

Prifysgol Aberystwyth University

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: Implementation Plan to end of 2017/18 Academic Year

Acronyms:

AURCG: Aberystwyth Research Concordat Group

RBI: Department of Research, Business & Innovation

GS: Graduate School

HR: Human Resources

CDSAP: Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice

IBERS: Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

1 CONCORDAT MONITORING AND REVIEW				
	AIM	ACTION	SMART Measure, Responsibility and progress	Oct-18
1.1	To build on the evolution of the Aberystwyth University Researcher Concordat Group and encourage more researchers to join the group.	Timetable three meetings per annum, and ensure continued representation from the Research Community.	Three meetings per annum scheduled. AURCG Chair.	AURCG has met regularly over the recording period with some disruption to this pattern in 2018, where changes to staff and roles has affected this. Informal sub groups have continued to meet.
		To replace CROS with a shorter in-house questionnaire to encourage a higher response rate.	AURCG sub-group to review survey and develop shorter survey (DR, IA, JA), Summer 2017	CROS, PIRLS and PRES have all been run alongside focus groups, informal 'post it note' feedback at the end of training sessions in addition to a Survey Monkey simplified questionnaire. We find this mixed approach to be working (2017: Survey Monkey 6 responses; 3 focus groups 13 attending; 2018: 3 focus groups offered but no attendees; 2 ad hoc focus groups with 4 Marie Curie Fellows attending).

1.2	To improve internal evaluation of Aberystwyth's implementation of the Concordat.	To include the survey results for review by AURCG	RBI: DR: Autumn 2017	Survey responses along with sound bites from focus groups have fed into the action planning process. The focus groups and special reference groups continue to gain traction in improving our internal evaluation. They also serve to raise the profile of our attempts to engage with the PDRA community.
		To run an annual focus group of researchers from different disciplines and career stages.	Focus groups for PDRA, ECR, and PIs to be run annually. RBI: DR: annually	Focus groups were run during 2017 (3 with 13 attending) and 2018 (5 with 4 attending). ECRs and postdocs and PI's views were picked up and fed into the action planning evaluation and next steps for two years. Going forward, RBI led training including the Research Good Practice sessions actively seek feedback and participation in the Concordat and career development issues.

2 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION			
AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review

2.1	Enhance PDRA interest in roles at AU to increase quantity of potential candidates	Soundbites/snippets of PDRA experiences and benefits of working for AU as a PDRA in an appendix to the job description. Research Development Officers to contact PDRAs and develop text and ARCG to approve final text	1. At least 8 Soundbites to be gathered by end of 2017 . 2. Explore potential for Research Careers web pages with Careers Department, decision to proceed or not by March 2018 . RBI: DR	Feedback was generated and circulated, this was useful and sometimes critical suggesting we need to find a way to better address recruitment and selection of PDRAs. AUCRG decided against adding any information to the Job Descriptions but instead to start by improving information available to PDRAs and potential PDRAs on the website. The updated website includes information about the Euraxess Careers Project. New Career webpages direct both PGR students and PDRA to career development online resources and careers service support.
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2.2	Improve quality of applications received	Evaluate a sample of previous PDRA shortlisting assessments for areas which reduce candidate pool - provide additional guidance to candidates where necessary.	10 previous applications to be reviewed by May 2017. Determine the number of applicants for researcher jobs and review diversity data of applicants since E-recruiter system established to be shared with ARCG (December 2017) Deputy Director of HR: Employee Services Team to present reports to ARCG.	5 shortlisting assessments have been reviewed. The analysis does not identify a particular theme. The criteria that applicants struggled with was discipline specific rather than a generic skill. The number of applicants in the above sample ranged from 5 to 35 applicants. Again no trend identified in how many applicants apply per job role advertised.
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3 RECOGNITION AND VALUE				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review
3.1	To update the HR system AberBoblPeople to categorise all research staff and enable targeted email communications to the groups.	1. Introduce categories on system for new recruits. 2. Audit existing research staff to ensure they are categorised correctly. 3. Trial emails requesting response if in the incorrect group. 4. Group emails automatically updated when staff are recruited or leave. 5. RBI to be advised of new recruits monthly and also advised of their line managers.	HR: Rebecca Kularatne (item 1 January 2017 , item 2 Spring 2017), item 3 June 2017 , item 4 on-going from June 2017 , item 5 commence September 2017)	AURCG now have three segmented email distribution lists, and this will allow us to contact PDRAS more effectively. We now have the ability to identify new starters, who their PIs are and can target resources and training briefings more effectively.

