

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH - CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN PROGRESS 2010-2012

1. BACKGROUND

The London School of Economics (LSE) has been monitoring the development of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (2008) and the School has been taking a proactive approach in ensuring that the School's policies and practices in relation to research staff are closely aligned with the key Principles of the Concordat. Much of this work is being led by the School's Research Staff Committee (RSC), a sub-Committee of the Appointments Committee, with consultations taking place with colleagues and other groups and Committees across the School. The RSC has been key to the development of much of the work around the Concordat. Originally a small working group, the Committee has now established close links with other Committees across the School, and includes a strong and experienced membership from colleagues who have close links in working with research staff. The establishment of this Committee and the commitment of its members in driving forward the RSC's programme of work has been a key achievement for the School.

In October 2010, the RSC developed a two-year Action Plan ([attached at Annex A](#)) which identified key areas that required further action from the School in order to ensure that it was supporting research staff during their employment at LSE. The Action Plan also incorporated themes that had been highlighted through the 2009 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) as well as the 2009 LSE Staff Survey, both of which will be run again in 2012-2013.

On 15 December 2010, the School was awarded the 'HR Excellence in Research' badge from the European Commission and Vitae. The School has been recognised for its efforts in improving the working conditions and career development opportunities for its researchers and for providing a clear plan of action for future developments. The RSC has taken the Action Plan as its core plan of work and receives regular updates from the relevant areas on progress against it.

2. KEY AREAS OF RSC PROGRESS AGAINST CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN, 2010-2012

Noted below are the key achievements and progress made against the Action Plan 2010-2012:

1. Improve accessibility of research staff information (including role profiles) on LSE website

This is an ongoing area of collaboration between Human Resources, the Teaching and Learning Centre and Research Division, looking at accessibility to Research Staff Information, not only for researchers, but also managers, key stakeholders and external audiences. The Research Staff areas of the LSE website are continuously being reviewed through the appropriate Divisions to ensure that content is easily accessible and relevant to the research staff community.

2. Human Resources to look at Recruitment procedures to ensure alignment with Concordat

The RSC has been kept abreast of changes to research staff recruitment procedures. Particularly, the Committee received the draft changes to the School's *Single Nominations Policy* for feedback at its 18 May 2011 meeting. Human Resources will continue to ensure alignment with the Concordat when reviewing its Recruitment procedures.

3. Development of workshops for new Principal Investigators

Workshops for new and existing Principal Investigators were developed through the RSC and delivered through the Teaching and Learning Centre with input from colleagues and Divisions across the School. The first workshop was held on 16 May 2012 and received positive feedback, with further sessions organised for the 2012-2013 academic session.

4. Bridging fund

Discussions had previously been raised regarding the support available for retaining and supporting researchers with a proven track record between externally funded grants. A Bridging Fund procedure had been drafted and developed by the School's Research Division in conjunction with Human Resources to support valuable research ventures within the School, enabling Principal Investigators to retain individual researchers where they are important to the successful delivery of a secured grant. The RSC had been kept abreast of the progress in this area, and provided feedback where requested.

The Scheme has now been finalised and will provide internal School funds for researchers for up to three months' salary where this is needed to fill a funding gap between an existing grant and secured future funding. This will enable such researchers to continue as School employees despite the short gap in external funding. The Scheme is available through the School's Research Division.

5. Review of the Research Staff Promotion Guidance

The RSC provided valuable comments on the Research Staff Promotion Guidance, which contributed to a set of recommendations being submitted to the School's Appointments Committee at its Summer Term 2012 meeting. The proposals were approved and are now implemented.

6. Finalisation of Guidance on Supporting and Managing Research Staff

At its 18 May 2011 meeting, the RSC finalised this Guidance, designed to developed by the RSC for colleagues involved in supporting and managing research staff. The Committee will continue to have oversight for this work and will review the Guidance annually. The Guidance has now also been turned into a series of web pages for ease of access.

7. Finalisation of Guidance on Annual Review meetings for research staff

A School framework for Annual Career Development Review Meetings for research staff has now been developed and implemented. Now in it's first full year of operation, the RSC will continue to have oversight of this area and will review the Guidance annually.

8. Review of the School's Intellectual Property Policy (which will include research staff)

The Committee has continued to receive updates from Research Committee and Research Division on this area of work. At its 7 March 2012 meeting, the RSC received a final draft of the Policy for comments. It is expected that the Policy will take effect during the 2012-2013 session.

9. Finalisation of the School's Redeployment Policy

The School has been reviewing its Redeployment Policy and Procedure. At its 30 May 2012 meeting, the RSC received a draft Redeployment Policy and Process paper from Human Resources for comments. The drafts were welcomed by the Committee as a positive step in this area. The draft will continue to undergo consultations with various groups within the School, with a view to take effect during the 2013-2014 session.

