

# The visibility of researcher development in UK higher education institutions' strategies

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# Executive summary

## Background

Following the comprehensive spending review in autumn 2010 and the end of the ring-fenced Roberts funding from the Research Councils to higher education institutions (HEIs) for researchers' professional and career development this report reviews the public strategic commitments of HEIs to sustaining researcher development programmes and implementing the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.<sup>1</sup>

The websites of 40 HEIs, including all the Russell Group institutions (20), 1994 group institutions (12), and others with relatively high numbers of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and/or research staff (8), were reviewed in December 2010 to find publicly accessible commitments to researcher development. Institutional strategy documents, research strategies, human resources strategies, and specific resources for the training and development of research staff and postgraduate researchers were reviewed.

This study investigates the visibility of researcher development in UK higher education institution strategies in UK HEIs, identifying commitments and resources which are easily accessible on individual HEIs' websites.

## Objectives

- To identify HEIs' visible strategic commitments to researcher development and the Concordat through their institution, research and Concordat implementation strategies
- To compare institutional strategies for future researcher development to inform the sector and national stakeholders
- To review how UK HEIs are profiling researcher development to inform a strategy for promoting internationally the benefits of undertaking research in the UK

## Key findings

Overall 60% of the institutions reviewed in this study made a specific public commitment to the professional development of researchers in their institutional (25%), human resources or research strategies. A quarter of institutional strategies reviewed highlighted career development and training for postgraduate researchers with 93% providing training and development resources accessible online. Eight per cent of those HEIs reviewed specifically mentioned the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in their public strategies and 88% referred to the Concordat on their webpages. There is a clear commitment to equality and diversity with 93% of HEIs having publicly available equality and diversity resources and policies and 70% making commitments in their top level strategy.

In relation to postgraduate researchers:

- A quarter of institutional strategies reviewed mention career development and training of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) with 15% highlighting the value of PGRs
- 65% of the HEIs in the study make specific mention of and/or provide a direct link to personal, professional or career development on their postgraduate study recruitment homepages
- Codes of practice for research degrees (or equivalent) were publicly available on 63% of HEIs' websites and were referenced but not located on the websites of three other HEIs
- Training and development resources for postgraduate researchers were found to be publicly available on 93% of HEI's websites that were reviewed
- The majority of institutions emphasise their focus on recruitment of 'the best' or 'world-class' doctoral researchers with development opportunities particularly highlighted in the recruitment of postgraduate researchers
- Although a total of 108 higher education institutions have taken part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) at least once between 2007 and 2009<sup>2</sup>, including 70% of HEIs in this study, only a small number of institutions reviewed provided evidence of feedback of results to postgraduate researchers

<sup>1</sup> [www.researchconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduate/pres](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduate/pres)

In relation to research staff:

- Resources for research staff (including training and development resources) were visible on 78% of HEI websites reviewed for the study. This figure was 95% and 92% respectively for Russell Group and 1994 Group institutions which may reflect the higher levels of focus and resources provided through Roberts funding
- 36 HEIs (90%) have publicly available human resources sections on their websites which set out policies and procedures relating to the employment of staff, highlighting key areas which often include equality and diversity, pay/salary scales, and recruitment
- Most of the institutions (85%) had participated in the Careers in Research Online Survey<sup>3</sup> (CROS) in the last six years with some evidence of feedback to researchers and use of CROS for benchmarking
- 90% of the HEIs reviewed had publicly visible sections on staff development and training
- 88% of HEIs in the study mention the Concordat on their web pages with 45% of these stating they have undertaken a gap analysis of how they meet the principles and/or produced an action plan for implementation of the Concordat principles

## Recommendations

- The majority of HEIs (60%) reviewed in this study had clear public strategic institutional commitments to the professional and career development of researchers. All institutions may wish to consider the external visibility of their strategic and operational commitments to researcher development
- There is an opportunity for HEIs and other stakeholders to enhance the visibility of the professional development opportunities for researchers in the UK as part of their strategies to attract the best doctoral researchers and research staff both nationally and internationally
- The HR Excellence in Research Award enables institutional commitments to researcher development to be publicly recognised at an international level. All institutions may wish to consider gaining the award
- There are high levels of engagement across UK HEIs in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). A greater emphasis could be given to using the results to visibly demonstrate progress and provide public feedback to researchers on the key issues and actions arising as a result of the surveys

<sup>3</sup> [www.cros.ac.uk](http://www.cros.ac.uk)

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Researcher development and the Roberts agenda

The Roberts review, published in April 2002<sup>4</sup>, identified a mismatch between the skills of graduates and postgraduates and the skills required by employers and recommended at least two weeks of training per year for postgraduate researchers and research staff. Government ring-fenced funding through the Research Councils was provided to deliver additional training and development through Career Development and Transferable Skills Training (Roberts) payments to HEIs until the end of March 2011.

