

**Concordat to Support the Career Development of Research Staff**  
**Mapping to Concordat key principles and best practice**  
**HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan September 2012 - updated with progress September 2014**

Concordat area and issue	Current Position	Possible / proposed Action	Original timeline	Responsibility for Action	Update on progress - September 2014
<b>1. Recruitment and Selection</b>					
Members of the research community understand researchers are chosen for their ability to advance research.	Recruitment choices are supported by role profiles and effective ED practices, required person specs and a recruitment system that uses person spec to formulate questions at interview all guarantee.	Include specific section in Quick Reference Guide for Managers on recruiting research staff.	November 2012	Associate Director HR (Schools)	Completed. Made available on the HR website as part of 'Managers and leaders' resources
Recruitment & selection procedures are informative, transparent and open to all qualified applicants	Positive approaches. Devolved procedure for recruitment only operates in conjunction with HR Advisors to ensure best practice.				
Person and vacancy specs must clearly identify the skills for the post, and these must be relevant to the role	Linked person and vacancy specs.				
Recruitment and progression panels should reflect diversity as well as a range of experience and expertise	Experience & expertise fine. Don't have a practice of requiring panels to be diverse, but neither do we have evidence to say we are poor at this.	Refer to Associate Director HR (ED) for consideration and to report back.	December 2012	Associate Director HR (ED)	Consider completed. It has not been possible to implement a formal policy with respect to this. HR Advisors do try to ensure that we have appropriately diverse panels, but sometimes this is driven by the availability of staff. Feedback from both the PIRLS and CROS surveys indicate that recruitment and selection are positively viewed by both groups of staff. Improving diversity of recruitment panels is an action on the Athena Swan action plan.
Recruitment & selections panels should have received relevant recent training	Rec & selection briefings compulsory for Chairs. Panel members encouraged to attend. Quick Reference Guide for managers has section on recruitment.				
Unsuccessful candidates should be given appropriate feedback if requested	Included already in Recruitment & Selection policy.	Include specific section in Quick Reference Guide for Managers on recruiting research staff. Define feedback arrangements and timescales	November 2012		Completed. Made available on the HR website as part of 'Managers and leaders' resources

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The level of pay or grade for researchers should be determined according to the requirements of the post and be consistent with pay or grading in the organisation as a whole	HERA role profiles already used.				
<b>2. Recognition and Value</b>					
Value and afford equal treatment to all researchers	ED employer. Policies and in place which promote equal treatment. Processes for appealing grades exist.				
In particular, the development of researchers should not be undermined by the instability of employment contracts.	Researcher development opportunities are available to all. Performance Development Review in place for research staff.				
Everyone involved should be committed to improving the stability of employment conditions for researchers	Business partnership roles in the Schools ensure active consideration of employment of researchers across a wide group.				
Implementing and abiding by the Fixed Term Employee Regulations	In place.				
Research managers participating in active performance management. This includes career development guidance and supervision	Business partnership roles in the Schools ensure active performance management in place. PDRs for researchers.	Include specific section in Quick Reference Guide for Managers on managing research staff.	By October 2012	Associate Director HR (Schools)	Completed. Made available on the HR website as part of 'Managers and leaders' resources
Research managers should be aware of, and understand, their responsibilities for the management of researchers. Training should be provided, including equality and diversity training, to achieve this.	Business partnership of HR into Schools ensures there is direct support for research managers. We consider awareness and understanding is relatively high. Research managers participate in leadership & management development training provided within the University.	Review uptake of management & leadership development provision by research managers, including reviewing systems for capturing and holding data on leadership development activity. Take action if appropriate to improve uptake. Participate in PIRLS survey and implement appropriate actions consequent on the findings.	Review completed December 2012, actions to be implemented March 2013. Revise and make changes to way data is held and captured - March 2013. PIRLS survey - Spring 2013, recommendations to Research Committee summer 2013.	Associate Director HR (OD)	Initial review completed December 2012. New HR system implementation initiated April 2014; information on managers/PIs available from late September 2014. Major review of all leadership & development at Aston underway; this group will be specifically considered and appropriate development opportunities put in place. PIRLS survey completed May 2013; 45% response rate (from 67 staff total). 4 elements of leadership were identified by them as a focus for further development, and will be included in the new action plan.

