

# University of Warwick

HR Excellence in Research Submission 2012  
UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

## Contents

Title		Page
Context		3
Development of the priorities for implementing the Concordat		3
Concordat Principles		4
Recruitment & Selection	Principle 1	5
Recognition and Value	Principle 2	6
Support and Career Development	Principle 3 & Principle 4	8
Researchers' Responsibilities	Principle 5	9
Diversity and Equality	Principle 6	10
Implementation and Review	Principle 7	10
Conclusion		11

## Glossary of Terms

- Athena The Athena SWAN Charter is a scheme which recognises good employment practice for women working in Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine (STEM) in higher education and attempts to address gender inequalities within disciplines
- LDC Learning and Development Centre is the staff training unit for the University and offers provision for all staff groups including researchers.
- PDRA Postdoctoral Research Assistants
- PULSE The PULSE Survey is the University's Staff Engagement Survey, conducted regularly to identify staff views on a range of university and employment issues.
- RSF Research Staff Forum acts as an interest group, at which representatives of each academic department meet to discuss issues and share information on topics that are relevant to the research community. The Chair of The Research Staff Forum (RSF) attends the Research Committee of the University. In addition RSF is usually attended by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and this enables positive dialogue between senior members and researchers.
- RSS Research Support Services is the central administrative function in the University dedicated to supporting the continued growth in research capacity and maximising the impact of that research through knowledge transfer and related activities. RSS work in close partnership with academics, external funders and collaborating organisations to develop research activities in all areas and disciplines.
- SIGs The Library's Wolfson Special Interest Groups (SIGs) is a new initiative that provides an opportunity for PhD and Early Career Researchers to work with a prestigious team of academics from Warwick, forming collaborative and interdisciplinary links.

## 1. Context

In 2005, the European Commission adopted a recommendation of a *European Charter for Researchers* and a *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*, both of which aim to provide a means to achieving a transparent and open labour market for researchers across Europe. The UK *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* was subsequently launched in 2008, with the aim of developing policies that increase awareness and sustainability of research careers and improve the quality and impact of research for the benefit of UK society and the economy. The University of Warwick signed the *Concordat* in 2008.

Warwick is one of the UK's leading universities and the quality and impact of our research is demonstrated by our excellent research rankings with Warwick ranked at 7th overall in the UK in the last Research Assessment Exercise (based on multi-faculty institutions). Excellence, innovation and ambition fuel the cutting-edge, world leading research that defines Warwick.

Warwick is justifiably proud of the reputation it has earned for the quality of its research and has ambitious goals for continuing growth. Warwick has the goal of enhancing its research profile to yet higher levels of international excellence. It aims at becoming a top fifty world-ranked university.

The research component of the University strategy is informed by a range of both quantitative and qualitative indicators that will allow us to follow progress to our goals. International excellence, in both individual and team research, will remain the primary indicator, but Warwick will also be thinking and acting more strategically in the development of our research programmes in the future.

## 2. Development of the priorities for implementing the Concordat

In August 2009, Research Support Services (RSS), Human Resources (HR) and the Learning and Development Centre (LDC) responded to a national survey from the Concordat Implementation Strategy Group, in which progress against a series of implementation milestones was measured.

The Research Staff Forum (RSF) was invited by the Research Committee to review and identify the high level priorities for the implementation of the *Concordat*. These were subsequently reviewed in partnership by the LDC, HR and RSS by extracting and analysing data from the 2010 and 2011 PULSE staff surveys and by identifying policies, procedures and practices which support the delivery of the seven principles of the *Concordat*. This was presented as a summary report and agreed by Research Committee in January 2010. Progress was further reviewed and updated in 2011. This previous work has formed the basis of the attached action plan.

The employment and career development of researchers is managed and steered by a number of senior and established Committees. The University has two major committees which focus on implementing the principles of the Concordat. The Research Committee is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and advises the Senate on all matters relating to the research strategy of the University and supports the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and relevant Pro-Vice-Chancellor(s) in driving forward the agreed research strategy. There is specific reference to the Committee's role in the Terms of Reference stating that the Research Committee monitors the University's activities in relation to the career development of research staff including oversight of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and other related sector guidance published in the future.

