

UK HR Excellence in Research Award

2nd annual review of key progress made in supporting the University of Sheffield's implementation of the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers'.

"Researchers are broadly defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose. It is recognised that this broad category of staffing covers a wide range of staff with different disciplinary backgrounds, levels of training, experience and responsibility, types of contract (fixed or open ended, full or part time), and different career expectations and intentions. Recognising the diversity of research staff experience and expertise, it is impossible to address researchers as a homogeneous group."
(Concordat, 2008)

This review has been compiled by the secretary to the RSDC, the role of which is to, "take a strategic perspective, focusing on how best to further enhance TUoS's provision for FTCS".

Since the 1st annual review, as actioned, the committee has developed from being a task and finish committee sub-group focused only on the HRExc award to a strategic committee embedded in governance structures.

Key themes and progress

Produce a University-wide statement on the management of research staff which includes the fact that researchers are chosen primarily for their ability to advance research at the University of Sheffield and that they should exercise and develop increased capacity for independent, honest and critical thought throughout their careers (Concordat Principles 1, 3, 4 & 5).

During 2013, The University of Sheffield 'statement of expectations for world class research' was created to detail the work environment the university wishes to see underpinning research. Building on the good practice seen in the Faculty of MDH, which has a tailored statement of expectations, in 2014, a consultation project has begun with the other four faculties to replicate this approach. Currently there are draft statements being reviewed at committee and executive board level in the Faculties of Science and Engineering.

Ensure that research staff in all faculties are offered appropriate induction (Concordat Principles 3, 4 & 6).

Following on from the consistent practices agreed during 2013, approaches to induction have now been further cemented. A whole day induction for new researchers in the Life Sciences is provided three times per year. In the Faculty of Engineering new researcher induction sessions are provided regularly and the RDM now presents at inductions for new academics to increase understanding of the support available for ECRs. In AH&SS, one to one inductions are offered to new starters. The RPD team now also receive a list of RS staff to enable them to make early contact and to ensure people are welcomed and inducted consistently. Departmental technical induction remains managed at local level but the need for this is signposted by the RPD team.

2013-2014 data will be used for benchmarking to see if there is increased uptake in 2014-2105 but it is important to note that the number of new starters may vary year on year, so it is not directly comparable.

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At the organisational level, a new induction portal has been created which provides information about the University and key information and activities listed by time period. Its aim is to support new staff from the period before they start, through to their first three months in post. New staff receive a personalised log-in via an automated email three months before their start date or later if applicable. All new starters are also invited to attend a 'Welcome to the University' coffee morning where they have the opportunity to meet staff from outside their department and faculty and can begin to build their own network of contacts.

Learning and Development & Career Planning (Concordat Principles 2, 3 & 4).

Selecting learning

The SRDS process seeks for all staff, including researchers, to identify development needed to support their achievement of work objectives and to support their ongoing development.

Learning & Development opportunities

The RPD through the Think Ahead framework, offer a breadth of developmental topics, these include but are not limited to:

- Viva survivor
- Broadening Horizons
- Grant writing and funding insight
- Fellowship preparation
- Commercialisation and IP
- Research data management
- Impact. Public Engagement
- Collaboration & knowledge exchange
- Academic writing
- Publishing
- Poster presentations
- Effective Researcher
- Springboard (women's career progression programme)
- Transitions
- Crucible (collaborative research ideas)
- Job seeking and application strategies
- Mentoring induction and ongoing CPD
- Presentation skills
- Personal impact
- Three minute thesis
- Project management
- Media

Other opportunities are offered through different university departments:

Integrity in Action – as actioned, a pilot course on research ethics and integrity for ECRs was delivered. Uptake was low but those that attended gave very positive feedback. A review is underway and a course of this focus will be run again in 2014-2105, though with a different format.

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Sheffield Leader – there has been an increase in uptake by ECRs though only marginal.

The following has been done to raise awareness of this development:

- An awareness raising session was held in July as part of the MDH Think Ahead programme and was well received.
- Two members of the RPD have been through Sheffield Leader and, as alumni of this are able to help in selling the benefits to ECRs.
- Places have been retained for a specific cohort of researchers (VC fellows) as part of their development plan

Waiting lists fluctuate for SL2 but regular places are available on SL1. Speed of access has been reported as a barrier, so it is possible that ECRs could be nominated for SL1 to increase access. More needs to be done to make clear to the PIs the benefit of nominating their staff.

Sheffield Teaching Assistant – teaching philosophy, content and practice development for PGRs and ECRs.

ECRS – a scheme of development and competitive application for independent research funding to encourage first steps towards independence.