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Consideration given to how research managers' performance in these areas is developed, assessed and rewarded.	PDR covers all aspects of the individuals responsibilities and objectives would be set for improvement/development if considered necessary.	Review uptake of management & leadership development provision by research managers. Take action if appropriate to improve uptake.	Review completed December 2012, actions to be implemented March 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	As above.
Organisational systems capable of supporting continuity of employment for researchers	Arrangements are in place to ensure all due consideration is given to finding continuation funding. Extensions of contract to cover maternity leave are automatic.				
Transparent pay progression in accordance with agreed procedures.	Transparent at appointment stage. - pay progression arrangements defined for each post. Increments as part of PRP scheme.				
Researchers offered opportunities to develop their own careers.	Staff Development opportunities, including ResearcherPlus available to researchers. All research staff can obtain Aston Certificate or PGCert in Learning & Teaching, both accredited by the HEA. Opportunities provided by research groups/teams. Latest CROS survey indicates this is not an issue.	Repeat CROS survey to check. Action plan produced dependent on findings.	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	Survey completed. Data received by a short-life working group of Research Committee in June 2013, and has informed the content of the ECR Development Programme (Launched December 2013). Comparative data( benchmark group of 43 pre-92 universities) made available early August 2013. Data showed that Aston is doing better or as well as this benchmark group in the majority of aspects considered in the survey. Areas for improvement will be addressed in the new action plan.
Researchers have access to additional pay progression. Transparent promotion procedures	See above. Position made clear on appointment. Researchers are included in the Performance Related Pay process.				
Clear career frameworks for early stage researchers outlined in organisational HR strategies	Career framework made clear through HERA role profiles.				
<b>3. Support and Career Development</b>					
Career Development which is comparable to, and competitive with, other employment sectors	No evidence that we are different from other sectors. This is a national issue.				
Development of transferable skills through embedded training	Staff development advertise provision.	Repeat CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	As above.

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Training, skills and competencies to carry out the funded project	HERA role analysis now required which gives role requirements in terms of competencies. PDR in place for research staff - training defined. PDR objectives are targeted to ensure both current and future roles are considered.	Map HERA research staff role profiles with existing training provision. Update mapping of training provision against Researcher Development Framework.	Spring 2013	Staff & Graduate Development	Not yet completed. The ECR development programme was primarily mapped against the RDF and the content significantly influenced by the research staff themselves. Mapping against HERA profiles will be contained in the new action plan.
Support to develop the communications and other professional skills to be effective researchers and highly-skilled professionals in other fields	Staff & Graduate Development advertise provision.				
Access to professional, independent advice on career management	HR Advisors provide such advice on demand. Careers Service give advice to research staff.				
Possibility of offering training and placements to broaden awareness of other sectors	No provision in place.	Investigate how such provision can be provided. Investigate funding available.	Summer 2013	Staff & Graduate Development	Not completed. Will be included in the new action plan.
Clear systems that help researchers to plan their career development	PDR in place for researchers. Role profiles on the web. Important role for Pies. Dedicated researcher development webpages give links to resources, including Vitae.				
Assist researchers to make informed choices about their career progression by ensuring policies and processes for promotion and reward are transparent and clearly stated.	Promotion and reward criteria apply equally to research staff. Through HERA, matching process allows on-going role review. All staff are eligible for increments and one-off payments through newly defined PRP process.	Undertake an awareness campaign to promote the researcher development webpage and resources available there.	December 2012	Staff & Graduate Development	Completed, but this is continuing with the introduction of targeted monthly emails to research staff. Website also improved, and included both on Staff & Graduate Development and the Research pages of the University's website.
Researchers are aware of local and national career development strategies	Links available to Vitae website on a University webpage explicitly for researcher development. LHS has examples of good practice.	Undertake an awareness campaign to promote the researcher development webpage and resources available there. Share experiences and practice within LHS with the other Schools	December 2012	Staff & Graduate Development	Completed, and significant information also included on external initiatives and strategies on the updated researcher development webpages.

