HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH - CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN PROGRESS 2015-2016

"LSE recognises the importance of personal and career development for Research Staff
at all stages of their career. Through a number of concrete mechanisms, such as Career Development Reviews,
we support and encourage researchers to pro-actively engage in their personal, career and lifelong development"

-   LSE Research Staff Policy Statement (2016)

INTRODUCTION

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) has been monitoring the development of the 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 remain 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 Committees and groups 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 Concordat Action Plan 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, which is regularly updated, also incorporates themes which have been highlighted through the School's Staff Surveys, discussion forums and Committees.

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.

KEY AREAS OF RSC PROGRESS AGAINST CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN

Noted below are the key achievements and progress made against actions:

Completed actions:

Finalisation of LSEs redeployment process (which will include research staff)

The School now has a redeployment policy in place for all staff groups.

To introduce a New Research Staff Career at the LSE

At its 23 February 2015 meeting, the Appointments Committee approved a New Research Staff Career structure (NRSC) which was introduced at LSE on 1 August 2015. The new structure gives prominence to research excellence at LSE and provides greater reward and support for members of the research community. 63 members of staff moved over to the NRSC on this date, which accounted for 77% of the relevant research cohort at the time.

Research staff members of the Committee have noted that the research staff community were very pleased with the outcome of the NRSC process.

To develop new promotions procedures for the New Research Staff Career. Continue to review promotions procedures for research staff

New promotions procedures for the New Research Staff Career have now also been developed by the School's Promotions Committee. The Promotions Committee also has overall responsibility for the promotion of non-NRSC Research Officers and Research Fellows at the School.

Actions updated/incorporated elsewhere

Development of the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2017 in a manner which supports a trajectory to increase researcher engagement

Development of the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) 2017 in a manner which supports a trajectory to increase PI engagement

The School will not be undertaking CROS or PIRLS 2017, instead focusing its efforts on developing actions based on the outcomes of the LSE's 2015 Staff Survey, which also provided data on research staff.

To resurrect the PI Development Programme with a view to encouraging any individuals that manage research staff to attend the programme

This has now been updated and incorporated into a new action within the Plan (Action 18 – 'Introduce training sessions for research staff making the transition from Researcher to Principal Investigator as well as academic staff to Principal Investigator'.

Actions In Progress

1. Review of 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. The Director of Library Services is leading the development of a new School Copyright Policy in the context of the UK Scholarly Communications Licence initiative, with plans for implementation in 2017-18.

2. To introduce a regular approach to training of new mentors to ensure appropriate numbers of mentors are available per session

The School has now developed workshops on 'developing your academic mentoring skills' as part of its Academic Development Programme. The sessions, which are also offered to research staff, combine discussion of good practice on establishing and developing mentoring relationships with insights from experienced academic mentors from across the School.

3. RSC to continue to monitor and actively promote research staff Mentoring Guidance

RSC regularly review the process for research staff mentoring and make recommendations for changes where necessary. Departments/Centres within the School have overall responsibility for assigning Mentors to research staff, and the engagement rates have increased over the years, for example in 2015-2016 session, all research staff due to be assigned a mentor had one allocated.

4. RSC to continue to monitor and actively promote Guidance on Career Development Review meetings for research staff.

The RSC has been involved in the development of the Career Development Review (CDR) scheme for research staff and are consulted about any proposed changes. There has been a significant increase in Departments/Centre's engaging with the CDR scheme. The Guidance is also regularly updated based on feedback from Departments/Centres and Research Staff. Reviewers undertaking the CDR meetings are also offered additional training and support.

Research staff at the LSE can also access professional development support from Human Resources (HR), the Research Division and the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), ensuring a joined up offering in areas such as data protection, copyright, research data management, fundamentals of grant writing and designing a successful grant proposal amongst many others. A recently revised programme of training and support ensures that research staff have support in the following areas such as:

- Research
- Education
- Leadership and management

- Knowledge, impact and engagement
- Communication
- Information and digital literacies

Programmes will be delivered as a 'one-stop' portal for Research Staff.

A pilot implementation of the Researcher Development Framework will also be undertaken in the 2016-17 session.

5. To more actively communicate and make accessible the support offered by LSE Careers

LSE Careers supports the career progression of research staff and all academic staff on fixed term contracts and communication about this service and access to it has been improved in a number of ways. Recent developments have eased the booking system for research staff and new web guidance has been written to support this. A biannual newsletter is emailed directly to staff providing information about the support on offer and careers support is also promoted regularly in the monthly 'Training and Development Newsletter'. Furthermore, the Careers Consultant for research staff attends informal meetings with research staff as and when available in liaison with the research staff representative.

