

RESEARCH STAFF FORUM (RSF)

Thursday 25th November 2021, 14.00 –15.30

MS Teams

Chair: Anna Chapman

Meeting Notes

1. ATTENDEES:

Rajnaara Akhtar (Law), Asra Asgharzadeh (WMS), Anna Chapman (OD, Chair), Jane Cooper (OD), Lucy Hooberman(WMG), Marsha Hughes (HR), Ishwar Kapoor (Library), Hesam Khajeh-Saeid (WMG), Joanna Mantaloufa (Chemistry), Georgina Milhut (Education), Bishal Mohindru (WMS), Eleni Papaefthymiou (Classics), Aggie Payne (WMG), Sharifah Sekalala (Law),

2. INTRODUCTION BY ANNA CHAPMAN.

Anna introduced herself and welcomed staff who were attending for the first time.

3. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES:

Organisational Development – Anna Chapman

The RAS OD Consultant post is still vacant. Recruitment is ongoing and Organisational Development is hoping to interview before Christmas.

Organisational Development update; plans for spring term – Anna Chapman

Plans are underway for RAS development provision. Programmes that will be offered in the spring term include Leadership Essentials, career development, project management and academic writing. The new RAS induction will run for the second time next week.

4. UPDATE FROM SUPPORT REPS:

HR update – Marsha Hughes

- Success Factors: work continues to run the payroll through Success Factors. A new tile has been added on which to record cases of long covid.
- Hybrid working: this is set to continue. A survey will be released soon to engage with staff to find out how they are finding hybrid working.
- Face coverings: Marsha shared a link to a helpful video by Professor Lawrence Young https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh_PFHymfbg
- Thank you payment: This payment was made on 24th November. There were a small number of cases in which an underpayment was made due to people whose contacts had changed mid-year. Any underpayments will be rectified in the December payroll.
- Conference Support Award: Financial reimbursements are available to support colleagues who incur extra care costs when attending an essential conference/workshop/training event. <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/findsupport/conferencessupportaward>
- Living wage accreditation: The University is now an accredited Living Wage Employer. Any member of staff earning below the minimum wage will receive an uplift to £9.90/hour. Points on the pay scale below the living wage will be removed.

5. Research Committee Representative – Sharifah Sekalala

- Professor Caroline Meyer, PVC Research, is undertaking a listening tour with research staff. Anna Chapman will invite Professor Meyer to attend the Research Staff Forum.
- Research Culture: the University is working to consider how research active colleagues can contribute to its work on research culture; how they feel valued, ethics, promotions, supporting young researchers and developing their careers.

- There are potential synergies between the Research Staff Forum the forum for technicians, and there may be opportunities to work together and share learning. Sharifa Sekalala will liaise with the chair of the technicians' forum, Dr Ian Hancox.

6. Discussion topic: How the pandemic is affecting research active staff 18 months on – All

Anna referred to the situation 18 months ago when we were working remotely and under severe restrictions due to the Covid pandemic. At the time a survey was undertaken with research active colleagues to learn more about the impact of the pandemic and their work. Many responses highlighted the challenges that research colleges were facing, both personally and professionally.

The discussion today revealed several positives to come out of the pandemic, particularly in relation to conducting online fieldwork:

- Online working has encouraged greater participation in research. It has been easier for research participants to engage in interviews/ focus groups etc online as there is more flexibility and no need to travel.
- Researchers do not need to expend as much energy in terms of travelling, organising and engaging with participants to do their research.
- Carbon footprint is reduced.
- Cost savings as venues and catering for fieldwork are not required.
- Quicker responses to requests for networking and collaboration with other researchers.
- Easier to network and collaborate as others are also working online.

However there are still challenges faced by colleagues:

- Networking and socialising within the University is still impacted as there are no/fewer informal opportunities to meet with colleagues in person.
- New colleagues are inducted in a different way, for example by being sent a link rather than being introduced to a person. It is harder to find out about services for researchers.
- Research can be very lonely when working in isolation and not as part of a team.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday 26 January 2022, 13.00 – 14.30, MS Teams