

University of Birmingham

Researcher Concordat Action Plan 2015 – 17 Review

The University's new Strategic Framework recognises that "We have created a research environment where academic rigour, innovation, and delivery are made possible by brilliant people, outstanding facilities and strong collaborative networks. Our goal now is to do more and better research". It goes on to state "Our staff and students are our greatest resource: their success is our success. Their work and achievements are rooted in the University's vibrant intellectual environment, and we focus our resources on building, maintaining and enhancing the environment."

The strategy identifies the need to focus on

- Attracting, retaining and celebrating talented staff
- Growing leadership capacity – specifically research leadership, including supervision of research students.
- Collaboration including working with other Universities.

The new HR Strategy supports these aims by focusing on recruiting, selecting and developing talent; supporting, managing and rewarding performance; developing and building leadership and management capacity; inclusivity and well-being.

Following our 4-year review, our revised plan seeks to support these organisational priorities, addresses areas for further development and builds on areas of strength.

The 2015 – 17 plan focused on four key themes: -

- Enhancing the institutional commitment to the Concordat
- Developing research leadership
- Recruiting, developing and supporting talented research staff
- Equality & diversity

Key actions were

- To establish a more robust institutional framework to focus on developing our commitment to researcher support and development
- To continue to develop and deliver excellent leadership programmes and develop new opportunities that increase our leadership capacity and capability
- To establish cross-University resources to identify, develop and promote best practice in local researcher development.
- Driven by CROS 2015 data, to identify and deliver programmes that meet the development requirements of research staff
- To increase involvement of research staff in developing and evaluating Concordat related activity
- To meet and exceed institutional Equality & Diversity targets.

Key Area of Focus / Action	Success Measure	Progress
<p>Institutional support for and monitoring of Concordat implementation</p> <p>It is recognised that more robust and formal structures would enhance our ability to meet the Concordat principles including increased involvement of RS in development and evaluation activity.</p>		
<p>1. The University Research Committee is now formally committed to regular review of RS development and support and progress against Concordat action plans. Formal reporting of Concordat related issues and progress against actions will take place twice per year.</p>	<p>Change to ToR approved by Senate</p> <p>Initial report & update received</p>	<p>COMPLETE - Change to Research Committee terms of reference to include support & monitoring of researcher development</p> <p>Initial report submitted. Summary of recommendations shown below.</p>
<p>2. Establish an operational working group to manage the day-to-day commitments to the Concordat. Membership to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic and Post-Doctoral representatives from each College • Representatives from relevant central professional services departments e.g. HR, Research Support, Strategic Planning. <p>Group to meet termly</p>	<p>Reps. identified</p> <p>Initial meeting</p> <p>Termly meetings</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>The proposed Early Career Researcher Development Support Group (RDSG) has been established and meets every 4 – 6 weeks. The group, chaired by a Deputy Head of College, includes Senior Academic and ECR representatives from all 5 Colleges, plus representatives from relevant professional service departments</p> <p>An initial report, submitted March 2017, identified three key areas of focus based on CROS results and input from ECR representatives from all Colleges: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated careers support for ECRs • Consistent high quality Performance and Development Reviews • Consistent and effective induction
		<p>Additionally the Vice Chancellor held a series of meetings with ECRs to explore areas of concern. The key issues to emerge were:-</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of mentoring was highlighted as being particularly important; it was suggested that the approach is currently variable between different Schools and Colleges.