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Planned induction programme for researchers	Institutional and local induction processes have been reviewed in the last six months, and considered to be working effectively. PIs responsible for local induction and HR for institutional induction.				
Research managers provide effective research environments for training and development of researchers, encouraging CPD	Has potential to be variable in quality, but all research managers are aware of their responsibilities.	Include specific section in Quick Reference Guide for Managers on supporting research staff	By October 2012	Associate Director HR (Schools)	Completed. Made available on the HR website as part of 'Managers and leaders' resources
Articulation of skills that should be developed to support career progression	Researcher Development Framework available and promoted on the dedicated researcher development webpage.	Undertake an awareness campaign to promote the researcher development webpage and resources available there.	December 2012	Staff & Graduate Development	Completed, but continuing with the introduction of targeted monthly emails to research staff.
And encouragement of researchers to develop those skills	Staff Development advertise provision. Role of PIs in encouraging uptake - no evidence.	Undertake an awareness campaign to promote the researcher development webpage and resources available there.	December 2012	Staff & Graduate Development	Completed, but continuing with the introduction of targeted monthly emails to research staff.
Development of a specific career development strategy for researchers	Nothing in place.	Develop a strategy	Summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	Not completed. Will be included in the new action plan.
Availability of mentors in providing support and guidance for CPD	Voluntary mentoring scheme now in place.	Monitor uptake of mentors by research staff Compile database of career counsellors and mentors that are qualified to give relevant advice for specific research areas.	Summer 2013	Staff & Graduate Development	There has been no uptake of mentors by research staff via the cross-institutional scheme set up in 2012. Mentoring has been built into the ECR Development Programme and is being phased in. Ongoing action and monitoring will be in the new action plan.
Appraisal systems for researchers	PDR in place for researchers.				
Preparation for academic practice i.e. teaching and administration	All research staff can obtain Aston Certificate or PGCert in Learning & Teaching, both are accredited by the HEA. Last CROS survey indicated that this is not an issue.	Repeat CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	CROS survey completed 2013. 46% of research staff had undertaken training for teaching or lecturing. Training is available to all research staff, but it requires them to be teaching to do this. 26% said they would like to do training, but the likelihood is that they won't be teaching. Requires investigation of preparatory training for teaching for researchers who do not get the opportunity to teach.

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Training when researchers are engaged in supporting learning and teaching	All research staff can obtain Aston Certificate or PGCert in Learning & Teaching, both are accredited by the HEA. Last CROS survey indicated that this is not an issue.	Repeat CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	CROS survey completed 2013. 46% of research staff had undertaken training for teaching or lecturing. Training is available to all research staff, but it requires them to be teaching to do this. 26% said they would like to do training, but the likelihood is that they won't be teaching. Requires investigation of preparatory training for teaching for researchers who do not get the opportunity to teach.
Input to policy and practice through appropriate representation at staff meetings and through committees	Membership on School Research Committee.				Additionally, research staff now sit on a new ECR Committee which advises Research Committee on requirements for researcher development.
<b>4. Researchers Responsibilities</b>					
Researchers should develop increased capacity for independent, honest and critical thought	Support from the PI. Good PIs probably do this.	Use CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	CROS survey completed 2013, but question set within CROS does not allow judgment on this issue to be made, so it will be an item in the next action plan.
Researchers should develop their ability to transfer and exploit knowledge	Role of the PI. Good PIs probably do this. Training offered in knowledge transfer. - uptake poor.	Use CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	CROS survey completed 2013, but question set within CROS does not allow judgment on this issue to be made, so it will be an item in the next action plan.
Researchers should conduct and disseminate research in an honest and ethical manner	Support of the PIs.	Use CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	CROS survey completed 2013. 254% of research staff have either taken or would like to take ethics training, and this might be indicative of researchers who are ethical in their practice. Needs further investigation, and will be considered in the next action plan.
Researchers should recognise that their primary responsibility for managing and pursuing their career is theirs. Seek out opportunities for learning and development		Use CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	CROS survey completed 2013. 88% of research staff agreed/strongly agreed that they took ownership of their career development, and 68% have a clear career development plan.
Research managers should encourage CPD	Has potential to be variable in quality, but all research managers are aware of their responsibilities.	Include specific section in Quick Reference Guide for Managers on supporting research staff	By October 2012	Associate Director HR (Schools)	Completed. Made available on the HR website as part of 'Managers and leaders' resources
Researchers should ensure that their career development requirements and activities are regularly discussed, monitored and evaluated.	Through PDR processes and career counselling appointments with HR Advisors and careers staff.				