The Research Councils remain committed to embedded researcher development activities:

**“.....the quality of skills provision and the employability of researchers are maintained and improved, through research organisations acting to recover funds to support researcher development from all funders of research and research students.”**

**“The Research Councils anticipate that funding for researcher development will be increasingly embedded into their normal training and research grant mechanisms.”**

RCUK letter to Research Organisations dated 3 December 2010

The Research Councils have indicated that research organisations should include the costs of researcher development and transferable skills training in the fees for postgraduate researchers (on average £200 per researcher) and in grant proposals for research staff. There is now more scope for flexible use of funds and integration of programmes into the normal business of training researchers.

## 1.2 The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the HR Excellence in Research Award

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (the Concordat)<sup>5</sup>, launched in 2008, sets out the expectations and responsibilities of researchers, their managers, employers and funders. The Concordat aims to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK and to improve the quantity, quality and impact of research for the benefit of UK society and the economy.

It is acknowledged that researcher development has been more substantially embedded for postgraduate researchers than for research staff.<sup>6</sup>

The European Commission's HR Excellence in Research initiative aims to encourage a step-change in the way that universities across Europe recruit, manage and develop researchers and align their practice with the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment.

In the UK, institutions can demonstrate their alignment with these principles through their implementation of the Concordat. Institutions need to undertake an internal analysis to compare institutional policy and practice against the Concordat principles and publish an action plan or implementation strategy to meet identified gaps.

The UK is leading the way in our commitment to ensuring good working conditions and career development for researchers. By December 2010, 23 UK universities had gained HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission compared to 17 universities across the rest of Europe.<sup>7,8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/1272-3083/SET-for-Success-Final-Report-of-Sir-Gareth-Roberts-Review.html](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/1272-3083/SET-for-Success-Final-Report-of-Sir-Gareth-Roberts-Review.html)

<sup>5</sup> [www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234701/Concordat-to-Support-the-Career-Development-of-Researchers.html](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234701/Concordat-to-Support-the-Career-Development-of-Researchers.html)

<sup>6</sup> Analysis of university reports on career development and transferable skills training (Roberts) payments, Karen Haynes, The Professional and Higher Partnership Ltd, July 2010 ([www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/Analysis20042009RobertsReports.pdf](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/Analysis20042009RobertsReports.pdf))

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/353501/European-Commission-HR-Excellence-in-Research-badge-working-doc.html>

<sup>8</sup> For up to date information on institutions and funders which have the 'HR Excellence in Research' Award, see [www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4ResearcherOrgs](http://www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4ResearcherOrgs)

## 1.3 The study: approach and methodology

This study investigates the visibility of researcher development in UK higher education institution strategies in UK HEIs, identifying commitments and resources which are easily accessible on individual HEIs' websites.

The main objectives of the study were:

- to identify HEIs' visible strategic commitments to researcher development and the Concordat through their institution, research and Concordat implementation strategies
- to compare institutional strategies for future researcher development to inform the sector and national stakeholders
- to review how UK HEIs are profiling researcher development to inform a strategy for promoting internationally the benefits of undertaking research in the UK.

Forty HEIs were selected for the study including all the Russell Group members and the 30 HEIs in receipt of the most Roberts funding<sup>9</sup>. The list also included a selection of 1994 Group member institutions (12) and post-1992 institutions (8). The ten HEIs outside the top 30 Roberts funded universities were chosen based on relatively high numbers of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and/or research staff. The full list is provided in Appendix A.

A framework was drawn up to guide the research (see Appendix B). Specifically the intention was to locate and examine the following documents/sections on each HEI's website for evidence of commitments to researcher development and Concordat implementation:

- The institution's mission, vision and strategy
- The institution's human resources/people strategy and web pages
- The institution's research strategy and web pages
- The institution's reference(s) to the Concordat and the institution's Concordat implementation strategy/action plan as well as their internal analysis to compare institutional policy and practice against the Concordat principles
- The institution's researcher development online resources for research staff and postgraduate researchers. A maximum amount of time (two hours) was allocated to review each institutions' website in order to find the relevant sections and/or documents and to examine that material to find evidence relating to the specific issues and information outlined in Appendix B

A maximum amount of time (two hours) was allocated to review each institutions' website in order to find the relevant sections and/or documents and to examine that material to find evidence relating to the specific issues and information outlined in Appendix B.

All the strategic HEI documents quoted in this report were publicly available online in December 2010.

## 2. Visibility of researcher development and Concordat implementation in HEI strategies

### 2.1 HEI strategies

Strategies or corporate plans, or in their absence mission and/or vision statements, were sought on HEIs' websites. Of the 40 institutions' websites reviewed, strategy documents were found on 37 websites and vision/mission statements on the three others. A quarter (ten) of institutional strategies reviewed specifically reference researchers.

The structures of the strategies vary greatly: most of the documents define broad strategic aims or areas and then set out objectives, or key aims, under each of the strategic themes. A few documents specify key performance indicators relating to the objectives including some relevant to researcher development, for example, relating to the measurement of satisfaction through surveys and/or participation rates in training. The strategy documents reviewed did not include monitoring and evaluation arrangements in any detail although it can be assumed that monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of the strategic aims is carried out through the normal governance structures of the HEIs.

#### 2.1.1 Commitment to postgraduate researcher development

Career development and training for postgraduate researchers was mentioned in a quarter (ten) of the HEI strategies reviewed including six Russell Group and four 1994 Group institutions.

