

University of Brighton

Report for the Concordat Interim Review

1 Internal evaluation of concordat implementation plan

The Concordat Implementation Plan at the University of Brighton is a live document which is monitored on a termly basis by the Concordat Implementation Steering Group (CISG) and by the Research Strategy Committee and the University Management Group annually. In advance of this interim review, the Implementation Plan was restructured to avoid the repetition present in the original plan and to highlight actions. We believe that this new structure results in a more user-friendly and readable document for internal staff which can be used to further promote the Concordat and how we are addressing it at Brighton.

In preparation for this review, the CISG conducted some additional activities designed to measure the impact of implementing the Concordat at the University of Brighton. A short questionnaire was sent to Deans and Heads of School asking for commentary on how they have implemented the Concordat at a local level, responses were then analysed by the CISG and the action plan amended accordingly. The University participated in the CROS survey which enabled detailed internal analysis and comparison with national data, drawing our attention to areas where we are performing less well than might be expected, this again has fed into the new implementation plan. The post of ECR Ambassador (see point 2.2 below) was evaluated and extended into this academic year. The new post-holder has held focus groups with Early Career Researchers during which the themes and concerns of the Concordat were discussed, these meetings have highlighted issues which have in turn been considered by the CISG. Finally, the CISG considered this new information and prepared a report for the Research Strategy Committee on progress and key achievements in implementing the Concordat. Due to the timing of meetings, an initial report and draft implementation plan was received in December 2013 for comment, and this final report and the new plan will be considered at the University's annual research monitoring meeting, scheduled for February 2014.

2 Key achievements and progress against the strategy

This section identifies the key achievements in addressing the principles of the Concordat (references refer to our original action plan where appropriate).

2.1 Progress on HR policies and procedures

Our original Concordat Implementation Plan, highlighted a need to revise recruitment materials for research (A1) (achieved in June 2013), to provide training for Recruitment and Selection (developed and rolled out in September 2012) (A4), and to launch a compulsory online training programme on Equalities and Diversity (February 2012) (A4). At the time of writing 1087 staff have undertaken the Equality and Diversity training. An initial review of the SDR process was also undertaken with subsequent recommendations being submitted to the Senior Management Team in February 2013. Further review of the SDR scheme has been deferred pending the new HR Strategy (C5, C10).

2.2 The appointment of an ECR Ambassador

In 2012, the University appointed an ECR Ambassador (ECRA) from its ECR community to co-ordinate sustained and embedded support for ECRs. The post, which is a 0.2FTE secondment to the Research Office, was approved for continuation in August 2013. The role has developed a network of over 100 ECRs from across the institution enabling regular communication and collaborative meetings. In June 2013, the ECR Ambassador ran a conference designed to give ECRs an opportunity to present their research and develop research project collaboration. *Crossing Disciplines and Building Research Communities* had 69 participants of which 24 presented. The ECRA has established a peer-to-peer (ECR-to-ECR) mentoring scheme, enabling one-to-one support and research collaborations (C8, C14)). The ECR Ambassador also represents the ECR Community on the University Research Strategy Committee and the Concordat Implementation Steering Group (C13). In addition, £3k from the University Alumni and Friends Fund (philanthropic donors) has been awarded to establish an ECR networking fund.

2.3 Establishment of dedicated funds to support the research careers of ECRs

The University has had a programme of competitive research initiatives designed to give academics money to further develop their research since 2009. These funds which include a sabbatical scheme and a 'research challenges' scheme have been open to staff at all levels and have funded a number of ECRs. However, in order to provide dedicated support for our ECR community, the University launched a 'Rising Stars' fund in October 2012 designed to support a 'step-change' in careers by assisting researchers in gaining experience of leading and managing their own research projects. In addition, from October 2013, a portion of the University's Conference Support Fund was ring-fenced for ECRs, or those within five years of beginning a research career. The CSF provides up to £750 to attend and present at a conference, and unlike, the main scheme, the ring-fenced portion does not require the applicant to find matching funds. Finally, the ECR Ambassador oversees an ECR Network/Collaboration Development Fund, which awards up to £300 for ECRs to be involved in the development of new research networks and collaborations.

2.4 Establishment of an online presence for ECRs

Part of the strategy of supporting and developing ECRs at Brighton has been to make them more visible within the institution. ECRs now have dedicated webpages on the intranet which include online resources, useful links and networking. The ECR network has an established twitter account keeping its members up-to-date with news and events.

2.5 Profiling of the careers service, transferable skills and the RDF

At the time of producing the original action plan, the extent to which staff used the careers service was unclear (C1, C2, C4). It is evident that the resource is not well-known amongst our staff and some work has been undertaken to address this issue. The careers service now has links from the ECR webpages and a member of the careers service is now a member of the CISG. At the time of production of the original action plan, there was a lack of clarity in some areas with regards to our provision of development for researchers (primarily section C) and following participation in the CROS survey (October 2013) (F2), the appointment of an ECR ambassador (see 2.2 above) and work

undertaken to understand take-up of various aspects of provision, we now have a much clearer idea of where to focus our efforts. Sessions on the RDF have been run at the Future's Bright (our conference for Early Career Researchers) (C3, D5, D6). There is clearly still further work to be done on both of these and some specific actions have been identified in our Implementation Plan.

2.6 Accreditation by Athena Swan and Stonewall

The University was awarded the Athena SWAN institutional Bronze award during the November 2012 awards round, and all five of its STEM schools are currently working towards putting in their own departmental applications during 2014. In 2013, the University joined the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme, and made its first submission to Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index in September 2013.

3 Next steps and focus of strategy for the next two years

The University is building on recent successes to reshape its leadership and management of research. This will include the creation of three dedicated Centres for Research and Development each supporting the Life, Health & Physical Sciences, the Social Sciences and the Arts & Humanities. The focus of these Centres will be on capacity building and quality advancement. In particular, they will have responsibility for the development of researchers and research both within and between the Centres. Each Centre will benefit from a critical mass of professionally qualified research managers and leaders and be led by a Director of Research and Development who will work to ensure that the career development of research staff is fully embedded within the university's research culture. It is intended that the new Centres will be fully operational by August 2014 with dedicated space and human resource.

In addition, to the reorganisation, the University has recently conducted a staff survey, the results of which will be available in February 2014. The staff survey asked for feedback on a range of issues, some of which might have an impact on our Concordat (eg views and experiences of performance, development, engagement and equality and diversity). These views will also feed into the new HR Strategy and so a reflection on the views of the full staff body will also have an impact on the Concordat Implementation Plan.

The University strategy for the next two years is to fully embed the Concordat within the culture and ethos of the institution. We believe that whilst we have made progress with this via our implementation plan, that there is work still to be done to ensure that the principles of the Concordat pervade all elements of engagement with research staff from induction, through ongoing staff development and future career planning. We believe that dedicated Centres for Research and Development will help us to achieve this aim as will the completion of the actions identified in our attached implementation plan. The success of this strategy will be measured by improved responses to the CROS and PIRLS surveys, by increased engagement of staff with the careers service and careers planning and by qualitative feedback from staff, either through formal consultation or via the ECR Ambassador.