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Researchers encouraged to record their CPD for presentation to future employers	We consider that this is now universally understood.				
<b>5. Diversity and Equality</b>					
Organisation takes positive steps to promote equality and to develop specific schemes and action plans to address specific issues of under-representation or lack of progression	University has a university-wide diversity and equality action plan. No specific schemes to address issues related to research staff. Equality & diversity issues considered to be fair and appropriate in last CROS survey.	Use CROS survey to check	CROS survey - Spring 2013 Report and action plan to Research Committee - summer 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	CROS survey completed 2013. The CROS survey includes 17 questions on equality and diversity issues. Responses saying agree/strongly agree to the questions averaged 81% across the set.
Recruitment and retention of researchers from the widest pool	Business partnership role of HR Advisors in the Schools ensures implementation of best practice. Explicit data sets are not available due to the way data is collected and stored.	Review procedures for capturing and holding data, including consideration of how systems can be better integrated	March 2013	Associate Director (OD) and Associate Director (ED)	Partially completed for two Schools of Study involved in Athena Swan submissions. Evidence from CROS and PIRLS surveys indicate that recruitment and retention practice is sound.
Address the disincentives and indirect obstacles to retention and progression in research careers which may disproportionately affect some groups	Good flexible working policies in place for all staff. Business partnership role of HR Advisors in the Schools ensure implementation of best practice. Explicit data sets are not available due to the way data is collected and stored.	Review procedures for capturing and holding data, including consideration of how systems can be better integrated	March 2013	Associate Director (OD) and Associate Director (ED)	Partially completed for two Schools of Study involved in Athena Swan submissions. Data show that progression of research staff in academic posts is lower than expected. Is being addressed in Athena Swan action plans.
Respond flexibly to requests for changes to working patterns and resist instant refusals based on 'we don't do it this way here'	Business partnership role of HR Advisors in the Schools ensures implementation of best practice. Explicit data sets are not available due to the way data is collected and stored.	Review procedures for capturing and holding data, including consideration of how systems can be better integrated	March 2013	Associate Director (OD) and Associate Director (ED)	Not yet considered institution wide, but the action plans for Athena Swan submissions include reviews of flexible working practices for both academic and research staff.
Transparent equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at all subsequent career stages	ED policy for recruitment in place. Chairs of panels must complete training in order to Chair. Promotions processes are transparent.				

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Diversity reflected in selection and evaluation committees	No formal institutional policy on this.	Refer to Associate Director HR (ED) for consideration and to report back.	December 2012	Associate Director HR (ED)	Consider completed. It has not been possible to implement a formal policy with respect to this. HR Advisors do try to ensure that we have appropriately diverse panels, but sometimes this is driven by the availability of staff. Feedback from both the PIRLS and CROS surveys indicate that recruitment and selection are positively viewed by both groups of staff. Improving diversity of recruitment panels is an action on the Athena Swan action plan.
Account taken of researchers personal circumstances. Change policies or practices that directly or indirectly disadvantage such groups	Policies and practices are in place.				
Measures exist for discrimination, bullying or harassment to be reported without adversely affecting careers of innocent parties	All of these measures are in place.				
Consideration of participation in schemes such as Athena Swan Charter, the Juno project, and other initiatives.	Athena Swan Bronze attained. Silver awards applications imminent for the two relevant Schools of Study.	Athena Swan applications submitted and achieved.	Summer 2013	Associate Director HR (ED)	During the period, School of Life and Health Sciences attained the Bronze award (2013) and School of Engineering and Applied Sciences attained Silver (2014)
<b>6. Implementation and Review</b>					
Undertake regular review of progress in implementing the principles of the Concordat	Research Committee responsible for monitoring	Reports to research committee	On-going		Reviews are completed and the action plan updated when new information or initiatives are available. During this period there was an updated plan, with new actions, in November 2013 as a consequence of data from PIRLS and CROS surveys. Formally, update reports, with the action plan annotated with progress, are presented to Research Committee biannually.
Use of the Careers in Research Online Survey	Last completed early 2010.	Repeat CROS survey	Spring 2013	Associate Director HR (OD)	Completed Spring 2013
Monitor equality and diversity indicators for researchers	On-going, and reported to Research Committee	Reports to Research Committee	On-going	Associate Director HR (ED)	Work now undertaken by the Equality & Diversity Committee, with reports to Research Committee as necessary.
<b>ACRONYMS</b>		HERA - Higher Education Role Analysis		PIRLS - Principal investigator and Research Leaders Survey	
CPD - Continuing Professional Development		HR - Human Resources		PRP - Performance Related Pay	
CROS - Careers in Researchers Online Survey		OD - Organisational Development			
ED - Equality and Diversity		PDR - Performance Development Review			
HEA - Higher Education Academy		PI - Principal Investigator			