

# Concordat Implementation Group

13 May 2019, 10:30–12:00  
BS/007, Berrick Saul Building

## MINUTES

**Attendees:** Deborah Smith (Chair), Steve Ashby, Nick Barraclough, Francina Clayton, Karen Clegg, Ana Duarte, Kate Freeman (minutes), Namrata Ganneri, Corrine Howie, Stephanie Prady, Anna Reader, Liz Rylott, Paul Walton, Helen Weatherly

**Apologies:** Pep Mateos Gonzalez

### 1. Approve [minutes](#) from the last meeting held on 17 January 2019 (*Encl.1*)

The minutes from the last meeting were approved subject to the reference to the Athena SWAN working group under 18/19-5 being amended to state 'Athena SWAN Steering Group'.

### 2. Review outstanding actions from the minutes

Review of the York Concordat Consultation: submission and process

*18/19-4 Action: KC to produce a list of the research associations who were known to submit a response and to share if approval is given*

Biology, Electronic Engineering, Health Sciences, Physics, Psychology, Environment and History. Biology, Electronic Engineering and Psychology had been invited to share their response with CIG. Biology, Electronic Engineering and Psychology had done so.

**18/19-9 Action: KC to put copies of the departmental responses in the CIG Google folder, with confidential information redacted as necessary.**

*18/19-5 Recommendation/Action: Re the collection of postdoc destination data. Consider under Athena SWAN working group and recommend to faculties as best practice.*

Collating postdoc destination data was difficult across the university sector. It was noted that the University of Liverpool (lead) and the Universities of Manchester and Lancaster (partners) have been awarded a Research England Development (RED) Fund (under an N8 banner) to support a [PROSPER project](#), to develop a model for careers enhancement and skills for Postdocs. [Griffith University in Canada](#) had surveyed their ECRs and published fully searchable results. It is possible that their approach (or the PROSPER) model could be used by York in due course.

As there had been no meetings of the Athena Swan steering group or working group since the last CIG meeting, Anna Reader offered to ask faculty working groups for examples of good practice.

DS commented that it would be helpful to see where York sits in the context of the N8 project above. Feedback from the Research Staff Conference in 2018 had identified casualisation as having a disproportionately negative impact on women.

**18/19-10 Action: Postdoc destination data collection to be discussed further at end of June once feedback has been obtained on the Athena Swan review submission**

*18/19-6 Action: Update to be given by Corinne Howie on the review of the use of FTCs at next meeting.*

Corinne Howie reported that the collective agreement from 2005 remained in force. Managers are required to justify fixed-term appointments on the grounds of project scope and funding availability. Where a researcher is to be offered a fourth contract or has been in post for 6 years, they will be transferred automatically to an open contract. Exceptions are where a short extension to a contract is required to complete a project. In 2006, conditions across contract and ongoing staff were harmonised to give staff identical benefits, irrespective of their contract status. Postdoc research staff have identical conditions to lecturers.

It was noted that rolling contracts do not necessarily provide more security so the PI needs to manage expectations and treat the researcher appropriately in terms of their development. It was acknowledged that the current process can cause anxiety for staff on FTCs, and encouraged people to move on rather than risk not being awarded another contract. Maybe more could be done to retain staff who were approaching the end of their contract. It was recognised, however, that a balance needed to be struck between managing expectations and the feasibility of there being ongoing roles. This could be addressed by encouraging ongoing dialogue between the PI and the researcher. It was noted that research contract staff could go on the redeployment register within one year of their contract end. It was suggested that the opportunity for redeployment should be added to the information provided to prospective candidates.

Although information on FTC conditions is freely available, misconceptions were common and could be addressed by advertising the benefits of working at York more vigorously. Various improvements to communication methods were suggested: the Working at York web pages could be made more attractive to entice prospective researchers; awareness could be raised of the flexible working and leave options promoted by Athena Swan; rethinking the staff survey process so that relevant feedback could be collected.

**18/19-11 Action: AR, CH, KC and DS to discuss FTC communications relating to FTCs and report back to the next meeting.**

Paul Walton suggested that departments offer bridging funds to cover gaps in contracts. This had been done in the past but it was not known how successful this had been. This would also be considered in the off-line discussion.