In addition the Equality and Diversity Committee reports to the Senate and the Council and is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality and Diversity. The Committee advises and may make recommendations to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Senate and the Council on matters relating to the promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity issues throughout the University. This includes the areas of equality and diversity included within the principles of the Concordat.

The PULSE staff survey enables the University to collect the views of all staff on a regular basis. It includes specific questions from which the University is able to extrapolate research staff perceptions with regard to the *Concordat* principles.

The PULSE Survey indicated that Warwick research staff responded more positively than the University average in terms of:

- Their general satisfaction with their job
- The degree of autonomy they have in deciding how work is undertaken
- The resources available to them
- Managers keeping them informed
- Their development needs being regularly reviewed
- Having good information on training opportunities
- Having opportunities to develop
- Being able to discuss career aspirations with supervisors
- Managers supporting personal development
- Annual Review helping to agree objectives

Improved communication of existing policies, procedures and practices which are available to research staff, as well as the consistency and equality of opportunity were highlighted as key themes for further action in the PULSE outcomes for this cohort.

Furthermore, the RSF has reported a perceived inconsistency of practice in terms of researchers across the University with respect to the following areas:

- Formal induction;
- Annual Review;
- Being encouraged to undertake career development activities

To address these issues the University has reinforced:

- A clear requirement for all researchers to have an annual review, in the course of which career development issues should be discussed;
- Training in staff reviews and development for all managers including those in academic and research leadership roles;
- Career development opportunities including career counselling available to all researchers;
- A pilot induction provision specifically for researchers. Postdoctoral newcomers will be invited to RSF lunches so they can meet their representatives and other key services, such as LDC & Library contacts, and to find out how the RSF supports researchers.

The University will map policy and service developments against requirements of the Concordat and the progress will be reviewed annually at the Research Committee.

### 3. Concordat principles

The seven Principles of the Concordat are:

- Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.
- Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.
- Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.
- Principle 4: The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.
- Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.
- Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.
- Principle 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

Achievements and progress which relate to the seven Principles of the Concordat are listed in the sub-sections below.

#### A. Recruitment and Selection

*Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research*

A fundamental strategic aim in Warwick's 2015 Vision Statement is for the University to continue to search for, appoint, nurture and reward the most able academic, research and support staff.

The University is committed to ensuring that recruitment and selection practice is professional and effective. Panel processes for selecting candidates are chaired by senior academic staff to ensure consistency of approach and the quality of appointments. The University holds to the principle of appointing the best candidate and would invariably take a decision not to appoint than employ individuals who would not enable the University to deliver the highest levels of research excellence.

The Recruitment and Selection policy applies to the recruitment and selection of all members of staff and has been designed to provide a flexible framework that promotes good practice, ensures equality of opportunity, and fully supports the University's core purpose.

This policy aims to provide a framework to:

- appoint the best person for each position
- ensure that recruitment processes are fit for purpose
- ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants
- ensure compliance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policies and relevant employment legislation
- promote the University's values
- meet the University's operational requirements and strategic aims

The University strategy also highlights aspirations of increasing the number of highly cited academics, with faculty identified as having realistic potential of being recognised as highly cited being encouraged through the provision of an additional twelve months study leave.

In addition to activities to promote research excellence at senior levels, a major focus is to identify and support talented new career staff. The Institute of Advanced Study (IAS) is designed to promote collaborative research projects of international calibre and profile. It operates across the full range of University Departments, Schools and Research Centres. The IAS supports a major Visiting Fellowship programme, innovative research initiatives and a range of early career activities and schemes. IAS Early Career Fellowships are designed to support Warwick doctoral candidates in the transition phase between their doctoral and postdoctoral careers. Students funded through this scheme are expected to use the Fellowship to advance the development of their research careers - by writing research publications, conference papers, job applications, and postdoctoral fellowship/grant proposals - while engaging with the interdisciplinary activities of Warwick's Institute of Advanced Study (IAS). Twenty two Early Career Fellowships have been undertaken in 2011/12. As a result of the Early Career Fellowship a significant number have secured ongoing employment and positions in research either at Warwick or externally. This is supplemented by a range of provisions including other interdisciplinary fellowship opportunities, funding streams and postdoctoral support.

