

Minutes from the Concordat Implementation Group Meeting

17 August 2016, 10.00-12.00, H/G17 Heslington Hall

Present: Deborah Smith - Chair (DS), Nick Barraclough (NB), Katrin Besser (KB), Karen Clegg (KC), Anna Duarte (AD), Anna Grey (AG), Alex Medcalf (AM), Stephanie Prady (SP)

Apologies: Rasha Ibrahim, Liz Rylott, Helen Selvidge, Helen Weatherly

In attendance: Helen Goodwill (minutes)

1. Agreement of the minutes and review of actions from the Implementation Group Meeting on 15 March 2016 (Enc1.August16)

The Group confirmed that the previous minutes were an accurate record of the March 2016 meeting. All actions from the March minutes had been completed and the following update was provided:

- i) Falling Walls – Public Engagement Event for Researchers

Action: Group members to send the link round and gather feedback to pass directly on to Karen.

KC confirmed that while she hadn't received much feedback directly, Karen Bloor, Research Champion, is keen to get something started as part of her research area and theme. AD mentioned that a mini-event similar to Falling Walls had taken place in CHE so has experience of it if KC would like any feedback or suggestions. The event will be arranged within Karen Bloor's own theme (Health and Wellbeing) but is likely to be open to all.

KC informed the group that the Vitae (national) Concordat Strategy Group have expressed that they intend to review the Concordat principles and their ongoing relevance. The aim is to do this during 2017 in time for any 'refresh'/activities in 2018 – the ten year anniversary of the Concordat. This may well be due to lobbying by the Researchers14 group who have already drafted their suggested revisions and will be sending them to the new Chair once appointed.

2. Minutes from the DRC/Concordat representative meeting at the Shared Practice Event (Enc2.August16)

DS commented that the information contained within the minutes was impressive and served to demonstrate just how much activity is going on within departments with lots of good ideas that could be translated into other departments.

DS queried who the other departments were who had not contributed.

Action: KC to provide DS with information on which departments have not yet provided any information and how many researchers are within those departments. Completed.

There was consensus from the group that it would be a good idea to hold the DRC shared practice element as a standalone activity on an annual basis in order to help celebrate and spread good practice more widely.

Action: KC and HG to confirm a date in the diary for next year.

AG queried whether this sharing of good practice could be applied to other staff groups. Response was that the staff survey highlighted that researchers, particularly those on fixed term contracts, are the group of staff who indicate that they feel less valued than other members of staff and that specific activities such as promotion for academic staff and the activities that fall under Professional@york such as the Development and Assessment Centres and annual conference cater for other categories of staff. As such there is perhaps more need to celebrate more widely the support that the University offers to its researchers.

Action: HG to contact the DRC/Concordat reps and confirm that there are no objections to the notes from the meeting going on the web for other departments to see (we will take individual names off but keep references to departments).

Action 2: KC/HG to create some further publicity celebrating the way in which researchers at the University are supported and valued.

3. 'HR Excellence in Research Award'

Two-year report on progress made (Enc3.August16)

Concordat Action Plan Review of progress 2014-2016 (Enc4.August16)

Feedback on the report:

- p.2, section 2, point 1 – change the wording 'Level 4 evaluation data' to something more meaningful.
- Comments regarding the table within the same section suggested that there was a lack of clarity regards what the numbers refer to. Simplify the table by keeping the '% of positive responses' column with a further column showing the sample size.
- p.3, Key Achievements section, point 2 – group felt this section needs more substance. The paragraph should refer to the new structure – Equality & Diversity has been reconfigured and the E&D Committee is chaired by the VC, with the Athena SWAN Steering Group (chaired by DS) reporting into this group. SS and A&H are now included in Athena SWAN so has an institutional-wide remit instead of being faculty-specific. KC to include a statement demonstrating how the current structure all fits together and feeds into / links with the Concordat.
- Top of p.3, first line – amend the wording 'early career researchers' to 'contract researchers'
- p.4, Challenges and opportunities – would be good to try and replicate the diversity and enthusiasm which was reflected in the notes from the Shared Practice Event. KC to add in a bulletpoint and cross-ref from the Shared Practice Notes.
- p.6, delete the question mark after 'Where to find funding'

Action 1: If anyone has any further feedback to provide, please let Karen know by Friday 9 September.

Action2 : KC to make amends to the report and recirculate to the Group members by Friday 9 September.

4. Review of the Shared Practice Event

On the whole the entire Shared Practice event received positive feedback with researchers finding it useful. DRCs and those responsible for the Concordat also found it useful to share good practice but it was agreed it was a mistake to ask them to sit through the initial session so in future it will run as two separate sections.

With regards to the DRC/Concordat representative part of the event, it was notable that the number of research societies/post-doc forums has increased from two or three to nine in two years, and this is partly on the back of last year's Shared Practice Event.

KC commented that she felt there was now sufficient interest to warrant a half-day research staff conference involving more post-doc society input (suggested date of June 2017). The event will be for contract researchers and transitioning PhD students. Other PhD students will be welcome to attend but it needs to be clear that the event is not specifically for them.

Feedback from the group members indicates that the importance of the keynote speakers will be integral to the event's success. Suggestions included: alumni; post-docs; inspirational speakers demonstrating how they've succeeded in their alternative careers; postdocs running a session for PhDs interested in becoming a postdoc, a representative from a research council or research unit, a Professor who started as a research assistant and has developed a career. Enthusiasm and inspiration needs to be tempered with realism and acknowledgement of how hard a research career can be.

Action: Group members to email any suggestions to KC.

SP is running a conference in September for early career researchers.

Action: SP to email KC post-event and feed back on how the event went.

5. Mentoring for Researchers Working Group (Enc5.August16)

Colleagues from Bristol, Cambridge and Sheffield are meeting with KC at the end of September to discuss whether we want to set up and run a mentoring scheme, what people are doing currently and what we would want out of it.

Action: KC will run an initial scoping meeting with interested researchers and people who have expressed an interest on 28th September. Members are very welcome and will be included in the circulation.

6. AOB

- Concordat Action Plan – p.5 – the evidence provided indicates that, on the whole, those research staff who put themselves forward to go up a grade usually get it. We need to be very careful about the message that goes out and careful with making claims about success rates.
Action: Take out the numbers and focus more on the fact that there is a process in place.
- Action: CIG members to look through the action plan and email KC if they believe there is anything that needs to be made more of, anything missing or if they have any concerns or suggestions.

- **Dates for 2016/17 meetings**

Autumn term – 8 or 9 November 2016, tbc, Heslington Hall

Spring term – 8 March 2017, 10am-12pm, H/G09 Heslington Hall

Summer term – 29 June 2017, 1.30-3.30pm, H/G17 Heslington Hall