

Internal Gap Analysis and Action Plan

To support the implementation of The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Version 4 – 28 March 2014

In 2000, LSBU introduced the Research Concordat through its document *Implementing the Research Concordat at London South Bank University*. The purpose of this document was to implement procedures for the recruitment, training and well-being of Contract Researchers, with four basic principles:

1. Research staff should be in a position to contribute to the ongoing development of the University's research activities;
2. New research staff should receive induction to the University, and be offered support and advice throughout;
3. Research staff should be offered training and development, and these should be identified through an appraisal system; and
4. A named 'supervisor' should be assigned to guide staff through the process and in their development.

The four LSBU principles were further distilled into the following ideals for 2013:

1. That Contract Researchers are central to the further development of research culture at LSBU;
2. That Contract Researchers should be engaged in their personal development, reviewed annually in an annual appraisal (Annex 1);
3. That Contract Researchers be guided and mentored by an appropriate person during their time at LSBU; and
4. That appropriate training and development be made available to Contract Researchers.

The existing document provided the foundation for Research Concordat compliance at the University until 2013, when a major review of the Concordat at the University was carried out, which sought to connect the provision for Contract Researcher support to that provided by the University's successful Key Skills provision for postgraduate researchers. Since 2004, the University has operated a successful research skills portfolio approach to research skills for postgraduates, which led to the introduction of a successful Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Research Skills for all postgraduate researchers. The success of this model, its focus on continuing professional development, informs the further development of the Concordat. The University was commended in the QAA Institutional Audit in March 2010 for good practice as a result of the accreditation of research training through the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Skills: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Reports/Documents/RG638LondonSouthBank.pdf>

In order to oversee the reorganisation and implementation of the review, the University established a Concordat Working Group to identify and evaluate existing systems, processes and procedures against the seven principles of the Concordat: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/vitae-concordat-vitae-2011.pdf> This group implemented the review process and engaged widely across faculties and senior management to ensure that the provision was as robust as possible.

Staff consultation for the gap analysis and action plan was conducted by obtaining feedback from research staff and researchers across the University who attended a number of networking lunches/focus groups and other research seminars (hosted by the Central Research Support Department throughout 2013) in relation to the existing University Research Concordat. The experiences and opinions of new and established researchers (including senior research managers) were recorded and mapped against existing infrastructure and processes resulting in a gap analysis and action plan to shape priorities after obtaining support from the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic). There is currently researcher representation on three of the Faculty Research Committees (FRCs) and from two faculties on the Research Concordat Group. Through extensive review and discussion of the various iterations of the gap analysis by the Research Concordat Group (RCG), this led to a range of actions to further strengthen the implementation of the Concordat principles such as research staff being emphasised as a key group to consider as part of highlighting their University Staff Development Profiles as well as the provision of online career development resources for research staff.

The action plan was used as a working document in conjunction with a major review of the University's existing Concordat Implementation Plan (July and October 2013 versions), which emphasised the University's commitment to the Concordat, before the latter's approval at the University Research Committee on 30 January 2014.

The primary approaches taken in the newly-approved Concordat Implementation Plan document were:

1. The goals of the Research Concordat can be met by the use of a reflective development cycle, in line with that recommended by the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC), and fulfilling the aims of the seven principles of the Concordat;
2. The development cycle involves the Contract Researcher in their own personal development, guided by their Contract Manager.
3. Each Contract Researcher is to be supported in his/her development by a Contract Manager, who will review development progress throughout the period of employment, and record this in the annual reporting cycle; and
4. Mentoring will be actively implemented.

Following approval, the Research Concordat Group (RCG) will implement the University's revised Research Concordat by:

1. Meeting the Heads of Department from all faculties by the end of April 2014 to ensure effective engagement with its principles; followed by;
2. Meeting with their research staff to initiate its principles in June 2014. The RCG will meet regularly to review progress, as outlined below.

The Research Concordat Group is chaired by the University's Research Support Manager, and the group is composed of academic researchers and professional services staff to ensure effective working practice:

1. Ms Sarah Plant (Chair) Research Support Manager, Central Research Support Department
2. Prof Lesley Baillie, Florence Nightingale Foundation Chair, Faculty of Health and Social Care
3. Mrs Janet Cattini, Organisation Development Senior Manager, Human Resources Department
4. Prof Peter Doyle, Postgraduate Skills Coordinator, Central Research Support Department
5. Mr Chung Lam, Research Support Officer, Central Research Support Department
6. Prof Dilip Patel, Professor of Information Systems; Pro Dean External, Faculty of Business
7. Prof Tracey Reynolds, Acting Head of Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences
8. Dr Yvonne Robinson, Human Resources Department, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences
9. Prof Bridget Shield, Professor of Acoustics, Faculty of Engineering, Science and The Built Environment
10. Dr Cecilia Vindrola, Research Fellow, Faculty of Health and Social Care

The University's action plan has been compiled by the Research Support Officer who since December 2013 has chaired the monthly Action Plan Working Group, comprising the members of the RCG plus Mrs Joanne Monk, Deputy Director of Human Resources, Human Resources Department and Dr Michelle Stewart, Course Director Careers Guidance, Faculty of Health and Social Care. Continuous feedback was sought from the members of the group through direct meetings and email. Additional consultation was provided by Prof Shushma Patel, Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee and Dr Ed Tinley, Secretary to the University Research Committee.

The action plan sets out existing practices and identifies further actions that are required to embed them, as well as recognising opportunities for further improvements and was approved by the University Research Committee on 13 March 2014 and will be delivered by members of the RCG who will meet three times a year to ensure its delivery. The Central Research Support Department has begun disseminating the University's newly-agreed Concordat Implementation Plan through meeting with Heads of Department in each faculty. An annual strategic review will be carried out by the RCG to evaluate progress and set actions for the future by making recommendations to the University Research Committee. During 2014, researchers across the University will participate in the implementation of the action plan through further networking lunches and awareness sessions hosted by the Central Research Support Department. To monitor the implementation of the action plan, the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigator Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) (or equivalent, facilitated by the Central Research Support Department) will be run biennially from spring 2015 onwards.

The latest version of the action plan can be found on the University website: <http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/research>