6. To actively promote the School's Bridging Fund process

The School's Bridging Fund is publicised among all other internal funding opportunities on the Research Division website and actively promoted by the Research Division.

7. Improve accessibility to relevant UK and EU web information e.g. Euraxess

The School is currently undertaking a wider web development programme to update the LSE website. The research staff web pages are continually being reviewed and updated to provide access to all the training support available at the School in one place. Once the LSE website update has been undertaken, the research staff web pages will be updated further to include UK and wider information for research staff.

8. RSC to continue to have oversight of and continue to review the 'Guidance on Supporting and Managing Research Staff'

The RSC currently has oversight for this area of work, and has decided to turn this guidance into a series of webpages, which are regularly reviewed and updated with information relevant to research staff. The School is also currently undertaking a wider web development programme to update the LSE website.

9. Human Resources to continue to ensure alignment with Concordat in all future Recruitment procedures, and ensure wider use of European-wide mediums e.g. Euraxess to advertise vacancies.

Euraxess is used from time to time, although more recently we have tended to use Researchgate a little more.

10. Preparation for REF 2021 to include early involvement and consideration of research staff

The Stern Review of the REF recommended that 'All research active staff should be returned in the REF'. HEFCE will be consulting the sector on this and other recommendations over the Christmas and New Year and announcing the rules of the next REF later in the session. For planning purposes, the School is assuming that until then all research staff on Research Fellows and above (band 7 and above) will be included in REF submissions. (Whether or not their outputs, and the outputs of any other research-active staff, are included may be a separate consideration, according to a Stern recommendation). Proposed revisions to the School's policy for research governance ensure that Heads of Departments are actively involved in matters relating to the progress of research staff falling within REF Units of Assessment for which they are responsible.

Furthermore, the School's first-stage REF preparations exercise in late 2015/early 2016 included research staff within its remit.

The next stages of its planning will involve departments in validating their REF data (including relevant research staff) in spring 2018 and undertaking the first internal grading exercise by October 2018.

Both these processes will include relevant research staff. For the purposes of REF 2021 preparations, all relevant research staff will be considered similarly to New Academic Career (NAC) staff.

11. To introduce a process by which, on an ongoing basis, we attempt to track the career paths of research staff who leave the LSE.

The School has recently introduced a new online Exit Questionnaire for staff, from which some anonymous data could be captured for research staff leaving the School.

12. To encourage research staff to play an active role in the life of their Department/Centre, including getting involved in appropriate departmental decision-making processes such as committees and working groups

The School's VCAC has written directly to Heads of Department, reminding colleagues that research staff should be invited to Departmental meetings and social functions. The RSC membership also includes research staff representation, as well as the Co-Chairs of the Research Staff Association.

13. To have a greater influence on wider EU provisions for research staff through active involvement with EU Research and Innovation Directorate.

We are currently involved with supporting EU initiatives, and our Director of HR is to become an Independent Board Director for the Resaver IORP.

14. To have a greater influence on wider UK provisions for research staff through active involvement in Vitae

Our Director of HR is currently the Chair of the Trustee Board of CRAC which runs the Vitae programme.

FEEDBACK

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

Research Staff Committee

The RSC membership includes research staff representatives, which has recently increased from two to three members. The membership also includes representation from UCU. Members are encouraged to liaise with their research staff networks regrading upcoming agenda items and to bring feedback to the meeting.

Research Staff Association

A Research Staff Association has been established to increase engagement with the Research Staff community. The group's Co-Chairs are also on the RSC membership, providing feedback from RSA members to the RSC.

LSE Staff Survey

LSE's Staff Survey was undertaken in December 2015, and the School has now developed a series of actions to address any themes. The RSC has been consulted in this area of work and is in the process of identifying any specific areas that may require further development by the School or the RSC.

LSE Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team

Research staff also have one representative on the School's Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team providing a researchers perspective on this area of work

NEXT STEPS

The RSC has taken the Concordat Action Plan as its core plan of work and receives regular updates from the relevant areas on progress against actions.

Whilst the School has made progress against its action points to date, it recognises that there is still room for improvement and will therefore seek to address any outstanding areas during the course of the coming year. New actions have also been added for 2017-19.

As a follow up to the Staff Survey 2015, the results and School level action plan will be discussed further by the RSC at its next meeting in February 2017. Any key themes and specific actions in relation to research staff have been discussed at the Research Staff Committee.

Another key priority going forward is to improve the accessibility of research staff information on the LSE website. Success measures for this will include, a streamlined path to key research staff information pages, an increased take up of training and development sessions and an increased awareness of REF amongst research staff.

Research Staff Committee
London School of Economics & Political Science, April 2017