The value of postgraduate researchers is specifically mentioned by 15% of HEIs surveyed for example in the University of Edinburgh institutional strategy:

**"Postgraduate students and early career researchers are valued members of our research community. We have a national reputation in transferable skills training and career development for postgraduate researchers and, through our Researcher Development Programme, we offer training and support for our research staff to assist in their professional and career development."**

University of Edinburgh, Strategic Plan 2008-2012

The majority of HEI strategy documents reviewed mention increasing the recruitment of postgraduate researchers; around half the institutions in this study highlight increasing international recruitment. Twenty five per cent of HEIs surveyed mention the development of transferable skills for postgraduate researchers in their strategy.

**"Increase postgraduate research student numbers and forge a reputation for excellence in the education, training and development of postgraduate and post-doctoral researchers."**

University of Bath, Corporate Plan 2009-10 to 2013-14

<sup>9</sup> Roberts funding is allocated to institutions on the basis of numbers of Research Council funded researchers

## 2.1.2 Commitment to research staff development

HEI strategy documents and visions/missions cover institutions' high level targets and approaches to teaching and research often addressing financial targets and infrastructure. The majority of these documents make reference to staff in general, either in the context of teaching and/or research, or in a separate section of the strategy addressing staff, with reference to recruiting 'the best' or 'world-class' staff/researchers. For example:

"Attract, develop and retain academic staff of the highest international calibre and make the University of Oxford and its colleges employers of choice for all staff in the international, national and local environments."

University of Oxford, Strategic Plan 2008-9 to 2012-13

"Making world-class academic appointments while developing the potential of our existing staff."

University of Birmingham, Shaping our future: Birmingham 2015

The issues most commonly mentioned in the HEI strategies reviewed which relate to research staff development and the Concordat are outlined in Table 1.

In this study 29 HEIs (73%) highlight the value of staff either directly or through their commitments to developing staff:

"The University's most precious asset is the people that it employs. The support and engagement of staff are also vital for the delivery of all the goals outlined in this plan."

University of Manchester, Advancing the Manchester 2015 Agenda

"Value staff, by developing their careers in a supportive environment that enables them to achieve the highest possible standards in all aspects of their work."

University of Glasgow, Glasgow 2020: A Global Vision

"...supporting our academics as researchers by providing appropriate training opportunities, and by ensuring the effectiveness of personal mentoring and of annual reviews of academic contributions."

Queen Mary, University of London, Strategic Plan 2010-2015

The training and career development of researchers is specifically mentioned in five strategy documents.

"Postgraduate students and early career researchers are valued members of our research community. We have a national reputation in transferable skills training and career development for postgraduate researchers and, through our Researcher Development Programme, we offer training and support for our research staff to assist in their professional and career development."

University of Edinburgh, Strategic Plan 2008-2012

"Nurture the development of our talented early career researchers"

University of Glasgow, Glasgow 2020: A Global Vision

Of the HEIs surveyed, two specifically mention the Concordat in their top level strategies:

"One of our key objectives will be to respond positively to the new Research Concordat – a sector agreement that sets out the expectations and responsibilities of researchers, their managers, employers and funders – so that researchers are provided with the best support to develop their careers."

University of Liverpool, Strategic Plan 2009-2015

"Continuing our commitment to the principles enunciated in the Concordat to Support the Development of Young Researchers, including post-doctoral fellows and research assistants."

Queen Mary, University of London, Strategic Plan 2010-2015

**Table 1: Issues covered in strategy and/or vision/mission statements related to staff and development**

Issues covered in strategy and vision/mission statements	Russell Group	1994 Group	Other institutions	Totals (%)
Evidence that staff are valued either by a direct statement or through commitments to their development	16	8	5	73
Explicit statement that research staff are valued	4	2	0	15
Commitment to recruit the best staff	14	8	2	60
Promotion of career development and training for all staff	6	7	4	43
Promotion of career development and training for research staff	4	1	0	13
Mention of appraisal	3	4	0	18

### 2.1.3 Commitment to equality and diversity

Equality and diversity resources and policies were publicly visible on 37 websites of the 40 HEIs surveyed (93%). No policies were found directly relating to research staff, although schemes did address equality and diversity in the recruitment of both staff and postgraduate researchers.

In this study, 28 HEI strategies (70%) reference institutional commitment to equality and diversity (75% of the Russell Group institutions and 1994 Group institutions and 50% of other HEIs) with a number specifically mentioning research staff and postgraduate researchers:

“The College views equality of opportunity as an essential component to the development of excellence; hence, it is an important and integral feature of our staffing policies. We value the views of our consultative groups, for example, Imperial as One, the Disabilities Action Committee and Imperial 600, and we will continue to support their development for the benefit of all. Activities to support the attraction and retention of female academics and research staff will continue.”

Imperial College London, Strategy 2010-14

“We will create an inclusive environment for students where differences are respected, and students are treated in a fair and non-discriminatory way:

- by encouraging ownership and awareness of equality and diversity throughout the University
- by developing new approaches to recruitment, admissions, and employment which reflect the expectations of diverse communities.”