		Assess Effective Contribution Scheme (annual review) completions amongst the PDRA community.	HR (HH). Review to be completed by end of October 2018 . (dependent upon 3.1)	Effective Contributions Scheme is a key part of the objectives of the new University Strategic Plan 2018-2023 "Ensure every staff member fully understands their role, responsibilities and accountabilities and participates in the annual Effective Contribution Scheme" . Current records indicate that 63% of Research only staff have completed the online Effective Contribution Scheme.
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3.2	To ensure all researchers feel valued and are part of a community at Aberystwyth University.	<p>Survey all PDRAs to evaluate their experience of the Effective Contribution Scheme (annual review). Include question to assess whether Accelerated Increments Contribution Points Scheme is discussed during ECS meeting. Co-ordinated through planning.</p>	<p>Announcement of AICP scheme in April 2017, measure number of applicants from PDRAs to review year-on-year data reports to ARCG in October 2017 and 2018. HR (HH) Review to be completed by end of October 2018.</p>	<p>2 out of 74 applications in 2015-16 to the AICP were from research staff. 1 successful and 1 unsuccessful. In 2016-17 the Accelerated Increments Contribution Points Scheme was suspended. It has not therefore been possible to measure the number of applicants by October 2018. Once the scheme is re-introduced the University will return to this action point.</p>
		<p>Ensure PDRAs are made aware of the Accelerated Increments Contribution Points Scheme. PDRA community to be emailed directly when announced in autumn 2017.</p>	<p>ARCG Chair: April 2017 (dependent upon 3.1)</p>	<p>Been on hold due to the University's Sustainability implementation Plan</p>

3.3	To further improve communications between the University and the PDRA	<p>Develop specific resources for PDRA's on the RBI website. commence Spring 2017 with page and basic resources, to be developed in conjunction with feedback from the PDRA representative on the ARCG.</p>	<p>RBI (DR): commence spring 2017.</p>	<p>Our Support for Career Development page has been updated to include new resources, mainly in the form of Vitae and other organisational materials.</p>
		<p>Run a one day PDRA symposium led by PVCR. Audience is PDRAs and their line managers for some of the event. Content to include communication of training provision and expectations of compulsory modules for all PDRAs. Also session on career management, focus group on requirements of community and 'self discovery' leadership development as a precursor to other courses.</p>	<p>(dependent upon 3.1) RBI (DR) Event to be run in November 2017, announced in June 2017.</p>	<p>AURCG decided to defer running a PDRA specific symposium until the Sustainability Implementation plan and associated Academic Restructuring had been completed. AURCG ran the university's first National Post Doc Appreciation Week in September 2018. The low turn out, and appreciation captured from the 3 attendees provided confidence that we must redouble efforts to further improve communication between the university and the Post-Doc community.</p>