1-1 support

The coaching qualification undertaken by six members of the RPD team has led to various coaching hours being offered to researchers, serving to provide tailored support, develop the team members' skills and to support fully qualified coach status. Two specific strands have also emerged as a result; thesis coaching and developing women in academia.

Mentoring

ECR mentoring by academics is available in every faculty.

Thesis mentoring has been piloted and a second cohort recruited. Among the mentors are those ECRs who have previously been mentees.

Careers Beyond Academia mentoring via a designated portal has been scoped, recruited to and a portal built ready for pilot in 2014-2015.

Career Management Support

The two ECR careers advisers continued to offer a suite of interventions, including group sessions under the DDP, 1-1 interviews, email support, CV clinics, employer liaison, careers events and supported RDM's with tailored events under the framework.

Careers support is offered via a range of methods other than 1-1 e.g. Skype, email, to ensure people's needs can be met.

Evaluating and reflecting on learning

All attendees at events (centrally and under Think ahead) are asked to give feedback and reflect on what they have learned. University-wide there is a drive to engage researchers more with their ongoing development and for them to recognise it is important to undertake additional development (through courses, other duties, shadowing, visits etc.) in order to increase their mobility.

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The University has launched a revised approach to its provision of soft skills training for all staff, called Development Everywhere. This approach has provided development opportunities for all staff in a variety of formats such as videos, top tips, web-links, self-assessments, e-learning etc. which can be accessed at a time and location to suit.

All staff have access to an e-portfolio to reflect on their learning and this is promoted on the research staff webpages and at induction. ECRs are also encouraged to create and update career plans as part of 1-1 discussions and at learning events.

Engagement and review

In 2013-2014, use of electronic systems has meant that baseline data can be captured for comparison in the future. Statistics on booking, attendance and feedback completion have been collated and this data will be utilised to review engagement and to identify areas for improvement.

Evaluation and feedback data is used routinely to re-shape content as needed and to ensure that planning for the next academic year is informed by the views of researchers.

Good research practices (Concordat Principle 5).

The UREC annual programme of research integrity workshops for PGRs was successfully delivered again in 2013-2014.

HR policy and practice (Concordat Principles 1, 2, 3 & 4).

RS participation in Sheffield Leader 1&2 has shown a slight decline in the last year, with only 5 engaging compared to 7 for the same period last year. There is now an active collaboration between members of HR and RPD team to increase marketing, communication and engagement.

As part of the implementation of the enhancements to the University's e-recruitment system, web guidance and training on recruitment and selection to include specific provision for managers / PIs with responsibility for the recruitment and selection of research staff is being reviewed and amended where required.

The SRDS form has been revised to include very specific discussion topics relating to ERCs to ensure a focus on career development and engagement in supporting development activity. These are being rolled out by the Faculties of Science & MDH in the first instance.

Equality and Diversity (Concordat Principles 2 & 6).

Equality objectives were developed and endorsed by UEB in 2012. Work towards these objectives is wide-ranging and ambitious. Rather than simply adding links between plans, the University web pages have been re-written and the action and implementation plans replaced with these objectives. Full details can be found at:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/equality/focus/equalityobjectives>

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Retain institutional Athena SWAN Charter award – the University has successfully retained the Bronze award.

Complete review of University redeployment processes – completed (see <http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/change/toolkit>). The new processes have been implemented. Communication with faculties is ongoing to develop tailored training support to ensure that these are implemented effectively. The Sheffield Manager development will also be exploring how to support managers in effective implementation of policies.

Monitoring & consultation

CROS was carried out in March 2013 and the finding used to shape activity and to feed in to the 2014-2016 action plan.

The RSDC has continued to take a strategic perspective, focusing on how best to further enhance TUoS's provision for FTCRS.

Glossary of terms and abbreviations used in the action plan

AH&SS	Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences (faculties of)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CROS	Careers in Research Online Survey
DDP	Doctoral Development Programme
ECRs	Early Career Researchers
FTCRS	Fixed term contract research staff
HR	Human Resources
MDH	Medicine, Dentistry & Health (faculty of)
PGR	Postgraduate Research Student
RDM	Researcher Development Manager
RPD	Researcher Professional Development Team – university-wide based team of researcher developers
RS	Research Staff
RSDC	The Research Staff Development Committee (http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/committees/drcstandinggroup)

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SL Sheffield Leader programme (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/hr/sld/lmd/sheffieldleader>)

SRDS Staff Development & Review Scheme

TUoS The University of Sheffield

UEB University Executive Board

UREC University Research Ethics Committee

(<http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/committees/ethicscommittee>)

The Committee whose purpose is to promote awareness and understanding of research ethical issues throughout the University, to advise on any ethical matters in research that are referred to it from within the University and to keep abreast of the external research ethics environment and ensure that the University responds to all external requirements.