University of the West of England, Bristol, Strategy Plan 2007-2012

## 2.2 Research strategies

Research strategies were found for 17 of the HEIs surveyed (43%). In general, the research strategies set targets for research, income and performance in the Research Excellence Framework but also often cover targets for support and numbers of postgraduate researchers.

“To increase significantly the number and proportion of both postgraduate Masters and PhD students, and postdoctoral researchers, providing each with the best possible quality of experience.”

Durham University, Strategy 2010-2020

“To attract increasing numbers of high quality postgraduate research students, and provide them with a stimulating and supportive research environment and training.”

University of Reading, University Research Strategy 2008-2013

Research strategies, like the HEIs' overall strategies, also often mentioned recruiting the best researchers:

“Retaining and recruiting researchers of the highest distinction and potential across the Collegiate University.”

The University of Oxford, Research vision and strategy

In this study, five research strategies specifically refer to research staff and their development, and two others highlight developing all staff:

“...the pivotal role that research staff play in our continued success, and we are eager that research staff get the most out of their time at Cardiff University while being fully supported in their personal and professional development”

Cardiff University, Research Strategy

“..all research staff on academic and research contracts, including research staff on open contracts should be offered appropriate training and career development opportunities with a view to enhancing their research productivity and ultimately their ability to compete effectively for research funding.”

The University of York, Research Strategy

### 3. The professional development of postgraduate researchers

#### 3.1 Researcher development in postgraduate researcher recruitment

Of the 40 HEIs surveyed, 65% of HEIs referenced professional, skills or career development on recruitment sections for postgraduate researchers (summarised in Table 2).

Twelve HEIs (30%) surveyed mention researcher development/skills training or provided a direct link to information about researcher development/skills training on their home page for prospective postgraduate researchers. For example, the University of Leicester mentions skills training as being an integral part of their PhD programmes:

**“A research degree programme provides a thorough training in a chosen field of study, including research techniques and methods as well as a range of generic and transferable skills and results in a piece of original research presented in a thesis.”**

University of Leicester, Research Degrees on Campus Section

The Universities of Durham and Hertfordshire also highlight research training in their research degree pages:

**“All research students will have the opportunity to develop their research and transferable skills through the Research Training Programmes offered by their academic department and the Graduate School.”**

University of Durham, Research Degrees Section

**“As a research student, you benefit from the formal training we offer to all research students and staff through a University-wide programme of seminars and workshops - the Generic Training for Researchers. As well as supporting you by providing knowledge and skills that will help you progress successfully through your research degree studies, this free programme of events is designed to help equip you for a future career.”**

University of Hertfordshire, Research Degree Students Section

Rather than specifically highlighting the training on the postgraduate researcher recruitment homepages, 11 HEIs surveyed (28%) provide a link to a Graduate Schools or other sections such as ‘Why study here’ which have information about researcher development. For example, on Cardiff University’s ‘Why Choose Postgraduate Study?’ page there is a section ‘Increase your transferable skills for a future or current career’ which describes Cardiff’s skills training provision. There is also a link to the ‘Graduate Centre’ from the ‘Postgraduate Study’ home page which has a link to further information about training. University College London provides a link to a section on ‘Realising your potential’ from its ‘Graduate Research’ recruitment page, which has a section on the ‘Skills Development Programme’. Skills Development is also highlighted in the ‘Why UCL?’ section, a link to which is also provided on the ‘Graduate Research’ recruitment page.

Information about researcher development was found by following careers links from postgraduate study home pages for three HEIs (8%). Newcastle University has a link to a section on ‘Careers & Employability’ from its ‘Postgraduate Study’ home page, which has a link to a section on ‘Skills Development’.

All HEIs have information for international students but the information provided is general information for international students rather than specific information on research degrees which highlight researcher training opportunities.

**Table 2: Reference to researcher development within postgraduate researcher recruitment sections of institutions’ websites**

Website sections/pages	Russell Group	1994 Group	Other institutions	Totals (%)
Specific mention of and/or direct link to researcher development on postgraduate study recruitment home page	2	5	5	30
Link to section such as “Graduate School” or “Why study here” from postgraduate study recruitment home page which has information on researcher development	8	3	0	28
Link to careers support section from postgraduate study recruitment home page which has information on researcher development	2	1	0	8
No obvious mention of researcher development in postgraduate study recruitment section	8	3	3	35

## 3.2 Codes of Practice relating to postgraduate researchers

In this study, we found Codes of Practice for research degrees (or equivalent) publicly available on 25 (63%) HEIs' websites and referenced, but not located, on the websites of three other HEIs (see Table 3). The Codes of Practice normally set out policies and procedures for research degrees including procedures for monitoring progress, the role of the supervisor, the role of the student, and the details of the examination procedure. They often also include details of the selection, admission and induction of students and the development of research and other skills. The Codes of Practice are produced by institutions in response to the QAA 'Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes'<sup>10</sup> and hence the content is relatively uniform.

A high number of HEIs surveyed (93%) had publicly visible training and development resources for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) (Table 3).

