

A Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Disclosable

Meeting
14/03/08

Agenda Item
14

Reference No
HEFCW/08/17

1 Issue

This paper invites the Council to become a signatory to a revised UK-wide Concordat to support the career development of researchers.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 In 2006, Research Councils UK (RCUK) invited HEFCW and a range of other organisations to participate in the development of an updated Concordat on the career development of researchers. This work has now been completed, and the participating bodies are being formally invited to become signatories to the Concordat.

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:

- i. agree that HEFCW should become a signatory to the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (copy attached at **Annex A**);
- ii. agree to support the proposed actions for implementation and review, as set out in Section F of the Concordat;

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 A decision is required at this point in order to enable RCUK to launch the Concordat in Summer 2008.

5 Council members' interests

- 5.1 No conflicts of interest have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

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7 Background

- 7.1 In 1996, the UK Research Councils, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (now Universities UK) and a number of other bodies published a *Concordat on Contract Research Staff Career Management*. This Concordat set standards for the career management and conditions of employment of researchers employed by HEIs on fixed-term contracts or similar contracts. It has been used as a general reference point for good practice across the UK higher education sector.
- 7.2 Since that time, there have been a number of significant developments relating to the employment of researchers. These include new legislation affecting staff on fixed term contracts (2002), the publication of the *European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruiters of Researchers* (2005) and amendments to the Research Councils' harmonised grant terms and conditions (2006).
- 7.3 In view of these developments, and the growing awareness of the benefits which effective career management of researchers can bring, RCUK and Universities UK decided to convene a higher education sector working group in 2006 to draft an updated Concordat. In addition to RCUK and UUK representatives, this working group included members from the UK higher education funding bodies, major research funders (e.g. Wellcome Trust, Association of Medical Research Charities) and a number of other organisations.
- 7.4 The UK higher education funding bodies were not involved with the 1996 Concordat. However, it was agreed that they should be included in the work on the updated Concordat in order to promote a more comprehensive approach.

8 The Concordat

Purpose and Format

- 8.1 The Concordat is intended to provide a single, unambiguous statement of the expectations and responsibilities of research funders and institutions with responsibility for the management of researchers. It is also intended to demonstrate internationally the high standards of management and support that can be expected by researchers in the UK. The document generally draws together expectations and guidance based on current good practice and existing legal requirements, rather than introducing new requirements.
- 8.2 The Concordat consists of:
- a high level statement of the signatories' expectations for the support and management of researchers
 - an explanation of the purposes for which it was developed
 - a small number of key principles

8.3 Whereas the 1996 Concordat dealt only with researchers on fixed-term contracts, the scope of the updated Concordat has been expanded to include all categories of researchers.

8.4 A copy of the revised Concordat is attached at **Annex A**.

Consultation with the Sector

8.5 RCUK and UUK published a draft of the revised Concordat for consultation with the sector in Summer 2007. The draft was also discussed at a number of events in mid 2007, including two consultation workshops.

8.6 Responses to the consultation indicated that institutions generally welcomed the revised Concordat, but considered it important that there should be a clear implementation plan.

Implementation and Review

8.7 The final section of the Concordat sets out the intended implementation and review arrangements. These include the establishment of a steering group to oversee implementation, and the commissioning of a benchmark study to assess the current state of practice in the sector.

Signing Up to the Concordat

8.9 It is envisaged that the signatories to the Concordat will include RCUK, UUK, the four UK higher education funding bodies and a number of other major research funders (e.g. Wellcome Trust, Royal Society, Association of Medical Research Charities). A further group of organisations, which have relevant interests but which do not fund research, are expected to agree to become Supporters of the Concordat. These organisations include the Universities and College Union (UCU) and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA). The full list of potential signatories and supporters is shown on page 6 of the Concordat.

8.10 Those signatories which provide grants for research projects (e.g. the Research Councils) will be asked to ensure that their terms and conditions include an expectation that the funded organisations adopt the principles of the revised Concordat. The higher education funding bodies will be expected to consider linking assurance of implementation of the Concordat to their processes for monitoring institutions' HR strategies.

The Council is invited:

- ***to agree that HEFCW should become a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, as shown at Annex A***
- ***to agree to support the suggested actions for implementation and review, as set out in Section F of the Concordat.***

9 Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this paper. However, the Council is likely to be asked to contribute funding to help support the implementation and review process. It is understood that the Council's contribution is unlikely to exceed £5k.

10 Communications implications

- 10.1 Following consideration of the Concordat by the signatories and supporting organisations, RCUK and UUK will publish the Concordat on their websites in Summer 2008.

11 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 11.1 One of the purposes of the Concordat is to promote diversity and equality in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers. The document includes a section specifically on this issue (Section E), and Annex 2 will provide web-links to an extensive range of relevant equal opportunities legislation.

12 Risk Assessment

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
There could be a risk that institutions might find it difficult to comply with the requirements of the Concordat.	This risk has been addressed through a consultation exercise with the sector, undertaken in summer 2007.
There is a risk that the Concordat will not be effective in the desired aim of promoting good practice in the management of researchers' careers.	The Concordat includes an outline process to ensure effective implementation and collective review of progress.