Research Staff Conferences, Summer 2019

*18/19-7 Action: Members of the Concordat Implementation Group to let Karen know if they would be happy to be part of this new working group.*

Liz Rylott, Helen Weatherley had volunteered to join this group.

Preparing for Fellowship Success Training Event

*Action 18/19-8: KC to get hold of the programme from Jane Hill to see if there is anything that we should be replicating.*

Done.

**3. Consideration of the Concordat Consultation Report published 1 May**

Feedback had been encouraging. KC thanked Namrata, Francina, Liz and Helen for their help in compiling York's response. The level of engagement in the University was illustrated by York having the highest number of group

responses of any university and the sixth highest number of individual responses.

The suggestion that 20% of time should be allocated to professional development had proved contentious with pre-92 universities where there was a higher reliance on grant income. Devoting a proportion of dedicated time to professional development would work in a performance review context however stipulating a fixed number of days was felt to be overly prescriptive. It was suggested that the areas considered to be professional development should be listed to help post docs to understand what is available. The tension between managing expectations vs the job the person is paid to do was mentioned. An independent person could determine if the activity was relevant to an individual's career development.

It was noted that some private industries give 10% for workers to do what they like as the benefit to the employer outweighs the time expenditure. A similar scheme could work at UoY however this would need to be evidenced in order to convince PIs that this is a good approach. It was further noted that this could potentially lead to gender inequalities and that closer alignment with Athena Swan submissions would need to be considered.

It was suggested that York could run a pilot project in a research unit or department e.g. Chemistry to test out what 10% might look like. This would need to encourage open dialogue about career development and the support available. The Pilot could sample across Depts to tease out differences and commonalities. 10 days may be impossible. Suggest asking researchers to compile a portfolio of professional development activity undertaken so that other post docs can see and emulate.

It was noted that UKRI grants may contain expectations with regard to career development. There would be benefit in looking at what is available across UoY. It was suggested that the University should ask UKRI to fund a pilot about funding for post docs. It was agreed however that the pilot needed to be scoped first -to be considered at the next meeting.

**18/19-12 Action: CH, SP, PW, KC and FC to discuss a potential pilot framework and report back to the next meeting.**

#### **4. Research Staff Conferences: 16 May Social Science and Arts and Humanities; 27 June Sciences**

It was noted that the Biology Department would be holding an away day on 27 June which would affect attendance at the Sciences conference. KC confirmed that the conference proceedings could be recorded and shared. Research staff were welcome to attend either (or both) events regardless of discipline area and staff members from Sciences departments could benefit from attending the careers section of the 16 May event. Some discussion took place about offering a separate session for Biology. Agreed that in future all dates would be sent to HoDs in good time to avoid any clashes.

**18/19-13 Action: All to raise awareness of the conference dates with colleagues in their departments. KC to contact Biology research staff to invite them to the conference on 16 May.**

#### **5. Training Event for Postdocs and ECRs looking to develop a Fellowship Application - [Enc. 6](#)**

A 1.5 day event had been held at the end of March 2019 to offer support and mentorship for the grant application process. The event had been oversubscribed with 28 applications for 18 places. The networking dinner had been a particularly useful component and supplemented the training. It was proposed that the training event be run annually and advertised promptly and widely. RETT will follow up with attendees to see whether the training translates into fellowship applications.

Additional leadership training would be provided for those attending the Future Fellows event. KC would discuss this with Rachel Curwen from Research Development and Matt Evans from Chemistry who observed the training.

DS commented that it would be useful to know more about the selection process so that people are at the right stage before they apply. Related to this was the importance of encouraging people to stay at York, and to apply from outside the University for fellowships. These issues needed to be examined by URC.

**18/19-14 Action: KC to develop a further paper on Fellowship for URC and discuss with Rachel Curwen and Matt Evans (Chemistry).**

CIG was pleased to note that the two Daphne Jackson fellowship applications had been approved (Maths and Biology). It was also noted that the Enterprise Fellowship Training Scheme had been submitted to Auril Praxis for funding, with a decision expected shortly.

## **6. AOB**

None.

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### **CIG Meeting dates 2019/2020:**

7 October 15.00-16.00, HG09

12 February 10.30-12.00, HG09

13 May 10.00-11.30, HG17