Information on institutional graduate schools were found on 18 (45%) HEI websites, with graduate schools based in individual departments found on a further 13 HEIs' websites (33%). The graduate schools usually act as hubs for resources for postgraduate researchers, including links to training and development resources, and career services, etc. Occasionally, some HEIs also have resources for early career researchers, including research staff, on their graduate school websites.

## 3.3 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) enables HEIs to collect information about what postgraduate researchers think about their experiences. A total of 108 higher education institutions have taken part at least once between 2007-9, with 82 participating in the 2009 survey<sup>11</sup>.

Of the HEIs in this study 70% have taken part in PRES at least once since 2007 but only a small number of institutions provide evidence of any feedback of results to postgraduate researchers.

The University of Bath has a section entitled, 'Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2010/11' which has sections including: 'What is the PRES?'; 'How do I take part?'; 'Weekly Response Rate'; and 'How are the results used?'

## 3.4 Postgraduate researcher associations

Evidence was found for postgraduate researcher associations in 19 of the HEIs reviewed, however, four of these appeared to be social groups. The majority of societies were found by external web searches, and three societies were found through their Facebook pages. The majority of the postgraduate societies described themselves as the "Voice of postgraduates" and appeared to have a representative role within the institution.

For example, the Imperial College Postgraduate Society serves the postgraduate community in several respects: by providing a lively forum for students to meet and socialise with a wide cross-section of the postgraduate community there; to represent interests that are unique to postgraduate students; and to serve as a point of contact for third parties. One of the purposes of the University of Surrey's Postgraduate Association is that it should:

**"Supply such representatives as may be necessary to sit on appropriate University and Union committees if requested."**

The University of Cambridge Graduate Union represents graduate interests within the University, and also provides graduate-focused services and fosters intercollegiate activities and events.

**Table 3: Sections/pages on institutions' websites with relevance to the development of postgraduate researchers**

Website sections/pages	Russell Group	1994 Group	Other institutions*	Totals (%)
Postgraduate researcher Code of Practice	14	9	2(3)*	63(8)*
Resources for postgraduate researchers including training	20	12	5	93
Institutional graduates school(s)	9	6	3	45
Departmental graduates school(s)	8	5	0	33

\* Figures in parentheses indicate pages/sections which are available on the institution's intranet only.

<sup>10</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeofpractice/](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeofpractice/)

<sup>11</sup> [www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduate/pres](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduate/pres)

## 4. The professional development of research staff

### 4.1 Researcher development in research staff recruitment

Staff recruitment sections of the websites were examined in order to find out whether specific reference was made to professional development opportunities for research staff. The 'Jobs' sections were normally accessible directly from HEIs' home pages, and also from the human resources sections. There were also often links to opportunities from the research pages. In most cases researcher development is not mentioned in the job descriptions/further particulars for research staff vacancies, although a small number of institutions do provide reference to their commitment to development through links to general staff development.

For example, the University of the West of England includes the following statement in the further particulars for a research associate:

**"To offer a staff and student experience which emphasises personal development, attainment, creativity, innovation and engagement built on a platform of excellence."**

Durham University has the following statement in the job details for Postdoctoral Research Assistants:

**"Durham University is committed to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. For further information please visit the Research Staff web pages on [www.dur.ac.uk/hr/researchstaff/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/hr/researchstaff/)"**

As the following examples illustrate, some institutions emphasise training and development opportunities as part of a broader commitment to develop staff without specific emphasis on support for research staff.

The University of Bristol includes links on its 'Working at Bristol' pages under 'Why choose Bristol?' to 'Positive Working Environment and Excellent Benefits' which outlines services such as a 'Career coaching service'.

The University of Southampton has a section on 'Working with us' which has a link to information on 'Development and training'. There are also a number of staff profiles in the 'Working with us' section, including a research scientist.

The University of Nottingham has a number of links to benefits of working there on its 'Jobs' pages under the headings of 'training and development' and 'career development':

**"The University is committed to the development of its staff. All staff are encouraged to attend courses, most of which are free of charge."**

**"As an employer with education as part of our core business, we care deeply about career and personal development. This starts with a structured induction programme to make you feel welcome and part of the team. An annual performance and development review helps identify your career aspirations and structure your individual development plan. We also have our own in-house Staff Training and Development Unit which provides an extensive programme of courses designed for all career stages. We also offer mentoring opportunities to support career development."**

De Montfort University includes in job further particulars 'participating in staff development' as a requirement of the job.

There is little evidence for specific targeted recruitment of international research staff on HEI websites although some institutions have sections in their jobs sections on 'Applying from abroad' (The University of Nottingham) or 'International recruitment' (The University of Southampton).

## 4.2 Human resources and staff development strategies

The HEIs' websites that were reviewed had human resources sections which contained many resources and policies pertaining to research staff. Publicly available human resources sections were found on 36 HEIs websites in this study (90%) which set out policies and procedures relating to the employment of staff. These highlighted key areas which often include equality and diversity, pay/salary scales, recruitment and a list of policies and procedures with information on induction and appraisal.

As Table 4 highlights, 36 of the surveyed HEIs (90%) had publicly visible staff development sections on their websites with specific human resources and/or staff development strategies available on 19 HEIs' websites (47%).

