

CRS Forum 14 – 27 May 2004

Present : Ruth Ayres (CAP), Abdel Berkaoui (Statistics), Chris Coe (SHSS) Marie Garnett (CAP), Jenny O’Leary (Careers), Louise Moody (Statistics), Joy Sisley (CBCCS), Rebecca Stewart (WMG)

Apologies: Jayne Archer (Centre for Renaissance Studies), Mark Barrow (Chemistry), Mairi-Ann Cullen (CEDAR), Michelle Ellefson (Psychology), Phillip Gould (Biological Sciences)

1. Matters Arising

Chris Coe agreed to draft a further letter to Stuart Palmer proposing changes to the Study Leave Scheme for Research Staff. This would be circulated via the CRS Rep. distribution list for comment.

2. The Careers Service Flyer

Jenny O’Leary outlined the service and resources available to CRS from the Careers Service: This included individual guidance in career planning with specialist advisers; job-seeking workshops designed specifically for CRS and various relevant careers library material.

A draft flyer advertising the Careers Service provision for CRS was circulated for comment. It was agreed that the information might hit the target audience better if it was headed Research Assistants and Research Fellows, rather than CRS. An interesting discussion ensued, and it was decided that future mailshots and information should be headed *Research Assistants and Research Fellows*, rather than *CRS*, since it was felt that the term *CRS* was unfamiliar to many fixed term researchers and may thereby result in a lack of interest/response to mailings and events.

It was agreed that some amendments would be made to the flyer to make explicit the opportunities available for people to develop their careers in HE and the University of Warwick. There was also a suggestion to include some reference to self-created jobs and enhancement of entrepreneurial skills.

There was general agreement that it would be a good idea to link the revised flyer to both the CRS website and the careers website, with perhaps a link to relevant case studies. CRS Reps will also be emailed the flyer as an attachment, for distribution on departmental noticeboards.

3. Plans for the Open House Event

Ruth Ayres outlined the plans for the Open House Event scheduled for Wednesday 16th June from 12.00-13.30: CRS reps confirmed that they had received personal invites to the event and agreed that they would try to encourage other CRS from their departments to come along. The event has been planned as an informal “drop-in” as suggested at a previous Forum meeting. There will be snacks and drinks available and a raffle. The intention is to keep the event informal, encouraging networking between RAs and RFs from different departments, whilst promoting awareness of the

Forum and other CRS specific issues. The aim is to display a range of posters and information at the event, covering the following:

- CAP posters (See below)
- The Concordat
- What the CRS Forum is
- U of W CRS Policy statement
- Issue of Forum newsletter that was based on CRS
- Jenny O'Leary's careers flyer, posters and career booklets
- CROS poster
- list of CRS Reps.
- Fixed Term Employees' Regulations
- Training and Development provision for CRS
- events / achievements of the CRS forum
- summary of last year's CROS results/main findings

The event was thought to be a good idea, and there was a consensus that the information listed above would be useful and relevant. There was a recommendation from CRS Reps. to include some additional information on study leave and the AUT.

The recently produced CAP posters were displayed and met with approval. These will also be displayed at the Open House Event.

4. Chairing CRS Forum Meetings

Whilst Marie Garnett was away from the University on maternity leave, there was a 'rotating Chair' for the CRS Forum, with CRS Reps taking on the role in turn. There was a proposal to set a similar system in place, such that the CRS Reps and the RCI coordinators would alternate in the chairing of the meetings. This would allow CRS Reps the opportunity to have more ownership of the Forum and take a greater lead in the topics discussed.

There was mixed feeling amongst CRS Reps about this proposal: Some felt this was a good idea, provided the Chair and Secretary/note-taker were two different people. Since the meetings are bi-monthly, there would only be the need to find 6 CRS Reps per year, with the RCI coordinators taking responsibility for the remainder of the meetings. Taking on such a role would be valuable in terms of career development, although some CRS Reps felt the task may be a little onerous and deter people from attending the meetings. It was pointed out, however, that each CRS Rep would generally only be required to chair or note-take for one meeting in their time at the University, due to the frequency of meetings and number of CRS Reps.

It was agreed that the RCI Coordinators would contact CRS Reps to request a couple of volunteers to act as Chair and Secretary for the next CRS Forum on 28th July 2004. Thereafter, it was felt that it would be best to set up a rota, naming a chair and secretary for subsequent meetings over the next year.

5. Future Events

It was suggested that possible contributors to future CRS meetings might include Research Support Services, the Coventry University-based unit: *Vision Works* with a regional remit for encouraging entrepreneurialism across faculties and the Faculty-based E-learning Advisers.

The possibility of holding a Warwick-based CRS Conference (along the lines of the University of Bristol CRS Conference) was also mooted. It was suggested that an exploratory email to CRS might be used to establish whether there would be sufficient interest to merit organising such an event.

6. Funding for CRS training and support

CRS Reps. reported back on departmental arrangements for the funding of CRS training and development. In the three departments represented funding to attend project-related conferences was built into the grant. Additional funding for project-based or broader 'research interest-based' training and development was via the Departmental fund and typically at the Chair of Department's discretion. In one (very small) Department there was total transparency with the Chair actively encouraging staff to attend conferences and staff development needs being discussed at departmental meetings. In one Department the perception was that access to funds for training and development depended very much on who the current Chair was.

There seemed to be much greater access to training and development for PhD students including Faculty-based skills training programmes, a Departmental-based programme (Biological Sciences), residential Grad. Schools run by the Research Councils and funding from societies for PhD students to attend their annual meetings.

7. Skills Training for CRS

Research Councils now fund universities to provide skills and research training for PhD students and researchers employed on the 1A research scale. A joint statement by the Research Councils and the Arts and Humanities Research Board sets out the skills requirements. At present all of the funding is directed to the Graduate School and their view is that CRS would be able to attend any of the training events being laid on for research students.

The view of the CRS Reps. at the meeting was that training should be provided separately for CRS as their needs and the level of training required would be very different from that required by research students. Particular areas of interest for CRS included getting funding, managing teams and networking in academic situations, team working, particularly in the Humanities, managing finances, career development, effective CV production and entrepreneurial approaches to career development.

It was suggested that CRS should be audited to establish their current level of skill in relation to the Research Councils'/AHRB statement of skills requirements. This would provide evidence that skills needs of CRS were at a different level to research students and would identify target areas for potential training. Some way of drawing departmental management into the audit would also be welcomed in order to identify needs and gain their commitment to the proposed training.

8. A.O.B.

Chris Coe asked about University progress with the pilot project looking at the transfer of fixed-term employees to open-ended contracts.

The project has been on hold whilst negotiations over the Framework Agreement have been underway with Trade Unions. Work in this area is set to resume during the Summer Term and may be taken forward through detailed discussions between the Director of Personnel and individual Chairs of departments in the first instance.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on 28th July 2004 from 12.00 – 14.00. Room tbc.