

RESEARCH STAFF FORUM (RSF)

Wednesday 13 January 2021, 14.00 –15.30

MS Teams

Chair: Anna Chapman

Meeting Notes

1. ATTENDEES:

Anne Chapman (OD, Chair), Jane Cooper (OD), Larissa Corbett (HR), Trudie Donnelly (OD), Aruni Fonseka (Physics), Dan Fowler (WMG), Thomas Grandjean (WMG), Charlotte Jones (Centre for Lifelong Learning), Emma Langley (Education Studies), Jean Marshall (WMG), Henry Nwankwo (WMS), Natalie Pocock (OD), Racheal Potter (WMS), Julie Robinson (Library)

APOLOGIES:

Angharad Butler-Rees (Sociology), Karen Jackson (Library), Tom Sorell (Politics)

2. DEPARTMENTAL INTRODUCTIONS AND UPDATES

Everyone introduced themselves and gave a brief outline of their area of research and/or their role.

LIBRARY – Julie Robinson

There has been much activity in the area of Open Access, including changes to the Wellcome Trust Open Access Policy which may affect where colleagues can publish. The Library is reviewing its services in light of the latest lockdown. The Library is open and not intending to close but Julie advised colleagues to keep checking the Library webpages for latest information.

EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON RESEARCH COLLEAGUES

There was a rich discussion about the effects the latest lockdown and continued remote working. Key themes emerging were:

- Maintaining a high level of motivation is difficult, when each day feels very much the same and unable to work on campus.
- The inability to undertake practical research contributes to a lack of motivation.
- If research is not deemed 'critical' there is no access to labs/equipment.
- In Physics research can be deemed 'critical' if it will lead to a publication or a grant, and this will enable access to labs and equipment.
- Colleagues miss the social side of work.
- Colleagues miss the serendipitous interactions which would normally happen in the corridor etc.
- Colleagues had helpful suggestions around setting up regular social chats/coffee conversations to help to maintain connections. Several colleagues have found this to be very valuable.

3. UPDATE FROM SUPPORT REPS

HR – Larissa Corbett

- Critical workers: HE staff are now deemed critical workers which means their children can go to school. However the Department for Education has asked that parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.
- Extremely clinically vulnerable: people within this category have again been advised to shield and this means working from home for staff. If an extremely clinically vulnerable member of staff is in a role in which they cannot work from home they should speak to their line manager or HR.

- Wellbeing: Larissa reminded the Forum of the importance of looking after their wellbeing, and to ensure they take time away from the screen, to get outside for exercise (within government rules) and to keep connected for work and social purposes. The Staff Wellbeing Hub has many wellbeing resources. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is accessed via the Health and Safety web pages, includes counselling and also has a new health and wellbeing app. This is all free.
- Carers Leave Policy: this has now been launched and is available on the HR webpages. It provides up to 5 paid carers leave days to help colleagues balance caring responsibilities and other commitments.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Anna Chapman

- Concordat: The University has formally signed up to the revised 2019 Concordat. Details are on the R&IS webpages <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/ris/researchsupport/support-for-researchers>.
- Academic Promotions: The deadline has been extended to 29th January due to continuing disruption caused by the pandemic.

DEVELOPMENT NEEDS FOR RESEARCH COLLEAGUES

Anna explained that she would like to open up a discussion about what the Forum felt were priority training or development needs for the rest of the academic year. There is a small amount of budget which can be used to meet development needs. During a discussion the following were highlighted by the Forum:

- Collegiality: Participating in University life and processes is so much more difficult when working from home. You have to know where to find such opportunities. Collegiality is an important part of the academic promotions process and there is no training or support on it. There is training on other areas such as engagement and widening participation.
- Engaging with collegiality/engagement events: It is hard to take part in these activities for colleagues with caring responsibilities. Some of this can be done online whilst working from home.
- Development isn't just about career progression; many people don't want to do this but still want development. Development can involve wanting to do your job well and to be challenged in your current role. You are still developing as a researcher even if you are not moving up the career ladder.

Julie suggested that there was a theme emerging about the **discovery of opportunity**, and that it may be that a forum/channel could help to do this. Anna confirmed that such a forum had already been set up – the Warwick Development Opportunities Forum (WDOF) - but had not been promoted recently due to the pandemic.

Anna asked if anyone had any other thoughts about development needs to email her.

Action – Anna to review the WDOF to consider how it can be made relevant and promoted to research colleagues.

RESEARCH ACTIVE STAFF INDUCTION - Natalie Pocock

Natalie explained that in addition to the standard induction and Welcome event which is for all colleagues, she was developing an induction specifically for research active staff. She asked the Forum for ideas about topics and content. The following suggestions were made:

- It can be helpful to pace the information. Some new starters can have a lot of information all at once and it can be overwhelming, particularly if they are from overseas.
- Bidding and leading projects – for example, how quickly you can bid for projects, timelines, costings, when to contact R&IS, role of R&IS, key contacts in R&IS.

- Finding people to collaborate with – how to go about this.
- The role of the Institute of Engagement.
- Network funding leads.
- Research Staff Forum.
- The Library would like to be more visible in the RAS Induction.

Action – Natalie to contact individuals outside of the Forum for a more detailed conversation.

CONCORDAT – Trudie Donnelly

Trudie explained that the HR Excellence in Research submission is a measure of our progress against the requirements of the Concordat. It has been decided that at Warwick the Concordat will cover Teaching-only, Research and Teaching and Research-only colleagues. This represents around 2,500 people, the majority of which are in the early research career category. We need to think about our approach to supporting early, mid and late/senior career research active colleagues, and Trudie asked the Forum for its understanding of what these terms meant. The following were discussed:

- It doesn't depend on age or length or time in a role; it depends on how confident the individual feels about their research.
- We tend to classify early, mid and late career by job title at present.
- It would be helpful if there was more guidance written down so that colleagues had something to refer to.
- We need to address mid and late career development needs but it is hard to identify what this is and how best to deliver it. By mid and late career stage, development is more likely to be happening within the disciplinary niche.
- We need to focus on a more structured development approach for early career colleagues.

Trudie confirmed that she had been given approval to recruit to the Organisational Development Consultant role for researcher development. This role will focus on the requirements of the Concordat. Trudie intends to use the RSF more in the future to ask for ideas around the requirements of the Concordat.

4. AOB

Anna said that the RSF is extremely valuable for Organisational Development as a place to discuss ideas with and get feedback from research colleagues, and that she hoped members of the Forum were benefitting by making connections across the University. Anna asked members to encourage their colleagues to attend future meetings.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 15 March 2021, 14.30 – 16.00, MS Teams