In general, human resources and staff development strategies address all staff:

"The University is committed to the personal and professional development of all staff. This is a prime responsibility of Faculties and Departments. Those with management responsibility for others are encouraged to support actively the development of the performance and effectiveness of their staff in the achievement of their objectives."

The University of Bath, Staff Development Policy

"Develop human resources practice that optimises the ability to recruit, develop, reward and retain the best staff, and foster an environment that inspires staff to make a full contribution to the University's corporate objectives."

The University of Reading, Human Resources Strategy 2007-2011

However, some HEIs' HR policies and strategies recognise the needs of different groups of staff, including researchers:

"To manage and develop research staff more effectively, including finding ways to integrate CRS more fully into the collegiate University"

The University of Oxford, Rewarding and Developing People at Oxford

"All research staff on academic and research contracts, including research staff on open contracts, should be offered appropriate training and career development opportunities with a view to enhancing their research productivity and ultimately their ability to compete effectively for research funding."

The University of York, Research Strategy

"Increase the capacity of the University to offer career development opportunities, for example better support for researchers at the beginning of their careers, and the advancement of new teaching standards."

The University of Birmingham, Human Resources Strategy 2007-2012

Most commonly, HEIs' human resources strategies, like HEIs' overall strategies, address the development of staff in general, often in the context of equipping staff to achieve the institution's corporate aims and recognition of staff value:

"...attract, retain, motivate and support high quality staff, recognising that its staff are its most valuable assets."

The University of Nottingham, HR Strategy

"Supporting and developing the University's greatest asset – our people."

The University of Birmingham, Human Resources Home Page.

Ten HEIs in this study have specific guidance relating to the management of research staff. For example, the University of Leicester has produced a 'Contract Research Staff Career Management Handbook' which mentions the Concordat and sets out processes and procedures that affect research staff. Loughborough University, Cambridge and Queen's University Belfast all have Codes of Practice for research staff employment.

Table 4: Staff development sections/pages on institutions' websites

Website sections/pages	Russell Group*	1994 Group*	Other institutions	Totals (%)
Human resources pages/section	19(1)	12	5	90(3)
Separate human resources/staff development strategy	10	5	4	48
Research pages/section	20	12	7	98
Separate research strategy	7(1)	4	5	40(3)
Staff development/training section	20	11(1)	5	90(3)

\* Figures in parentheses indicate pages/sections which are available on the institution's intranet only.

### 4.3 Training and professional development for research staff

Thirty-six surveyed HEIs (90%) had publicly visible sections on professional development and training for staff. These sections list a large range of short courses for staff ranging from courses on teaching to leadership and management. The majority of HEIs (75%) in this study have publicly visible sections containing information specifically for research staff (Table 5).

Thirty-one institutions (78%) in this study have pages with training and development resources, with an additional two HEIs providing links to intranet only resources. Notably this is lower than the number with resources for PGRs (93%; see Section 3.2). Where there are links to specific resources for research staff these often include many of the resources generally available for all staff.

It is notable that a higher proportion of Russell Group (95%) and 1994 Group (92%) institutions have publicly visible training resources than other institutions (13%), which may reflect the focus and resources provided through Roberts funding.

### 4.4 Appraisal

In general, all HEIs have induction and appraisal policies in place for all staff, with appraisals specifically mentioned in seven institutional strategy documents:

**“Revised arrangements for the induction and appraisal of staff are being introduced; the practical emphasis will be on communicating and achieving desired outcomes, linked with more structured personal development planning.”**

Kings College London, 2006-2016 Strategic Plan

Appraisal schemes specifically for staff on short term contracts and documentation relating to appraisal was not found for 34 HEIs (85%). One case was found where the appraisal scheme appeared to be just for academic staff, and another where there was a scheme for academic and research staff.

Increasing appraisal participation rates was targeted in a number of human resource strategies. In addition, some Concordat implementation plans have actions relating to reviewing the appraisal schemes for research staff. For example, one of the University of Glasgow’s Concordat Implementation Plan’s priorities is:

**“Tailoring the existing Performance & Development Review scheme for academic staff to meet the Concordat’s principles”**

The University of Hertfordshire has an action in its Concordat Implementation Action Plan to:

**“Incorporate researcher requirements into existing projects relating to induction and appraisal. Brief current project owners.”**

### 4.5 Careers in Research Online Survey

Overall, 34 of the 40 HEIs studied (85%) had participated in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) after 2005 with evidence for using CROS to benchmark performance found for 17 HEIs (43%). Evidence as to whether the themes from the CROS data had been fed back to staff varied. A number of institutions had published CROS reports on the research staff sections of their websites, but it was not clear whether institutions had disseminated the results to staff directly. In contrast, in August 2010 Lancaster University held an open forum for researchers to feed back the results from CROS and to consider options for the university. At the University of Manchester, CROS is mentioned in a Research Staff Training Skills Newsletter. The article states that staff are developing an action plan based on the issues raised. There is a section on CROS on the University of Reading website where it is stated that surveys have affected provision for research staff as well as survey reports from 2003 and 2005.