In terms of seeking to retain staff, the University supports employees who are in a redundancy situation, including those reaching the end of a fixed term contract. This includes the Redeployment Guidelines which relate to all staff and which outline the procedure to be followed and the ways in which the University supports individuals to seek suitable alternative opportunities in such circumstances.

It is recognised that the majority of research posts require specialist skills and knowledge and that these may not be easily transferable to other departments however the University is committed to supporting all staff in seeking suitable alternative employment.

## **B. Recognition and Value**

*Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.*

Warwick's strategic objectives highlight the importance of research to the future success of the University. The University's strategy in full can be found at <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/insite/strategy>.

### Parity of terms and conditions

The University has three sets of Terms & Conditions which were implemented in 2009 following extensive discussions on harmonisation with Trades Unions. The three sets are as follows and it is noted that for the vast majority of terms, research staff receive the same benefits as academic and teaching faculty.

- Academic, Research only and Teaching only
- For staff in levels 1a-5  
For staff in levels 6-9

### Processes for REF inclusion

The University, in line with the Funding Councils' Research Excellence Framework Guidance on Submissions, has produced a REF Code of Practice (CoP) on preparing its submission to

the REF including the process by which staff will be selected for inclusion in the exercise. A key aim of the CoP is to demonstrate the University's commitment to fairness and transparency in its mechanisms relating to decision making regarding the inclusion of staff and the principle that they should be selected on the basis of demonstrable research excellence. The processes outlined in the CoP have been designed within the context of all relevant equality legislation enacted since the RAE2008 submission, namely, the Equality Act 2010 which came into force on 1 October 2010 and the public sector Equality Duty from 5 April 2011 (<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/public-sector-equality-duty-specific-duties-for-england>). In addition, for the purpose of the REF, special circumstances with regard to early career researchers are taken into account in accordance with HEFCE guidelines.

The process of selection covered by the CoP seeks to identify all eligible staff who have produced excellent research for submission to the REF.

#### Learning and Development support

A fundamental aim of staff development provision for researchers is to support the creation of a researcher community by creating opportunities for researcher to researcher interventions that share experience and good practice. Programmes are identified and developed by researchers, and therefore contextualised to and targeted at researchers' needs. Funding is available from the staff development fund for Faculties and departments to commission and deliver appropriate learning opportunities that enable experience and learning to be shared across the whole early to mid-career researcher community in order to achieve maximum impact. The LDC works collaboratively with the Library and RSS and other services to deliver this programme of support. The programme is clearly mapped against the Researcher Development Framework.

A Learning and Development Adviser is dedicated to delivering development to support the needs of the early to mid-career researcher community. In addition, in collaboration with RSF, LDC has developed a web resource which signposts researchers to the information (listed below) which they regard as highly relevant to their roles and which is disseminated across a number of service departments' web pages:

- Training, Personal and Professional Development
- Networking with other Research Staff
- EPSRC Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Transferable Skills Training
- Warwick Resources for Research Staff
- University Policies relating to your employment as Research Staff
- Policy - The National Landscape
- Career Progression for Research Staff
- Research Staff Opportunities within Warwick
- Research Staff Opportunities outside Warwick
- Warwick Writing Programme
- PDRA Transferable Skills Training

The University's Roberts' Funding supported a number of initiatives including researcher development programmes, Faculty and department networking opportunities, a monthly LDC e-newsletter and a researcher website. Roberts' Funding ceased in December 2011 and provision is now funded by core LDC funding and EPSRC funding to support the themes of *delivering impact* and *developing leaders*. Current priorities include building on an existing Research Team Leaders' programme (an entry level leadership programme for early career researchers), by consulting with researchers and early career academics on their leadership development needs in order to pilot a second level leadership programme, contextualised to the academic/researcher world. A range of development workshops will also be commissioned and delivered on engagement, impact and effective presentation skills/communications for early to mid-career researchers. Case studies on good practice received from researchers who have used EPSRC funding for networking activities are

published on the researcher web pages. Further detail and links to University provision in this area is provided in the action plan.

