

## Concordat Implementation Group

20 January 2020, 15:30-17:00

H/G09 Heslington Hall

### MINUTES

**Attendees:** Deborah Smith ([Chair](#)), Nick Barraclough, Karen Clegg, Stewart Barker (minutes), Stephanie Prady, Anna Reader, Liz Rylott, Paul Walton, Anna Grey, Vijay GC, Mia Shandell, Noortje Uphoff, Susan Kane, Anna Einarsdottir

**Apologies:** Steve Ashby, Helen Weatherly, Ana Duarte

**1. Approve minutes from the last meeting held on 13 May 2019 (*Encl.1*)** The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

#### **2. Review outstanding actions from the minutes**

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

*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. **Not actioned. AR - Collation of postdoc destination data is problematic and part of a bigger issue around exit/destination data. Review action in the light of the creation of the new UoY Action Plan 2021***

*18/19-11 Action: AR, CH, KC and DS to discuss communications relating to FTCs and report back to the next meeting. **Not actioned. Still a live issue. HR should be involved.***

*18/19-12 Action: CH, SP, PW, KC and FC to discuss a potential pilot framework of (to enable 10% time allocation for professional development) and report back to the next meeting. 10 days now part of the revised Concordat. Action Closed.*

*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 21 May. Action completed*

18/19-14 Action: KC to develop a further paper on Fellowship for URC and discuss with Rachel Curwen and Matt Evans (Chemistry). [University of York Fellowship Scheme now in place.](#)

### 3. Review and approve the revised ToR and membership (19-20:2)

DS invited comments from the room

- VGC - Ana Duarte excluded, should be added. [KC has already actioned](#)

### 4. The revised 'Researcher Development Concordat'

DS invited KC followed by SK to make comments:

KC:

- The revised RD Concordat has 3 principles: Environment & Culture; Employment and Professional and Career Development. It highlights some challenges across the sector, namely Postdoc destination data & fixed term contracts.
- Challenges for York: What 'counts' as 10 days training; provision of additional training to help researchers develop a research identity; provision of leadership training for all PIs.
- It also offers the opportunity to develop a unified approach to EDI & Athena Swan, and to develop the UoY Fellowship programme in relation to the concordat principles.
- There's an opportunity for wider support and representation, particularly via the [Research Staff Liaison Officers \(RSLOs\)](#).
- York has a solid base of training and development to build upon, in addition to benchmarking from Researchers 14 and N8.

**Action - we need to agree i) if the University wishes to become a signatory and if so ii) to engage researchers in developing a new implementation plan to be published within 12 months of the commitment letter being posted on the Vitae '[Signatories of the Concordat](#)' webpage.**

SK:

- We (Human Resources) fully support the 10 days training initiative, but there's logistical and fairness considerations. We must be mindful of other staff groups around the university.
- How do we measure the training? It's the responsibility of both the individual and the line manager. However there's currently no consequences if staff don't do this, so how do we police it?
- How do we build it into the university's research culture?
- We have to consider resource implications - what can contribute to the 10 days?
- We can align the concordat action plan with the equivalent Athena Swan plan - having oversight over

the two is important.

AR: welcomes the potential for collaboration.

Room opened up for additional comments:

Discussion after LR raises issue of concordat at York needing branding and a logo. DS suggest "Research Concordat", KC suggests "Research Development Concordat". Further discussion around overlapping branding.

SP indicates that some PIs will be resistant, and asks how we ensure equitable access.

AG - Based on attendance at a recent Wellcome Trust meeting, York is ahead of other universities in terms of research culture. Therefore we need to look at what we already do, and how we can do that better. DS - we need to monitor what we do to identify gaps.

AE - Disappointed with wording in the employment section of the concordat - to "seek to improve". We need a more robust commitment. In regards to York, we need better comms from HR regarding the end of researcher's contracts. Issues around job security are significant.

SK - In response, HR isn't in a position to stop using fixed term contracts currently. However we do offer a range of support including the redeployment process, but unsure of how widely known this is.

Discussion about the 10 days training: AR - It would be good to look at monitoring of who's applying, to determine any invisible barriers. SK - we must be mindful that for some, not all of the training will be formal. This is challenging to report, so could it be included in performance reviews? LR agrees, and adds that the data needs to be collectible, suggests allocating codes to different activities? VGC - could a 4 or 5 day core skills training be included (as is used in their department)? Also suggests that RETT could present concordat news/implementation at departmental meetings?

KC asks the RSLOs (MS, NU & VGC) how we can raise visibility about York's approach to concordat as part of a positive research culture.

DS - it's important to look at what the Concordat asks different groups to do, not just as an institution. We must approach this in a holistic way. SP - can we put an emphasis on researchers developing a portfolio? NU - departments must allow researchers to have flexibility in the training they pursue.

AG - How does York do research? Some of these issues aren't just researcher issues, so it's important to unpick those from issues regarding research at York as a whole.