**Table 5: Sections/pages on institutions’ websites with relevance to the development of research staff and the Concordat**

Website sections/pages	Russell Group*	1994 Group*	Other institutions*	Totals (%)
Research staff pages/section	18(1)	10	2(2)	75(8)
Research staff training pages	19	11	1(2)	78(5)

\* Figures in parentheses show documents which were not publicly available but which were referred to.

## 4.6 Research staff associations

Evidence for institution-wide research staff associations (RSAs) was found in 14 of the HEIs surveyed, and evidence for individual departmental research staff associations was found in 10 others (some of those HEIs with institution-wide associations also had department-based associations). The institution-wide associations ranged from societies which had a social function and a representative role, to research staff forums which were convened by the institution.

For example, the University of Warwick has a University Forum for Research Staff, which includes among its member the Deputy Vice-Chancellor:

“to serve a general networking function and to provide a focus for gathering research staff views on issues such as induction, training and development opportunities etc.”

The University of St Andrews has a Research Staff Forum to represent the views of research staff on University policies and procedures and to discuss matters which affect research staff. The Forum is convened by the Deputy Principle. The University of Cardiff also has a Research Staff Policy Forum focused on UK and University policy developments affecting the career development of research staff across the University. Similarly, the University of Glasgow has established an annual Research Staff Conference.

## 4.7 The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the HR Excellence in Research Award

Reference was found to the Concordat on 35 HEI websites (87%) in this study including all but one Russell Group HEIs (Table 6). Normally, the Concordat is referred to on research staff pages, with occasional references in overall strategy documents (University of Liverpool, Queen Mary, University of London) or in recruitment details (Strathclyde University).

Cardiff and Edinburgh Universities have research staff pages with a specific section on the Concordat describing what it is and what it means for research staff. Details of their Concordat implementation action plans are published as well as details of their HR Excellence in Research Award. There are also links to the ‘Cardiff University Concordat Action Plan 2010-12’ and the Edinburgh ‘Code of Practice for the Management of Research Staff’.

Kings College London has page on the Concordat under the ‘Other information’ section of the ‘Researcher Development Programme’ pages of the ‘Graduate School’ website. The page describes the principles of the Concordat and mentions the ‘Researcher Development Unit’ is carrying out a ‘Mapping and Gapping Exercise’ (sic).

The University of York has an ‘Information for Research Staff’ section under the ‘Staff Development’ section of the human resources website. There is a highlighted box outlining their ‘Concordat Action Plan’, and details of the HR Excellence in Research Award.

The University of East Anglia has a ‘RS Connections’ section under the ‘Centre for Staff and Educational Development’ with a video welcome from the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, Enterprise and Engagement. This message makes commitment to the principles of the Concordat and the EU Charter and Code, mentions the ‘Code for Research Staff’ which commits the University to helping research staff with professional and personal development and also states that every school has a senior member of staff who is the Research Staff Coordinator.

Durham University has a ‘Code of Practice for Ensuring Sound Conduct in Research’, which mentions the Concordat twice in the context of training and mentoring. The document also states that Durham supports the principles of the Concordat.

The University of Sussex provides a link to the Concordat on the ‘Career choices’ page of the ‘For research staff’ section of the ‘Careers and Employability Centre’ website.

Table 6: The Concordat

Website sections/pages	Russell Group*	1994 Group*	Other institutions*	Totals (%)
Mention of the Concordat	19	12	4	88
Concordat	9	4(2)	2(1)	38(8)
Publication of action plan	6(3)	3(2)**	3	30(13)

\* Figures in parentheses show documents which were not publicly available but which were referred to.

\*\* One institution had published actions rather than an action plan.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall 60% of the institutions reviewed in this study made a specific commitment to the professional development of researchers in their institutional, human resources or research strategies. A quarter of institutional strategies reviewed highlighted career development and training for postgraduate researchers with 93% providing training and development resources accessible online. We found 18% of those HEIs reviewed specifically mentioned the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in their public strategies and 87% referred to the Concordat on their web pages.

### Key findings

- 25% of HEIs make a commitment to researchers in their institutional strategy, with 38% referencing researcher development in their specific research strategies
- 73% of HEIs highlight the value of staff with 18% specifically referencing research staff and/or the Concordat in their strategy documents. There is a clear commitment to equality and diversity with 93% of HEIs having publicly available equality and diversity resources and policies, with 70% making commitments in their top level strategy

In relation to postgraduate researchers:

- A quarter of institutional strategies reviewed mention career development and training of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) with 15% highlighting the value of PGRs
- 65% of the HEIs in the study make specific mention of and/or provide a direct link to personal, professional or career development on their postgraduate study recruitment home pages
- Codes of Practice for research degrees (or equivalent) were publicly available on 63% of HEIs' websites and were referenced but not located on the websites of three other HEIs
- Training and development resources for postgraduate researchers were found to be publicly available on 93% of HEIs' websites that were reviewed
- The majority of institutions emphasise their focus on recruitment of 'the best' or 'world-class' researchers with development opportunities particularly highlighted in the recruitment of postgraduate researchers
- A total of 108 higher education institutions have taken part in the PRES survey at least once between 2007-9<sup>12</sup>, including 70% of HEIs in this study but with only a small number of institutions evidencing any feedback of results to postgraduate researchers