		<p>Induction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The importance of the induction process was stressed by the group. Induction requirements will vary based on the nature of individual academic disciplines, and this is therefore an issue that primarily needs to be addressed by Heads of School. This local approach is supplemented by the University's central induction, which is generally well received. <p>See the 2018-20 Action Plan for specific actions identified.</p>
<p>Research Leadership & Management Effective leadership and management are critical to our success. We will deepen the reservoir of ability in this area.</p>		
<p>Continue to develop and deliver existing leadership programmes.</p>		
3.	<p>1 x Senior Leadership Programme (SLP) per year 3 x Emerging Leadership Programmes (ELP) per year 1 x Developing as a Research Team Leader (DRTL) per year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmes run at 90% capacity Participants report changes to personal leadership & management practice and performance <p>Delivery COMPLETE SLP – One programme delivered at capacity (32 Participants) ELP – During 2015/16 and 2016 / 17 two programmes delivered annually. (104 participants). This met the organisational requirements for that period. Following a review of this programme with respect to balancing delivery resource, demand and ongoing University talent development requirements, it has been agreed to deliver 3 programmes for the academic year 2018/19</p> <p>DRTL – Since 2015, 3 programmes have been delivered for 42 participants. (97%) attendance</p> <p>Additionally a parallel programme, Developing as an Academic Team Leader, was piloted with 16 early career academic staff. This programme increased the opportunity for ECRs to attend tailored leadership development and expands the target audience to include early career lecturers and teaching focused staff. Following evaluation and participant input, a second programme ran in 2017 for a further 16 staff. Both programmes ran at 100%. It has been agreed to continue offering this programme.</p>

4.	Evaluate each programme to determine reaction, behaviour change and impact.		<p>SLP Evaluation 93% found the programme useful or very useful 79% report the programme as having an impact on them as a leader and on their School, Department or Institute. In particular increasing their understanding of leadership and its responsibilities, increasing appetite for internal and external leadership roles and developing networks. 92% would recommend the programme to colleagues.</p> <p>ELP Evaluation 100% found the programme useful or very useful. 100% reported some or significant impact on them as a leader and 94% reported some or significant impact on their School or Service. In particular, they valued the opportunity to explore their approach to leadership in the academic context, reflect on development areas and develop cross-institutional / functional networks.</p> <p>DRTL / DATL Evaluation At least 85% found the different topics useful In particular, participants found the networking opportunities to be useful and report that they recognise and adapt to team members' needs and preferences more effectively.</p>
5.	Pilot a management programme for new College Board members to deploy the essential “nuts and bolts” of good subject leadership and management skills		<p>COMPLETE New College Board development programme piloted. This programme is currently under review.</p>
6.	Pilot new Research Leadership Programme		<p>COMPLETE Two Research Leaders Programmes have run/are running in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Early evaluation indicates participants value being invested in and the opportunity to develop their understanding of leadership and associated skills in the specific context of leading their research teams.</p>

Recruitment, development and support of talented research staff			
<p>While there has been some success in establishing local researcher development groups there remains inconsistency and duplication in activities. The project launched in September 2015 to identify and share best practice in local researcher support & development across Colleges; coordinate local and central initiatives; establish local researcher development groups where they do not currently exist; identify, promote and implement new central researcher development activity; support local groups to develop and deliver local development programmes.</p> <p>This project is driven by research staff input and feedback to local groups feeding in to the new Operational Working Group; formal evaluation of existing activity; further detailed review of CROS and locally generated data. Initial areas to be explored will be induction, researcher learning & development priorities and PDR engagement.</p>			
7.	Project allocated to individual POD Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff member allocated 	Allocation COMPLETE & activity ONGOING
8.	CROS analyses presented to College leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College actions identified 	<p>Analysis COMPLETE</p> <p>The CROS 2105 data has now been superseded by CROS 2017. Although the data was shared with Colleges, it did not achieve any significant traction. The process of making the best use of CROS data to inform necessary change needs to be reviewed.</p>
9.	Identify and address causes of research staff not participating in annual Performance Development Review (PDR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≥80% research staff having annual PDR 	<p>Investigation COMPLETE</p> <p>Addressed by enhanced Training & Development for reviewers re-stating expectations of PDR and providing specific guidance for ECR PDRs</p> <p>CROS 2017 shows a significant increase in ECR engagement in PDRs. 72% (2017), 57% (2015)</p> <p>Local PDR practice was reviewed via the Researcher Development Support Group. This revealed that where consistent expectations were set and specific guidance provided to reviewers and reviewees PDRs are more likely to take place. There are differences between Colleges in who the reviewer should be (supervisor or other academic). All approaches have merit, the key being the quality and content of the conversation.</p>
Induction			
10.	Investigate causes of research staff reporting that they are “not offered” central induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce to 5% RS report “not offered” central induction 	<p>Investigation COMPLETE</p> <p>Investigation has revealed a complex range of reasons for staff reporting not being offered a “Central Induction”. These include both local and central causes. HR administrative process have been reviewed to address this. Further institution wide work on induction will also contribute to reducing this percentage to the target.</p>

