

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH - CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – DECEMBER 2018

“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 Concordat Action Plan is the Research Staff Committee’s (RSC) core plan of work and receives regular updates from the relevant areas on progress against it. Noted below is a summary of progress made in each area during 2017-18.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The Committee has oversight of the Research Staff Career Development Review (CDR) guidance and form and undertakes regular reviews to ensure that it is meeting the needs of LSE researchers. Feedback is received from Departments/Centres on how the process, guidance and form could be reviewed the following year. Regular updates are also received from the Vice-Chair of the Appointments Committee (VCAC) on CDR engagement rates (for research staff this was 87% for 2017-18), as well as any themes that might be emerging in Departments/Centres or amongst research staff. Additional guidance for undertaking CDRs has also been developed to support this.

Research Staff can also access professional development support from a range of different sources including Human Resources Organisational Learning (HR OL), LSE Research and Innovation (previously Research Division), the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and LSE Careers. These providers endeavour to be as joined up as possible in offering learning and development support as such have a termly meeting to share progress and future activity, have developed a single web page signposting all learning and development available and advertise this availability collectively. For 2018-19, a new range of provision has also become available from the Research and Knowledge exchange area and this has been included in the joint approach mentioned earlier. The providers are achieving satisfaction scores of above 90%.

In Summer Term 2018, the School also agreed a new Policy Fellow career track with the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU). This arose as a natural consequence of the introduction of the New Research Staff Career (NRSC) at the School and the closure of recruitment and promotion to and within the ‘old’ research fellow career track.

The Policy Fellow career track is for those who principally undertake policy and user-orientated work, as their research and publication profile does not fit that of the NRSC. Such staff tend to publish mainly policy reports and analysis in, for example, working papers or specially commissioned reports; their work is not orientated towards peer-reviewed journals. The move demonstrates an essential need for such work within the School and it is particularly valuable for enhancing the School’s engagement and impact, and has been welcomed by the research staff community at the School.

The School’s Staff Survey will also provide an opportunity to measure levels of job satisfaction, amongst other areas.

MENTORING

The Committee also has oversight of the Research Staff Mentoring guidance and undertakes regular reviews to ensure that it meets the needs of mentors and mentees. Regular updates are also received from the VCAC on the allocation of mentors, as well as any themes that might be emerging in Departments/Centres or amongst research staff. Work has also been undertaken to provide support for new mentors, however sessions for new mentors did not receive a high level of engagement. Guidance on undertaking mentoring has now also been developed and made available on the LSE website.

RESEARCH STAFF WEB PAGES

The School is undergoing continuous improvement of its web pages, and Divisions are undertaking internal reviews to ensure that web content is easily accessible and of value to research staff. Links to external areas such as EURAXESS and Vitae are also signposted and guidance on using the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) has also been included.

COMMUNICATIONS

A tailored newsletter is now circulated by LSE Careers to research staff on a termly basis and has received positive feedback. The School is now looking to develop an overall communications strategy for research staff to identify the best means of communication for this staff group.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The Committee has continued to receive updates from Research Committee and Research Division on this area of work where a new School Copyright Policy is being developed.

LEAVERS DATA

The Committee has been engaged in providing feedback on the School's exit questionnaire, which is circulated to all staff, including research staff. A small subgroup of the Committee was set up to look at the exit questions and provided recommendations for changes which have now been implemented into the revised questionnaire. It is hoped that the revised questions may encourage more colleagues to complete the survey, providing the School with improved leavers data.

BRIDGING FUNDS

The School's Bridging Fund is currently being revised and the Committee is being kept abreast of changes.

RECRUITMENT

All relevant research roles at the School are now also advertised on EURAXESS alongside other mediums.

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021

Preparation to date does encompass all research staff, and the School will continue to do so all the way to the point of submission in November 2020.

DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

The Committee received diversity and equality data on an annual basis, along with other research staff data profiles to help inform and shape the Committee's plan of work.

SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Once reliable data is available, the Committee will analyse the data received from the Exit Questionnaire to help shape its plan of work.

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

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

Research Staff Committee

The RSC membership includes three research staff representatives that feed into the development of the Action Plan and Report, as well as all other Committee business.

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.

LSE Staff Survey

The Committee also receives reports from the LSE Staff Survey and will be consulted on the next one scheduled to take place in 2019.

Feedback through Learning and Development sessions

Research staff have been invited to provide feedback on their preferred method of undertaking learning and development sessions, as well as the preferred days, times and methods of receiving communications. The changes have now been implemented

Themes raised in Career Development Reviews (CDRs)

Research staff CDRs are reviewed by the Vice-Chair of the Appointments Committee (VCAC) who is also Chair of the RSC. Any themes raised in the CDRs are fed back to the Committee and used as a basis for making changes to the guidance, form or process for the following year.

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 is making progress on the areas outlined above, there may be new actions arising from recent changes at LSE, for example, the consultation and introduction of the new School 2030 strategy, as well as the appointment of the new Pro-Director, Research.

The Committee will therefore review the action plan in 2019 and add any new actions arising from those areas of work.

Research Staff Committee
London School of Economics & Political Science, December 2018