In relation to research staff:

- Resources for research staff (including training and development resources) were visible on 78% of HEI websites reviewed for the study. This figure was 95% and 92% respectively for Russell Group and 1994 Group institutions which may reflect the higher levels of focus and resources provided through Roberts funding
- 36 HEIs (90%) have publicly available human resources sections on their websites which set out policies and procedures relating to the employment of staff, highlighting key areas which often include equality and diversity, pay/salary scales, and recruitment
- Most of the institutions (85%) had participated in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS)<sup>13</sup> in the last six years with some evidence of feedback to researchers and use of CROS for benchmarking
- 90% of the HEIs reviewed had publicly visible sections on staff development and training
- 87% of HEIs in the study mention the Concordat on their web pages with 45% of these stating they have undertaken a gap analysis of how they meet the principles and/or produced an action plan for Concordat implementation

### Recommendations

- The majority of HEIs (60%) reviewed in this study had clear public strategic institutional commitments to the professional and career development of researchers. All institutions may wish to consider the external visibility of their strategic and operational commitments to researcher development
- There is an opportunity for HEIs and other stakeholders to enhance the visibility of the professional development opportunities for researchers in the UK as part of their strategies to attract the best doctoral researchers and research staff both nationally and internationally
- The HR Excellence in Research Award enables institutional commitments to researcher development to be publicly recognised at an international level. All institutions may wish to consider gaining the award
- There are high levels of engagement across UK HEIs in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). A greater emphasis could be given to using the results to visibly demonstrate progress and provide public feedback to researchers on the key issues and actions arising as a result of the surveys

<sup>12</sup> [www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduate/pres](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduate/pres)

<sup>13</sup> [www.cros.ac.uk](http://www.cros.ac.uk)

## Appendix A:

### The institutions in the review

Institution	Grouping	HR Excellence in Research Award at Jan 2011
Aston University	Other	Yes
University of Bath	1994	No
University of Birmingham	Russell	No
University of Bristol	Russell	Yes
Brunel University	Other	No
University of Cambridge	Russell	Yes
Cardiff University	Russell	Yes
De Montfort University	Other	Yes
Durham University	1994	No
University of East Anglia	1994	No
The University of Edinburgh	Russell	Yes
University of Glasgow	Russell	Yes
University of Hertfordshire	Other	Yes
University of Huddersfield	Other	No
Imperial College London	Russell	No
King's College London	Russell	No
Lancaster University	1994	No
University of Leeds	Russell	Yes
University of Leicester	1994	No
University of Liverpool	Russell	No
London School of Economics (LSE)	Russell	Yes
Loughborough University	1994	Yes
The University of Manchester	Russell	No
Newcastle University	Russell	Yes
The University of Nottingham	Russell	No
University of Oxford	Russell	No
The University of Reading	1994	Yes
Sheffield Hallam University	Other	No
The University of Sheffield	Russell	No
University of Southampton	Russell	No
University of St Andrews	1994	No
University of Strathclyde	Other	No
University of Surrey	1994	No
University of Sussex	1994	No
University of Warwick	Russell	No
The University of York	1994	Yes
Queen's University Belfast	Russell	No
Queen Mary, University of London	1994	No
University of the West of England, Bristol	Other	No
University College London	Russell	No

## Appendix B:

### Specific areas and information sought through review of institutional websites

For postgraduate researchers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Availability of a research degree Code of Practice/evidence of structures and systems for induction/progress review</li> <li>■ Explicit mention of international postgraduate researchers (PGR) and commitment to PGR development</li> <li>■ Evidence of a PGR association</li> <li>■ Evidence of participation in PRES and provision of feedback</li> <li>■ QAA audit reports</li> </ul>
Researcher development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mention of the commitment to the recruitment, selection and retention of excellent researchers (including whether there is an international focus)</li> <li>■ Whether or not researcher training is mentioned in recruitment pages</li> <li>■ Statement that or evidence that research staff are valued</li> <li>■ Commitment to and promotion of career development for researchers</li> <li>■ Evidence of a research staff association</li> <li>■ Evidence that there are equality and diversity policies for researchers</li> <li>■ Commitment to monitor and evaluate the implementation of plans</li> <li>■ Evidence of participation in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and the provision of feedback to staff</li> <li>■ Evidence of plans for sustainability post-Roberts funding</li> <li>■ Evidence of structures and systems for induction and appraisal of research staff</li> <li>■ Researcher Development Framework: mention and inclusion in training plans</li> </ul>
Specific issues related to the Concordat:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mention of the Concordat</li> <li>■ Evidence of an analysis of alignment with Concordat and whether it is public or internal</li> <li>■ Publication of implementation/action plan for aligning more closely with the Concordat</li> <li>■ Commitment to monitor/evaluate process</li> <li>■ Evidence of policy changes in light of the Concordat</li> <li>■ Mention of CROS for benchmarking progress</li> <li>■ Evidence of engagement of staff and researchers with the Concordat</li> </ul>