<p>Researcher community.</p>	<p>HR induction for PDRAs mandatory. Also, once recruited PDRA and line manager to be emailed by RBI with Research Induction pack (linked to Concordat's line manager pack *1) and a completion check list. Completion to be notified on AberBoblPeople, and check list to be signed and returned to RBI by PDRA.</p>	<p>(dependent upon 3.1). RBI (DR) to develop induction pack by May 2017. Emails to commence for new recruits in June 2017. HR (HH) to implement check box for PDRA induction completion on AberBoblPeople by May 2017. Annual reports from HR (HH) on % of new starters attending HR Induction and line manager induction to be presented to AURCG at start of 18-19 academic year.</p>	<p>All new PDRAS are invited to regular induction events run by HR. In the absence of and pending HR distribution lists the resource pack for PDRA and line manager is incorporated into the Researcher Development website and reflected in the Research Good Practice sessions and Project Implementation Management Folder meetings. When new externally funded research projects are awarded PIs are invited to a Project Implementation Management File meeting. This is an opportunity to work through a checklist of PI responsibilities including those relating to the Concordat . The new distribution lists and reporting mechanisms will allow us to target PIs for additional Research Development Framework Planner based training.</p>
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3.4	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 (JD): to run both programmes a minimum of twice per annum. Aim for 85% of PIs to have undertaken course. Reports from Research Finance to ARCG at start of academic year 17-18 and 18-19	Top Tips for Managing Your Research Grant continues to be run twice per year. Slimmed down versions have additionally been offered through the Research Good Practice 7 week program. With the advent of newly available New Starter information RBI will be able to target PIs better and track the take-up of these and other sessions.
		Managing Staff module to be developed by HR.	HR: new module developed by August 2017 with first cohort in September 2017 . Aim 90% of PDRA line managers to have attended by November 2018.	A number of modules have been delivered including the Essential Skills of an Effective Manager; Stress Management and Time Management. These were not delivered exclusively to the PDRA community. The coming suite of courses will be made mandatory for all managers with line-management responsibilities.

		<p>Continue compulsory 121 induction meetings with new academic starters and their relevant Research Development Officer.</p>	<p>Ongoing RBI (reporting DR) and IBERS RDOs (reporting Jo Walker). Annual reporting by HR at the end of August annually to be provided to AURCG for next meeting following deadline. Target for 90% of all staff to have been inducted. HR (HH) to introduce tick box for RDOs to complete in ABW & provide reports (May 2017)</p>	<p>This is offered to 100% of staff and currently we have a 60% take-up rate.</p>
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3.5	Ensure PDRAs have access to funds to attend academic conferences.	Open conference fund to PDRAs who are not on an externally funded project to ensure the opportunity to attend conferences and present papers/posters is provided.	Director of RBI: proposal to be taken to research committee. By March 2017 . Implementation from 2017-18 academic year.	Internal funding to attend academic conferences is available via the Gooding fund (science). Also new institutional funding for networking, pump-priming to support International Development Research is available to research fellows on externally funded grants such as our Ser Cymru Fellows.
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4 SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review

		<p>Introduction of compulsory researcher development programme for ECR and PDRAs (as part of probation and for), and optional for other researchers. Subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics • Open Communication of research (Open Access and Research Data Management) • Engaging the public with research (Impact) • Applying for research grants • Managing Research Grants, including project management skills • Recording research activity on PURE (CRIS) 	<p>RBI (DR) 2017-18 academic year launch. Target 95% completion from new starters of PDRA and ECR and 75% of Existing PDRA and ECR (started within last 24 months). Report on completions at start of 2018-19 academic year .HR to provide attendance recording facility on ABW by July 2018, RBI (DR) to liaise.</p>	<p>Good Research Practice programme established. This is now compulsory for new researcher staff. 7 sessions are run three times per year, with a New Starter 1/2 day offered three times a year. HR systems only as of November 2018 will allow us to record completion of Research Good Practice compulsory sessions.</p>
4.1	<p>To Implement a comprehensive career development programme for all researcher career stages.</p>	<p>Also see 3.2(1) for PDRA development day to include career management.</p>		<p>RBI put in place the university's first National Post Doc Appreciation Week in 2018 and offered sessions including: Exploring careers outside of academia, Developing Resilience , Improving Interview Skills and Funding for Post Docs.</p>

		Continue provision of 'Springboard' development programme for women	Programmes in Spring 2017 and 2018 (Director of Equality). Report of attendance diversity (role, age, ethnicity) for previous and new cohorts by end of academic year (HR: Joy Arkely)	Due to significant organisational change and the implementation of the new faculty structure the Springboard programme scheduled for September -December 2018 has been postponed until January-April 2019.
		Continue funding for the LFHE Aurora Leadership and Management programme for women.	4 staff be funded (departmentally) to attend in 2017 and 2018. (Director of Equality / Head of Institutes)	5 women attended in 2017. Details of 2018/19 Programme were circulated by email to the Equality Champions on 27 June 2018 and thus far two women have enrolled for 2018 programme
4.2	To ensure that PGR training is up to date and relevant	Ongoing development and redevelopment of PGR programme: Development of optional Entrepreneurship training in conjunction with careers	New programme developed for 2017-18 academic year . (Director of Graduate School)	Enterprise module continues to be run. It ran 2018 with 5 participants and all successfully completed.
		Continue delivery of PhD supervision		The Postgraduate Steering Group recommended that the Graduate School should continue to provide Supervisor Workshops on a rolling basis. The Graduate School has run a