			Additionally College researcher groups have begun to implement local initiatives including a welcome letter specifically to all new ECRs, ECR specific induction workshops and ECR reps seeking out new starters to introduce local support provision.
Learning & Development			
11.	Identify College RS learning & development priorities via CROS data and consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top 3 priorities identified 	<p>Identification COMPLETE</p> <p>Local groups have identified key focus for research staff development and are providing development programmes.</p> <p>Based on consultation and feedback from support groups there is a consistent demand for grant writing and application support, research focused technical development and careers guidance. In addition, CROS15 identified leadership & supervision and research impact as key development areas.</p> <p>Where appropriate, dedicated local support has been provided to meet specific need E.g. Researcher Development post appointed in CEPS. Leadership development, career planning and research impact programmes have been delivered centrally. CROS 2017 shows that these continue to be of great interest to ECRs, although slightly less than previously.</p>
12.	Central programme on researcher career development piloted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% capacity • 80% recommend 	<p>Pilot COMPLETE</p> <p>It must be noted that despite this seeming to be a high priority, attendance has not backed this up, only 23 attending since Sept 2015. It is possible that this is a communication issue. This programme will be reviewed as part of the annual review of centrally provided programmes in April 2018.</p>
13.	1 additional centrally delivered researcher development programme piloted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% capacity • 80% recommend 	<p>Pilot COMPLETE</p> <p>Based on CROS and consultation (noted above) we have delivered a combination of additional local and central provision. In particular, research funding focused support is being provided locally. A formal review of this provision is planned in order to ensure consistency and efficiency.</p> <p>An additional leadership development programme has been provided centrally.</p>

14.	Evaluation of CMDS annual researcher development programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% recommend • Participants report changes to personal leadership & management practice and performance 	<p>A limited evaluation has taken place in this specific College as part of the Researcher Strategy Away Day. This revealed that 100% respondents would recommend local development events to colleagues.</p> <p>A more detailed evaluation survey is underway at time of writing. Results and recommendations will be reviewed and implemented as part of the 2018020 Action Plan.</p>
15.	Local annual programme of research staff focused development established in 4 of 5 Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual attendance 30% of research staff population 	<p>Programme COMPLETE Development programmes are now in place across all five Colleges.</p> <p>CMDS – Driven by the established PERCAT committee CMDS continue to provide a programme of short masterclasses and more formal training sessions covering research, teaching, and personal and career development topics. In addition larger events including an annual Research Gala, Strategy Away Day, Careers Exhibition and Athena Swan focused E&D events. A researcher development fund is also available for activities to develop research specific skills & knowledge.</p> <p>CLES / CEPS – Consultation with reps identified development priorities. The re-launched programme has focused on career development & planning and grant application. A joint conference is scheduled for June. In addition, a development fund has now been established against which ECRs can apply to fund specific development activities.</p> <p>CoSS / CAL – The newly established relationship between CoSS and CAL for ECR support has resulted in a number of activities including an ECR specific induction session, research speed dating, workshops on PDR / 5 year plans and ECR funding opportunities.</p>

