Continue provision of Spring Board development programme for women	Director of Equality, attendance Reported at the end of each academic year (2015/16 and 16/17)	Springboard - Director of Equality to open first session 2016 & 2017; Joy Arkley delivering. Advertising for 2017 cohort underway Nov/Dec 2016

4.6	Ensure that research managers have the skills and confidence to effectively lead and manage teams.	Continue funding for the Aurora Leadership and Management programme for women.	Director of Equality, attendance Reported at the end of each academic year (2015/16 and 16/17)	Aurora 6 2015; 2016, Birmingham - 7 (5 IBERS + 1 Interpol + 1 RB&I); 2017 - currently advertising for Cardiff. round 2016) WUMS (Wales University Mentoring Scheme for women) 2016 - 18 mentors and mentees were matched with other HEIs in Wales. 2017 might be the last year as funding is nearly finished - currently advertising; closing date 16th Dec for mentors / mentees
		HR launching a Leadership Foundation programme.	HR, Summer 2015.	Programme in second year - focus is on a coaching leadership style.
		Continue provision of annual HR Training Programme e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment & Selection Training • Requirements of the UKBA for NON EEA applicants • Dignity and Respect at Work • Drug and Alcohol Policy • Sickness Absence Management • PoblAberPeople – for managers and administrators • Compendium Training on HR policies and Procedures • Family Friendly policies • Matching and Slotting training 	HR, attendance reported at the end of each academic year (2015/16 and 16/17)	During the period HR ran 53 courses in addition to the e-recruiter training.

4.7	To ensure that PGR training is up to date and relevant	Ongoing development and redevelopment of PGR programme as influenced by the AHRC, EPSRC, ESRC DTPs. Ensure the programme development is shared across the broader disciplines.		Implemented through the Graduate School: achieved.
4.8	To provide career management guidance to PGRs	Develop a career management module with optional industrial placements.	Graduate School, September 2015	Completed.
		To develop a leadership programme for PGR	Graduate School, September 2016	Completed.

5 RESEARCHER RESPONSIBILITIES				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review December 2016
5.1	The University's expectations are clearly communicated and researchers are aware of their responsibilities.	<p>Continue with Top Tips training (see 3.3)</p> <p>Encourage researchers to write articles for AberNews and other media, programme to be developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article on Ethics • Article on Research café • Article on Grants Factory 	RBI and ARCG. Programme developed by April 2015. First article from May 2015, quarterly.	Articles on the 3 subjects have been included in Aber News publication.
5.2	Ensure PhD supervisors are aware of their responsibilities.	To Revamp the Graduate School training for PhD Supervisors and ensure all PhD supervisors have undertaken the training.	<p>Graduate School, programme revamp by September 2016.</p> <p>Monitoring of Supervisor training levels annually, reported at the end of each academic year (2015/16 and 16/17)</p>	New scheme introduced. Some PDRAs have attended to upskill themselves with future potential supervision opportunities.
5.3	Ensure Directors of Research are aware of their responsibilities.	Identifying the expected core responsibilities and developing a training programme that includes the career development of researchers and a support framework for ECRs.	RBI and the Director for Research Excellence and Impact, Winter 2015/16.	No inductions in 2015 and 2016, as no new Institute level appointments. HR's new programmes on management and leadership includes DoRs.

