

RESEARCH STAFF FORUM (RSF)

Tuesday 29th September 2020, 12.00 –13.30

MS Teams

Chair: Anna Chapman

Meeting Notes

1. ATTENDEES:

Elisabeth Arweck (Education Studies), Monsin Bilal (DCS), Anna Chapman (OD, Chair), Chris Clarke (Politics), Jane Cooper (OD), Jodie Enderby (WMS), Gareth Johnson (IAS), Sue Johnston-Wilder (Education Studies) Darius Koester (WMS), Yanyan Ni (Psychology), Deepak Parashar (WMS), Hatef Sadeghi (Engineering), Katie Tindall (WMG), Michele Underwood (Student Administration Services), Loana Vrabiescu (Law).

APOLOGIES:

Nicholas Hopcroft (WMS), Julie Robinson (Library), Jo Schofield (Life Sciences).

2. INTRODUCTION BY ANNA CHAPMAN.

Anna Chapman opened the forum by introducing herself and welcoming attendees.

3. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES:

The forum is open to any Research Active colleagues, noting some of those present were attending for the first time. Each colleague gave a brief overview of their area of work and update from their department if relevant.

Themes emerging from the updates:

- Some colleagues still cannot conduct fieldwork due to the lockdown.
- Colleagues in some departments are experiencing a move away from research and towards teaching.
- Colleagues in some departments are finding they are competing for ever-decreasing pots of funding.

Gareth Johnson gave an update from IAS: The IAS (Institute of Advanced Study) is welcoming its new early career and WIRL-COFUND fellows this week. It is also the start of a new term of the Accolade researcher development and professional networking programme. Accolade pivoted to a virtual delivery in April. The new mid-career post-doctoral fellowships programme starts at the end of October, the successor to the highly competitive and esteemed WIRL-COFUND. The EUTOPIA-SIF Post-Doctoral Fellowships are part of the EUTOPIA European University initiative, and for the first-time scholars currently at Warwick will be able to bid to participate (details can be found here (<https://eutopia-university.eu/2020/09/24/eutopia-sif/>)) with the call opening late October.

The Exchanges [interdisciplinary journal](#) is working towards its next regular issue in the next few weeks, alongside the development of a number of special issues to appear in 2021 on 'cultural representations of nerds', 'climate fiction' and 'the history of art students experiences at Warwick'; variously developed in collaboration with the universities of Monash, Oxford, SOAS and Goldsmiths. Various calls for manuscript contributions, especially aimed at PGR and ECR scholars, can be found on the journal's site.

The Exchanges Discourse, a companion podcast to the journal, has continued to add new episodes over the summer. The podcast, which discusses issues relating to the journal, interviews with contributors, as well as the wider academic publishing scene, will shortly launch its sixth episode focussing on special issue proposals (<https://anchor.fm/exchangesias>). The journal's editor in chief ([Gareth Johnson](#)) welcomes approaches from local scholars who may be

interested in contributing to a future episode, or to discuss any matters relating to the title.

ACTION: Contact Gareth if you are interested in being involved in the podcast.

4. UPDATE FROM SUPPORT REPS:

HR – Katie Tindall

PDR Check-Ins

PDR has been scaled down this year due to Covid-19 but is still important. In addition to regular catch-up, line managers are encouraged to hold PDR Check-Ins with their staff. The aim of the Check-Ins is to provide support and recognition in a holistic, 2-way dialogue. There is no paperwork to complete.

Off Campus Working interim Policy

This includes best practice measures and guidance to enable staff to work safely and efficiently away from the campus. Colleagues are reminded to complete the risk assessment.

Test and Trace

This is now live for appointments only. It is for staff and students who think they may have Covid-19 symptoms.

Flu jab

This will be available by the end of October.

Annual Leave

In recognition of the significant level of support from staff, we will receive two extra days annual leave on 23rd December and 4th January.

OD – Anna Chapman

Covid-19 Staff Support Survey

The survey, which was open from 5th July – 17th August, aimed to find out how the pandemic has affected colleagues' working lives and to identify support required. 42% of colleagues completed the survey. Analysis of the comments at a University level has revealed that juggling childcare and work, lack of IT equipment/furniture and the loss of face to face connections have been amongst the biggest challenges. The full results can be seen [here](#).

Given the challenges of carrying out research at home it was anticipated that the responses from RAS colleagues would be lower than for other groups of staff. Most RAS (research focussed and teaching and research focussed) results were lower than the overall University results. Areas in which the RAS result was significantly lower than the overall University result are:

- Feeling well connected to University leaders.
- Feeling well informed about the actions the University is taking to respond to the impact of Covid-19.
- Knowing where to access wellbeing and support information.
- Ability to work from home effectively.

The results have been filtered by faculty and shared with Heads of Departments who are being asked to consider local actions. The results areas also being looked at centrally. The information feeds into charter marks such as Athena Swan and other groups such as the Gender Task Force. In response to knowing where to access wellbeing and support information, there will be an article in the next RAS newsletter about the services provided by Wellbeing Services.

New RAS Website

The forum was given a preview of Organisational Development's new [RAS webpages](#). These will go live on 30th September.

ACTION: Anna Chapman to change images on the homepage.

RAS Workshops 20/21

The forum was given an overview of the priority areas for RAS development for 2020-21. These are shown on the new [RAS webpages](#) and include Academic Writing, Career Development, Leadership Development, Research and Impact and Research Integrity training. There is a new Leadership Development Programme called [Leadership Essentials](#). This is open to all people managers and a summer cohort is reserved exclusively for RAS colleagues (although RAS colleagues may attend any cohort).

Elisabeth expressed a concern from the Research Committee about the training being provided for research staff.

Action: AC to forward this to Trudie Donnelly.

Elisabeth expressed a concern about the lack of development for mid-career researchers, particularly around addressing the funding landscape.

ACTION: AC to forward this concern to Trudie Donnelly.

HR Excellence in Research working group – Anna Chapman on behalf of Sandra Beaufoy

The University is forming a working group to address the HR Excellence in Research work to align it to the revised Concordat. Sandra Beaufoy (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager) would like two representatives from the forum (preferably one male/one female) to serve on that group. The group will consist of: Pam Thomas (as Chair); members of RIS, Trudie Donnelly, Sandra Beaufoy, a representative from HR and two members from the research forum.

ACTION: Contact Sandra Beaufoy if you are interested in joining the working group.

Research Committee - Elisabeth Arweck

Nothing to report as there has not been a Research Committee meeting since the last Research Staff Forum.

5. DISCUSSION ITEM:

Updates in light of the measures introduced by Professor Pam Thomas in response to RAS Engagement Survey, and ongoing challenges and barriers to research.

During a brief discussion the following points were raised:

- There are challenges in the funding landscape and this is being experienced across departments.
- Pre-Covid, colleagues were experiencing a decrease in the amount of funding available, and this has been exacerbated due to Covid as funding is directed towards Covid research.
- Despite money from the Researcher Development Fund, there is still uncertainty for colleagues who are on fixed-term contracts and who have not been able to work due to the pandemic and lockdown. In some cases it is still not known whether contracts can be extended.

6. AOB:

Several colleagues expressed the value of the Research Staff Forum and that it is a vitally important way of staying connected to the research community and to share and explore areas of commonality. Some colleagues said that this was the first contact they had had with colleagues outside of their department.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday 25 November 2020, 13.00 – 14.30, MS Teams