The University hosts a number of centres and units that offer early and mid-career researchers' opportunities to develop specific technical experience, including a number of Doctoral Training Centres.

### **C. Support and Career Development**

*Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.*

*Principle 4: The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.*

LDC offers a range of personal and professional development opportunities for research staff. These can be either open to any researchers to attend, or bespoke for departments or researcher networks. The aim is to allow researchers to navigate the provision they need. Themes include:

- Career Planning for Early Career Researchers
- Making Successful Grant Applications
- Making an Impact in Job Applications
- Interview Success
- Presenting to different audiences
- Relating your research skills to employer needs
- Academic writing
- Being a Research Team Leader

In addition, LDC ensures the delivery of a range of one to one support, including coaching and careers guidance for researchers in collaboration with Student Careers and Skills.

Other departments offer a range of support to researchers and are networked and linked in a holistic framework. This includes advice on grant applications from RSS, space and networking opportunities in support of collaborations in the Library's Research Exchange, Wolfson Research Exchange and Post Doctoral Training Centres and the accredited Post Graduate Award/Certificate in Transferable Skills for Post-Docs in Science.

The Library's Wolfson Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are made up of researchers (doctoral and early career) from across a number of disciplines and backgrounds. Each special interest group has a chair/facilitator from Warwick who is an early career researcher, and each group is sponsored by a senior academic. SIGs are intended to encourage more postdocs to get involved or to lead projects as this experience will be helpful for them when applying for more permanent positions. An example of one of the SIGs group is the *Energy and Environment Group* which focuses on the topic of Energy and Environment from a wide variety of angles including scientific, political, law and conservation in order to stimulate cross discipline collaboration and knowledge transfer. Other examples can be found on the SIGs webpage: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/researchexchange/research\\_networks/sigs](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/researchexchange/research_networks/sigs)

The University recognises the importance for research staff attending conferences but also understands that this is often difficult for parents with childcare responsibilities. A small annual fund has therefore been established to assist with payments of extra childcare arrangements for individuals attending conferences/workshops etc. The University nursery will also consider taking a child on a one-off basis if a parent needs cover to attend a conference and their child does not usually use the facilities.



In addition, the University is committed to ensuring that all staff, including research and fixed term staff, benefit from a review of their performance and development needs and career aspirations, and implemented a common Annual Review process in 2009 to further support this objective. Staff on Fixed Term Contracts should also receive career review meetings with their supervisor and this is encouraged through Research Committee.

#### **D. Researchers' Responsibilities**

*Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.*

Researchers are alerted to the University's induction website on joining the University. The induction website includes the essential information which all staff need during their induction period, but also points to a researcher's web page which acts as a signpost to researcher-specific information.

The induction website sets out, among other topics, requirements for researchers in terms of research governance, data security, financial regulations and health and safety.

Individual academic departments also have their own induction programme/documentation.

LDC takes a proactive role in encouraging early career researchers to take control of their career aspirations and progression. LDC advertises and organises one to one career counselling sessions for researchers, and commissions seminars on career development topics for this audience. LDC has also produced online learning resources for researchers on career development. <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/researchers/careers/>

Researchers are encouraged to network, by joining the RSF, or a researcher network in their department or Faculty. LDC has pump-primed and supported the set-up of these local networks, encouraging groups to create their own programmes of activity and their own seminar series. <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/researchers/networking/>

Research Support Services (RSS) is the central administrative function in the University dedicated to supporting the continued growth in our research capacity and maximising the impact of that research through knowledge transfer and related activities. RSS work in close partnership with academic colleagues, external funders and collaborating organisations to develop research activities in all areas and disciplines.

RSS provide advice and support for researchers from conception of an idea, through to helping identify funding for research and putting together a funding application. RSS guide researchers through financial regulations, governance and funder's rules and procedures. And when researchers secure funding, RSS will manage the project financially and offer ongoing advice.

In order to provide valuable links for new postdocs a Postdoc Newcomers Meeting has been established which links in with the RSF. This enables postdocs to meet with their reps and other key people, such as LDC and Library staff, and also for postdocs to find out what the RSF can offer researchers. The SIGs have also collaborated with RSF in organising this welcome event for postdocs at the start of term. These meetings promote collaboration and networking between the postdoc community and therefore reduces the risk of isolation, enhances communication of appropriate initiatives and offers help and advice with issues such as funding applications.