10. Increase research staff engagement

This will continue to be an on-going area of work to increase engagement with the Research Staff community across the School. As a positive step forward, a Research Staff Association was established in Summer Term 2012 to:

- provide a means by which research staff can discuss a range of issues and communicate their views back to the School;
- enable the School to communicate more effectively with its research staff about policy developments and improve awareness of the significant range of career and professional development courses on offer to staff;
- create a greater sense of community amongst research staff members in the School.

11. Review of research staff inductions

The revised programme of TLC's research staff inductions took effect this academic session and was seen as a positive step forward in providing new research staff with a warm and informative welcome to the School. The RSC is currently holding discussions with TLC on how to improve attendance at the events. The programme will be reviewed by the RSC annually.

12. Finalisation of research staff Mentoring Guidance

The Committee had finalised the research staff mentoring arrangements at its Summer Term 2011 meeting. A School framework for research staff mentoring arrangements has now been developed and implemented. Now in it's first full year of operation, the RSC will continue to have oversight of this area. Developmental support for new mentors will also be discussed at a future RSC meeting.

13. Periodic review of research staff review periods to ensure it complies with good employment practice

This area of work is currently being developed through other Committees of the School. The RSC will continue to receive updates on this area of work.

14. Approval of updated research staff Contribution Pay Guidance

The RSC was involved in making recommendations to Human Resources on this area of work, particularly regarding raising awareness of the processes. The Committee recommended contacting Principal Investigators directly to inform them of upcoming deadlines, in a bid to encourage applications for research staff. The RSC also recommended a name change of the contribution committee to better reflect the staff groups which it represented.

15. Research staff themes emerging from 2009 CROS and Staff Survey will be incorporated within the School's Concordat Action Plan

Key themes emerging from these surveys have been included in the Concordat Action Plan and will continue to be probed in future surveys. The RSC has also set up a sub-committee to begin preparation for the 2013 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS), both of which are scheduled for place in March 2013. Led by TLC, the subgroup is made up of one researcher, one Principal Investigator and one LSE Fellow who has been involved in administering such surveys for several years.

16. A review by December 2012 to assess the progress of actions

In October 2012, the RSC led an internal two year self-assessment review of progress against the Concordat Action Plan. At its 31 October 2012 meeting, the Committee discussed and approved a revised Action Plan which included a progress monitor displaying developments against its previous actions. Those responsible for leading on each area were asked to provide progress updates to the RSC on a regular basis and at the end of the interim period (2010-2012).

3. FEEDBACK

The RSC receives feedback on progress through a variety of avenues:

Research Staff Committee

The Committee's membership includes representation from two active research staff members who are also involved with the School's Research Staff Association. The RSC will be liaising closely with the Association to gain researchers views on RSC agenda items.

Research Staff Association

A Research Staff Association has been established to increase engagement with the Research Staff community. The group's Chair is also on the RSC membership.

Research Staff Advisory Group

A Research Staff Advisory Group was formed through the School's Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) to capture the views of researchers. The feedback has been integrated into the RSC's work via TLC membership on the RSC.

Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS)

The CROS survey is scheduled for March 2013 along with the PIRLS survey, the themes from which will be used to inform the Committee's plan of work.

LSE Staff Survey

LSE's Staff Survey is scheduled for December 2012, the themes from which will be used to inform the Committee's plan of work.

4. NEXT STEPS

The RSC has taken the Action Plan as its core plan of work and receives regular updates from the relevant areas on progress against it. The plan is structured as follows:

Section A: The School's first set of action points for 2010-2012 and their current status, as well as links to further information.

Section B: The second phase of actions for 2012-2014.

While the School has made excellent progress against its action points to date, it recognises that there is still room for improvement. Furthermore, although there are actions which have been identified as 'complete', the LSE is keen to continuously review and improve these areas, and has therefore also identified them within the second phase of the Concordat Plan. With this in mind, there are some actions from 2010-2012 which have also been carried forward as actions within Phase 2/Section B - 2012-2014.

Key priorities will include ensuring the accessibility of research staff information on the LSE website and addressing any key themes emerging from the LSE Staff Survey. The RSC is also keen to ensure that where actions have already been addressed, there is further development to ensure successful implementation, for example through training and support for new mentors who have expressed an interest in mentoring research staff.

Some of the success measures will include:

- A more streamlined path to key research staff information pages
- Take up of development sessions for new mentors
- Feedback from research staff through the CROS 2013 survey
- Increased awareness of REF

The School is also looking to undertake the CROS and PIRLS surveys in 2013 to touch base with the research staff community and receive feedback on actions to date. The LSE also is also currently undertaking its own Staff Survey, results for which will be available in early 2013. All the Surveys will feed into the Concordat Action Plan.