4.3	Ensure PhD supervisors are aware of their responsibilities.	programme as an 'open' programme at least annually. Also rolling programme of training in Institutes: one Institute per term; all six Institutes to have run one session by end of 2017-18 academic year,	(Director of Graduate School). 50% of all supervisors to have been trained by end of 2018. Report to ARCG December 2018 .	number of these over the past year, which tends to be aimed at new supervisors, but also provides information for experienced supervisors.
5 DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review
		Ensure diversity and equality issues are reinforced within the CPD Framework.	Report on progress to ARCG annually (Director of Institute of Professional Development and Director of Equality)	Diversity and equality issues remain a university-wide priority whilst recent considerable structural changes impacted on a lead role feeding into the AURCG since winter 2017. A new executive lead on Equality and Diversity has been appointed in autumn 2018.

5.1	Ensure that diversity and equality is promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers in the University.	<p>Consideration of gender sensitive research as requirement on research ethics application forms and internal grant application forms. Once relevant training is in place, the ethics application process will be updated to reflect this requirement. In the meantime, RBI is ensuring that gender sensitive research is captured in the wider-policy framework and in Research Ethics Panel procedures.</p>	<p>Existing forms to be reviewed by August 2017 and revisions included in 2017-18 Academic year (Director of RBI)</p>	<p>Awareness of gender sensitive research continues to form part of the Ethics Panel's review methodology. In relation to research with participants, we ask researchers to specify the anticipated age range and gender of participants. Where it appears that one gender is being excluded for no valid reason, strong, clear justification is required.</p>
		<p>Raise the importance of gender sensitive research through inclusion of "Equality" as an agenda item on Research Committee meetings.</p>	<p>To be included as a standing item from March 2017 (meetings are termly). (Director of RBI)</p>	<p>This has been included as an item on the Research Committee agenda.</p>
		<p>Monitor and report on the combined Action Plan for Athena SWAN and GEM (awarded November 2014); carry out final evaluation, survey staff and apply for the Institutional renewal in November 2017</p>	<p>Annual report of progress to be presented to ARCG for information. (Director of Equality)</p>	<p>The university recently resubmitted for Athena SWAN bronze accreditation and was unsuccessful, and given the opportunity to resubmit by September 2019. The Athena SWAN action plan and Strategic Equality Action Plan 2016-2020 are available online</p>

6 IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW				
	AIM	ACTION	Responsibility and progress	Progress Review
6.1	Implement and monitor progress of the Concordat Action Plan with relevant stakeholders.	Ensure that the AURCG monitor the progress of the Concordat Action Plan: minutes of each meeting and reports to be submitted to Research Committee .	Termly AURCG meetings scheduled over the next 2 years. (ARCG Chair)	Changes in roles and staffing led to the AURCG actions being carried on whilst formal meetings in 2018 were limited to 2 minuted meetings. The university restructuring provides a better platform for ongoing planning and review.

6.2		Feedback from Researchers to be received from focus groups and surveys, as per 1.2	Feedback from RBI: DR to be reviewed annually in Michaelmass Term (2017 and 2018)	RBI have continued to employ a mixed approach to capturing feedback and participation in the action plan from various stakeholders. These have comprised of informal focus groups, special reference groups, vox pop feedback through the Women's Research Network and the pilot Survey Monkey. (2017: Survey Monkey 6 responses; 3 focus groups 13 attending; 2018: 3 focus groups no attendees; 2 ad hoc focus groups with 4 Marie Curie Fellows attending); 2017/18 Women Research Network met 4 times with attendance of 93).
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