Research staff support networks			
16.	College research staff development groups established in 4 of 5 Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly committee meetings • Local development programme in place 	<p>COMPLETE – groups established and operational</p> <p>Development & support groups are now in place across all five Colleges and meet regularly. In two cases these are cross College groups, which encourages networking, sharing of practice and resources especially where there are small numbers of ECRs in a non-STEMM Colleges. Local development programmes are in place across all Colleges.</p> <p>Significantly, after external pump priming funding, CEPS / CLES have allocated internal funding to provide administration and coordination resource. This has resulted in an immediate increase in ECR engagement evidenced by a 50% increase in ECR representatives attending group meetings and a circa 60% increase in participants from these Colleges attending recent central training programmes. Development and provision of activity and resources for these two Colleges has also been reviewed and a revised programme proposed for 2017/18.</p>
17.	New research staff information web-portal available to all researchers		<p>ONGOING</p> <p>Following consultations via local groups and RDSG there is a preference for locally managed information portals. These are now established in three of the five Colleges, providing links to local, central and external development activities, key sources of information, policy and guidance.</p>
Equality & Diversity			
Our aim is that all staff are treated with dignity and afforded respect as key aspects of their wellbeing. We will build on existing success in this area.			
18.	Remaining 3 STEMM Schools to obtain Athena Swan awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award obtained 	<p>ONGOING -One School has achieved a Bronze Award. Action plans in place for the remaining two, including enhanced internal review and support prior to submission.</p>
19.	STEMM Schools to seek renewal or enhanced Athena Swan award as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award obtained 	<p>ONGOING - All schools have reapplied for accreditation as appropriate</p> <p>Additionally CMDS ran an ECR conference focused on Athena Swan related issues</p>
20.	CAL / CoSS to seek Gender Equality Charter Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award obtained 	<p>ONGOING - Athena Swan is now applicable to non-STEMM Schools. Two CAL / CoSS Schools scheduled to submit in November 2018</p>

21.	1 cohort undergo Aurora programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% completion 	COMPLETE
22.	Appointment of an additional member of HR team focused on the staff equality agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New employee appointed 	COMPLETE - New member of staff appointed December 2015
23.	Revised institutional Equality Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan published 	COMPLETE - Plan published Autumn 2016
Evaluation of action plan Research staff have already provided feedback on this plan and will continue to do this via the Operational Working Group (Action 2). The working group will coordinate overall evaluation including the specific input from research staff. CROS survey and other internal systems will provide specific evaluation data Dedicated project resource (Action 6) will manage local evaluation activity via local support and development groups. This will feed in to the working group.		Robust evaluation data including feedback from research staff informs future action plans	Local research staff support groups continue to gather feedback on local initiatives and to identify where further support is required. However, this continues to be somewhat inconsistent and generally qualitative in nature. CROS data continues to inform our focus. However, this is not used as effectively as it perhaps could be. Further work is required on how best to review and evaluate ECR support activity.
24.	Birmingham will take part in CROS 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35% participation 	UoB took part in CROS 2017. However, we only achieved a 21% response rate. A key factor in this was the loss of dedicated support resource in CEPS / CLES, the colleges with the 2 nd and 3 rd highest number of ECRs in the University. This resulted in a combined reduction in response rate of 23%. The dedicated support has now been replaced, resulting in immediate improvement in communication and engagement in these two Colleges. CMDS increased its participation rate by 10% compared with 2015.

Glossary

CAL – College of Arts and Law

CEPS – College of Engineering and Physical Sciences

CLES – College of Life & Environmental Sciences

CMDS – College of Medical & Dental Sciences

College – Principle academic organisational unit within the University of Birmingham

CoSS – College of Social Sciences

CROS – Careers in Research On-line Survey (national researcher survey)

DRATL – Developing as a Research / Academic Team Leader

ELP – Emerging Leaders Programme

HR – Human Resources

HRLT – HR Leadership Team

PDR – Performance Development Review scheme.

POD – People and Organisational Development. Team within University HR Department

PVC – Pro-Vice-Chancellor

RDSG – Researcher Development Support Group

R&KT – Research & Knowledge Transfer

RIS – Research Innovation Services

RLP – Research Leaders Programme

SLP – Senior Leaders Programme

STEMM – Science Technology Engineering Mathematics and Medicine

ToR – Terms of Reference

UEB – University Executive Board

UoB – University of Birmingham