6 DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY				
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	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review December 2016
6.1	Ensure that diversity and equality is promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers in the University.	Ensure diversity and equality issues are reinforced within the CPD Framework.	Director of Equality and Professional Development, Staffing & Equal Opps Committee, reported at the end of each academic year (2015/16 and 16/17)	Aberlearn Black Board area set up for "Equality matters" for all-staff access - and proposed future student courses (e.g. Dignity & Respect, Consent, etc). This is being mapped out over 18 months and will be a useful in-house resource. Director of Equality rolling out Equality & Diversity to academic departments and Prof Services - slow but 2 Institutes have requested this be mandatory to date; dates now in diary. Parts of Campus services and IS, HR and PGT students all done.
		Inclusion of "gender sensitive research" as a topic during ethics training for all new PhD students.	Director of Ethics, Director RBI, reported at the end of each academic year by Research Ethics Officer (2015/16 and 16/17)	Completed.
		Raise the importance of gender sensitive research through inclusion of "Equality" as an agenda item on Research Committee meetings.	RBI, to be a standing agenda item from January 2015.	The Director of Equality is a member of the Research Committee and relevant items are added to the termly agenda or raised in the meeting. From January 2017, this will be a standing item.
		Consideration of gender sensitive research as requirement on research ethics application forms and internal grant application forms	RBI, form to be amended Spring 2015.	RBI is ensuring that gender sensitive research is captured in the wider-policy framework and in Research Ethics Panel procedures. Once relevant training is in place, the ethics application process will be updated to reflect this requirement. Action for 2017-18 plan.

		Implement the Athena SWAN action plan (Awarded April 2014).	Director of Equality, annual review (April 2015 & 2016) against targets in action plan.	Joint Athena SWAN (post 2015 principles). 1st December ECIG (Equality Chartermark Implementation Group) disbanded and a new high level strategic SAT (self assessment team) for Nov 2017 formed. First meeting Jan 2017 (Chair : Rebecca Davies PVC) to plan departmental self assessment, co-ordinated at Institute level for the Bronze renewal in autumn 2017
		Implement ECU Gender Equality Chartermark action plan (Awarded April 2014).	Director of Equality. Annual review (April 2015 & 2016) against targets in action plan.	
		Promote Athena SWAN awareness and develop departmental awards in STEMM Departments. Equality Chartermark Implementation Group developed to take forward action plans of ECU awards; to support and promote the awards and embed their principles in departments; to develop departmental awards with the aim of submitting	Director of Ethics. Two STEMM departmental bronze submissions by 2017.	
6.2	Promote the work and material of Vitae's Equality and Diversity Champion's network.	Director of Equality post appointed internally (August 2014). The post holder has taken on the role of Vitae Equality and Diversity Champion with the aim of recruiting more staff to undertake the role.	Director of Ethics and Equality will actively seek to recruit a researcher onto the ARCG to promote this work, Spring 2015.	The Director of Ethics and Quality post was split between the two functions and a part-time Director of Equality was appointed in September 2015, and she sits on the ARCG. An Equality Champions Group has been established at the University. We are not aware that Vitae's Equality and Diversity Champion's network is still in place, as no details could be found on the web site or via our regional Vitae representative.

6.3	Ensure that Welsh---medium and bilingual provision is mainstreamed and promoted in relevant aspects of the recruitment, induction and career management of researchers in the University	Implement the relevant actions in the University's Welsh Language Integrated Strategic Plan	Welsh Language Strategy Committee, annual review from March 2016	Implementation of Welsh Government guidelines on new Welsh Language standards for research staff (e-recruiter / HR) New Welsh language standards launched 3 October 2016.
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7 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review December 2016
7.1	Implement and monitor progress of the Concordat Action Plan with relevant stakeholders.	Ensure that the ARCG monitor the progress of the Concordat Action Plan and communicate progress to the Research Committee on an annual basis.	RBI, Quarterly meetings scheduled over the next 2 years. Annual report to first Research Committee of each calendar year.	Meetings scheduled as per section 1
		Hold consultation exercises on an annual basis regarding the Action Plan with researchers.	RBI, Winter 2015 and 2016.	Not undertaken due to resource limitations. However, better representation of researchers on the ARCG has ensured engagement with reviewing and developing action plans.
		Ensure consultation with PVC Research, Enterprise and Engagement and also, the University Executive to address the requirements of the University Research Strategy.	RBI Director, Spring 2015.	Ongoing dialogue with PVC Research and ARCG minutes presented to Research Committee.
		Review outcomes of the 2013 Researcher Development Survey(s).	ARCG, when available in 2015 and 2016.	CROS, PIRLS and PRES were reviewed by ARCG. Low response rates on CROS and PIRLS limited the usefulness of the data. An internal shorter questionnaire is being developed. Survey fatigue is a contributing factor.