Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Update on Actions – October 2009

Report to Research Committee

The initial mapping of the expectations for good practice detailed in the Concordat document against Aston's processes and procedures showed that we were in a relatively good position, and an Action Plan was drawn up to address those areas where it was felt improvement could be made.

The document overleaf indicates the progress that has been made so far; although some issues have been addressed there is still work to be done. A concerted effort should be made to address the remaining issues as a matter of some priority, and it is recommended that a further report be made to the Research Committee in the spring term 2010 to confirm that actions have been completed.

Two particular areas are worth noting to the Committee. Firstly, the Careers service's request for additional funding to support careers guidance for research staff was not approved, and we need to identify ways of progressing this area of work within existing resources, or find alternative funding steams. Secondly, the PI training programme is a particularly important element in addressing a variety of issues related to the employment and retention of research staff. An additional note in Appendix 2 gives a summary of our proposal for introducing this training programme.

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Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress
Complete Athena Swann application	EDA	31/03/2009	Application completed, and Aston now signed up. Group now established to enable us to work towards the Bronze Award
Complete KTP role profiles.	HR	31/03/2009	Profile has been developed. Project currently on hold – significant debate and differences in practice in sector on how to deal with KTPs. Most keep them outside HERA Framework due to funding issues.
Amend PDR guidance	Staff Dev	31/03/2009	Guidance note amended.
Analyse current diversity profile of research staff.	EDA	30/04/2009	Work in progress
Raise awareness of bridging funds	HR	30/04/2009	Work to begin
Check constituency of School Boards for research staff membership	Registry	30/04/2009	The membership of School Boards indicates "one member of Academic Staff for each 20 Academic Staff in the school, elected by the Academic Staff in the School. There is no explicit, separate research staff constituency.
Develop and introduce process for grading research posts at application stage	Research Support Office and HR	30/04/2009	Work to begin
Undertake CROS survey	Staff Dev	30/04/2009	CROS survey completed, but with poor response rate. Survey to be run again, internally, before the end of the calendar year.
Improve advertising of Aston Cert in L & T for research staff	Staff Dev	30/04/2009	Wide-spread advertising via direct email, research secretaries ongoing.Research Staff section of Staff Development website under redevelopment - completion January 2010.
Survey the approach to training offered within research groups	ADRs	31/07/2009	??
Consider provision of careers guidance for research staff through the Careers Service.	Careers Service	31/07/2009	Careers Service requested additional funds to support this activity during the annual budget review, but the request was declined.
Analyse recent retention and progression data for research staff	EDA	31/07/2009	Work underway to access what metrics are available in the HR system
Analyse uptake of work-life balance provisions	EDA / HR	31/07/2009	Build question(s) into internal CROS survey (see below)

Review devolved procedure	HR	31/07/2009	Currently under review as part of wider review of recruitment procedures across the University.
Review application of probation procedures	HR	31/07/2009	Work to begin
Schools to consider explicit induction arrangements for research staff	School Research Committees	31/07/2009	Considered by Research Committees. Actions?
Introduce Rec & Selection training for PIs	Staff Dev	31/07/2009	Rec & Selec training now required for all Chairs of Panel, which includes PIs. The topic will also be included in PI training.
Investigate frequency of PDRs for research staff	Staff Dev	31/07/2009	This is now compulsory. Will follow up with a question in the internal CROS survey
Map HERA research staff role profiles with existing training provision.	Staff Dev	31/07/2009	Mapping to be completed by December 2009
Consider standard proforma for prompting discussion on training within PDR	Staff Dev	31/07/2009	There is a standard proforma to prompt recording of training needs.
Investigate how training and placements could be offered to broaden awareness of other sectors	Staff Dev / Careers Service	31/07/2009	Dependent on Careers Service resource being made available.
Develop a strategy to raise researchers awareness of local and national career development strategies	Staff Dev / Careers Service	31/07/2009	Dependent on Careers Service resource being made available.
Investigate process for ensuring diversity on recruitment panels	EDA	01/10/2009	Work to begin shortly
Develop metrics for each theme within the Concordat	Research Committee	01/10/2009	Work to begin
Develop and implement a PI training programme	Staff Dev	01/10/2009	Under development for implementation early 2010.
Investigate how to complete career benchmarking against other sectors	Staff Dev	01/10/2009	Being considered by national working group of Vitae.
Consider introduction of a voluntary mentoring scheme for research staff	Staff Dev	01/10/2009	A voluntary mentoring scheme is to be rolled out imminently.
Introduce a tailored 'Management Development for Research Staff' programme.	Staff Dev	01/10/2009	A new management competencies framework is being developed and a complete suite of management development programmes, which will include provision for research staff, will be made available.
Link role profiles and vacancy specs	HR	31/12/2009	Work progressing

Proposal for Management Training for Principal Investigators (PIs)

1. Concordat requirements

1.1. 'The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' identifies a number of clear responsibilities of research managers under the following five principles:

- Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential

- Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation

- Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible

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

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

1.2. The identified responsibilities are generally in accordance with UK/EU employment legislation and existing University policies, agreements and codes of practice.

2. Content of training

2.1. The Centre for Staff Development already provides or is currently developing short courses that offer appropriate management training. The content of these will be adapted to provide a coherent programme for PIs which addresses those issues which need improving, identified in the mapping against the Concordat requirements. This includes the following:

- Key principles of employment legislation and University policy and practice, including equality, diversity, work-life balance and support and development of staff

- Recruitment and selection processes and practice

- Induction content and practice

- Performance Development Review process and practice

- Mentoring skills

3. Delivery of training

3.1. The proposed programme of training is suitable for delivery over a maximum of three days, but we will be attempting to compress it into a two day programme. We will consult with existing PIs to receive their input in relation to content and format.

3.2. Personnel involved in the delivery of the proposed programme would be professional staff members of the Centre for Staff Development, the University's Equality & Diversity Advisor and HR Advisors (academic staff). It may be useful to have experienced PI's involved in the delivery.

3.3. The programme would be offered to PIs in the first instance in February 2010.

Human Resources: Centre for Staff Development

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