KC - 1 option is to develop something we can put on the website about what we're doing to develop research culture, and use research culture as a 'badge' for concordat work. This would help to prevent the RD Concordat becoming a tick-box exercise, and instead make it a vessel/mechanism for the institutional changes we're making. PVC P&E will have a view on this. AR indicates that Athena Swan needs to be an 'enabling body' as well, which KC agrees could tie

into a website presence regarding York's commitment to developing a positive research culture, with Athena Swan and the Concordat linked in.

AG - Revisiting the 10 days training, would volunteering be included? There's also a perception that leaving academia is still seen as a negative career choice which needs to be addressed. DS replies that there is a huge spectrum of activity around research at York, and agrees, although we also shouldn't make the atmosphere negative for those who are academia focused.

PW - Success of promoting the concordat will hinge on being coupled with a strong message on research culture from the University.

DS - looking at 10 days training, are there any other comments/suggestions?

KC - Ultimately we/UoY can decide on what is included. There is a desire across the Russell Group to share what we're including, which we could use to produce a checklist for PIs, or incorporate into performance reviews. Knowledge exchange, relationship building and Enterprise all need to be considered as part of the 10 days also not just in terms of participation in workshops but as part of mentoring relationships if we go down that route. The creation of the action plan needs to be informed by as many researchers as possible.

SP - Can we set up a consultation with academics?

DS - Important to remember that a list of training would be for guidance. It should be open ended, yet meaningful.

SK - If we are giving individuals flexibility on their training, line managers need to accept that they'll have to trust their staff. We need to educate that it's not about PIs policing the situation, but rather an adult relationship. It needs to be built into performance reviews.

NU - questions why the training has to be directly relevant to the researcher's line of work. The point of doing some training is to expand your skill sets.

DS - I strongly support flexibility, but it needs to be monitored, possibly as part of a trial period. MS agrees, and AE contributes that they believe almost everyone would choose something genuinely beneficial.

LR - We should use the RSLOs to gather as many ideas and examples of training as possible. DS counter-proposes that the list should be kept streamlined to begin with.

**DS - Asks the room, do we want to sign the concordat?** Room is in full agreement.

**Action: DS to feedback this decision officially to the VC**

**Action: KC to include in a paper to URC, send to DS first**

**Action: KC to chair a Concordat Action Planning Working Group (CAGWG) sub-group meeting on March 16th**

**Action: SB & KC to send out doodle poll for additional sub-meeting, and provide further info on February sub-meeting**

## **5. Update on Provision of Fellowship Training and Support - verbal update by KC**

The 1st 'Preparing for Fellowship Success' training and dinner ran in March 2019. 1.5 days non-residential. 18 attendees, all supported by their departments and typically a supervisor attended with them. KC has followed up on last year's attendees and had 6 responses. 2 of those now have fellowships, and the others either have or will be submitting applications. Other attendees will be followed up.

It was agreed by URC and UEB in summer 2019 that the training would run as part of a programme of support for the new University of York Fellowship Scheme. Comms to be sent out with a deadline of February 7th for nominations and applications. All applications to be reviewed and approved by the new Fellowship Coordination Committee. This year's event will be held on 4/5th March, including a networking dinner to which the PVC P&E will be invited.

## **6. Researcher Conference 2020: 21 May**

KC - Agreed at the last RETT SG, that we will run a one day conference for researchers and final year PGR students, with a focus on Interdisciplinary research. (KC passes draft objectives/ideas around room). There is potential for us to have discussions around the Concordat in the afternoon. Should we add "positive research culture" into the title? AE - there should probably be a separate event on research culture, but agrees with KC that the discussion about research culture can be primed at the researcher conference.

PW - Are we giving the attendees tools to develop interdisciplinary contacts/projects?

AG - Should it be more about working in interdisciplinary research - looking at what it's like, and the issues, culture & process.

LR - We need a 'hook' - can we use to 10 days training? Looking at what other people have done? Would be good to invite external individuals too

KC - for invited papers we could ask them to highlight what skills they have had to develop. What shall the theme be?

DS - frame it around the concordat. SK - around the three themes. LR - help the attendees crystallise changes they would make as individuals.

NU - will we know enough about our plans by then? KC - Yes

KC - How about an open invite for research staff associations about what they're doing?

DS - Can I check, is the aim to have 1 event, and increase the numbers? KC - Yes

**Action: KC to develop with the Concordat Action Planning Working Group (CAGWG) a conference programme**

## **7. AOB**

AR reports that a Women In Research Conference is being planned and will be held in March. This is currently in development with Lorna Warnock from RETT.

**Future Concordat Implementation Group Meetings will be chaired by the PVC P&E, Professor Kiran Trehan.**

### **Confirmed meeting dates:**

13 May 10.00-11.30 HG/17

5 October 14.30 - 16.00 - room tbc

1 February 2021: 14.00-15.30 - room tbc

19 May 2021: 10.00 - 11.30 - room tbc

### **Concordat Action Planning Working Group (CAPWG):**

**15 June 11.30-12.30**

**8 October - time tbc**