In addition, LDC has funded researchers to undertake development activities (organising events, setting up collaborative groups) and has created a series of case studies, written by researchers themselves on outcomes and the core transferable skills they have developed in

undertaking the projects. These are all shared on the researcher website at: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/lds/researchers/eande/casestudies>

The University has a Single Equality Scheme and associated Equality Objectives which links to a number of aspects highlighted within the Concordat and it is explicit that the scheme covers all staff including researchers and fixed term staff.

## **E. Diversity and Equality**

*Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.*

The University of Warwick recognises its responsibility to ensure that no-one is discriminated against or disadvantaged, through membership of any particular group, or on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics. The Equality and Diversity Committee, as a joint committee of the Senate and the University Council, provides strategic oversight of the implementation of the University's Single Equality Action Plan and the work of the associated network groups

The University of Warwick achieved an institutional Athena Bronze Award in April 2010. At a departmental level the Chemistry and Physics Departments have received an Athena Silver Award, the Department of Psychology has been awarded an Athena Bronze Award and Warwick Medical School have similarly achieved an Athena Bronze Award, making them the first Medical School in the UK to receive this distinction. Post-Doctoral Research Assistants are fully represented on the University wide Athena Network Group, which offers support and guidance to departments on submissions to the process.

The Athena Action Plan has been amalgamated into the University's Equality Objectives. Whilst it is recognised that the University's Athena agenda is primarily gender based, any improvements to policies, procedures and practice is considered to be beneficial to all staff.

Equality and Diversity training is available including an on-line module, and all staff are encouraged to participate in this training.

Post-Doctoral Research staff are also in attendance at Equality and Diversity Network meetings and research staff are also represented at the formal University Equality and Diversity Committee.

## **F. Implementation and Review**

*Principle 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK*

The University of Warwick is committed to the principles of the Concordat, integrating the development and sustainability of research careers into University decision making and strategy. The University offers a range of support from recruitment of talented researchers, to skills development, career progression and identification of career pathways. Engagement of researchers is critical and this is measured through the various networks, the staff engagement survey and feedback from courses and fellowships. The University strives to support researchers in their career whilst equipping them with the skills to be self-starters, identifying and seizing opportunities.

In addition the University establishes and implements policies and procedures which support researchers. These are developed in consultation and seek to ensure that they become embedded into everyday business.

Review of policies and procedures relevant to researchers is undertaken at the Research Committee. Review of policies and procedures which are relevant to researchers and which have equality and diversity focus is undertaken by the E&D Committee.

The University seeks feedback on provision for researchers through the RSF and its membership of Research Committee, and also by analysing the outcomes of its staff survey, PULSE, which allows the collation of responses by staff group (including researchers). The University's PULSE staff survey is one of the mechanisms by which the University can evaluate the attractiveness of its employment offer, whether members of staff feel engaged with the strategic purpose of the University and feel that the University is a place at which they wish to pursue their careers. In addition, the University offers a range of engagement events which take place throughout the year including Campus Catch Up, Vice Chancellor's Surgery, Windows on Warwick, Ideas Cafe and various social events. All of these opportunities promote feedback regarding how people feel about working at Warwick and inform the way the University seeks to position itself and strengthen its attractiveness as an employer of choice. The University believes that engagement is an essential component in individual researchers meeting their potential and the University achieving its strategic research aims.

## **G. Conclusion**

As has been demonstrated above, the University of Warwick has embedded the concordat principles in the developmental provision available for research staff delivered through a collaborative approach between various departments and services. This has been offered on the basis of researcher to researcher provision with an emphasis on engagement with the community in terms of highlighting needs.

University policies and processes fully embrace all staff groups including researchers and the University's governance processes support the consideration and inclusion of matters specific to the research community in appropriate fora.

The University's strategy and the key goal of achieving research excellence in support of making Warwick an undisputed world leader in research and scholarship underpins all of the University's endeavours in this regard.

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**11<sup>th</sup> September 2012**