

Concordat Implementation Group

8 March 2017, 10.00–12.00, H/G09 Heslington Hall

MINUTES

Chair: Deborah Smith (DS)

Present: Karen Clegg (KC), Ana Duarte (AD), Anna Grey (AG), Rasha Ibrahim (RI), Lisa Kim (LK), Alex Medcalf (AM), Stephanie Prady (SP), Anna Reader (AR), Liz Rylott (LR), Paul Walton (PW) Christian Schuster (Physics ECR Forum)

Apologies: Nick Barraclough, Anna Grey, Helen Selvidge

Minutes: Helen Goodwill (HG)

1. Minutes and action log

The minutes of the last Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) meeting held on 9 November 2016 were **approved** and the action log was reviewed.

2. Research Staff Conference and Falling Walls in June 2017

The 23 June is the date that has been decided on for both the above events, with the [Research Staff Conference](#) due to take place in the morning and the [Falling Walls competition](#) due to take place in the afternoon. The theme of the conference is 'Celebrating Research' and the event will indeed aim to celebrate both postdocs and their work and achievements along with the value that they bring to the institution.

2a) Research Staff Conference

Feedback from the event last year indicated that people wanted a focus on careers, in particular developing their career knowledge and getting a sense of what career options are available to them.

Four big funders have accepted invitations to host a panel session:

- Dr David McAllister, Co-Chair Research Careers Network and Head of Skills and Careers, BBSRC
- Dr Shewly Cloudhury, Head of UK Grants, The Royal Society
- Dr Sue Carver, Head of Histories, Cultures and Heritage AHRC
- Dr Candace Hassall, Head of Researcher Affairs, Wellcome Trust

We are still waiting to hear from NIHR. When staff complete the application form to attend the staff conference, there is an opportunity for them to identify a question that they would like to go to the panel. In advance of the session, the panel will select those questions they wish to answer.

SP queried whether the time given to people to complete their ticket bookings can be extended as they currently only have 8 minutes so people may well end up rushing and not completing this section of the form

Action: HG to extend the time allocation via EventBrite and add a comment saying that people can email rett@york.ac.uk with a question if they need more time to think of one.

It was queried whether research students could be invited. While initially the event was aimed at research staff only, there is a very real concern that there will be a low turnout and DS stressed the importance of 'selling' this event and encouraging as many people as possible to come. LR suggested opening it up to final-year PhD students and the event could be added onto SkillsForge as a course to be booked on and therefore included in their training profile. GSA would also be able to help with publicity.

ACTION: Final-year PhD students to be invited to the event and included in the advertising material with immediate effect.

It is important that we are seen to be inclusive and KC confirmed that the event will be opened up to other universities with a public invite being sent out at the end of April.

2b) Falling Walls competition

Falling Walls is a fantastic opportunity for members of staff to pitch their innovative ideas to an audience in three minutes. The eligibility criteria states that they must be within five years of being awarded their PhD completion or seven years of an MA. Included in the competition will be three PhD students (chosen via the annual Three Minute Thesis competition which takes place on 13 June) while staff are to apply directly via an application form.

There is some concern about the lack of applications so far although Josie Thomas in Research and Enterprise is doing a sterling job individually targeting people and saying they are being invited by the research champions - early signs indicate that this approach is working. Helga Smallwood is also visiting postdoc societies in order to talk to colleagues and advertise the event. It is important that we advertise the competition as a huge profile opportunity, with training by an excellent communications coach included along with prizes for what amounts to only 3 minutes' worth of their time. The event is a potential gamechanger for research at York and but we need to get our researchers engaged and wanting to be involved.

Discussion took place as to whether or not the competition could be opened to all researchers, however it was thought the eligibility criteria was not the limiting factor although perhaps it needs to be clarified further. Personal encouragement, particularly from the Research Champions, is vital and we need their active support and involvement. DS confirmed that the event will be cancelled if applications don't reach an adequate number by Friday 24 March as there is too much potential for reputational damage. PIs could be engaged by advertising it as a huge coup for them and their department if they put forward a winning postdoc.

Action: DS to contact HoDs and DRCs while KC will draft an email for the CIG members to circulate which they should use to promote the event.

Action: Karen to provide an update in a couple of weeks. The deadline for withdrawing is Friday 24 March.

3. Update from KC on the meeting with Paul Walton and Clare Viney which took place in December 2016

Clare Viney is the recently appointed (October 2016) Chief Executive Officer of CRAC (The Career

Development Organisation) and is overseeing a number of changes to Vitae including the issue of the Concordat needing significantly refreshing. KC would value the opportunity to be on the Concordat Review Group and believes they may well attempt to recruit via Researchers14 – the next meeting is due to take place in April.

KC already has a strong relationship with Clare who is aware that York is well established in training and could bring a lot to Vitae. They have since spoken about their links with Athena SWAN and the importance of considering the alignment between the Concordat and Athena SWAN and this is perhaps not something Vitae are up to date with.

The CIG voiced their support for KC putting herself forward should this opportunity arise.

4. **Look at actions from Concordat action plan 16-18**

KC suggested that as there is nothing outstanding or of any particular concern this agenda point could be pushed to the next meeting as we will have a better sense of what is going on when we have been able to get the DRCs together (HG is currently looking at a date in June/July).

Anna Reader has added a column to the Concordat action plan which indicates where there is alignment to or overlap with the university's Athena Swan work so that it is clear where the relationship between the two stands.

Action: Circulate updated action plan which includes the column that Anna Reader added in.

5. **Mentoring for Researchers working group (update from Karen)**

Following many requests for researchers, KC, along with colleagues in Leadership and Development and partners at the universities of Cambridge, Sheffield and Bristol, launched a small, cross-departmental objective-led mentoring scheme pilot for research staff/postdocs in January. The pilot is taking place in the following four departments:

- Chemistry
- Environment
- Health Sciences
- Physics

So far there have been 29 applications from staff wanting to be mentored (85% of these appear to want some type of career support) and 23 from potential mentors so the plan is to go out to the mentors to see if anyone would be willing to take on two. Anyone left without a match after the mapping process can be directed to the coaching pool. The majority of applications have come from Health Sciences with Physics submitting the least. The CIG was interested in the gender split. **Action: Karen to inform the CIG of the gender split.**

There is a strong commitment to aligning mentoring to the Concordat and to supporting Athena SWAN objectives. A 1.5 hour training session (which includes a video and a slide on unconscious bias) for both mentors and mentees has already taken place with around 9 people attending and another two scheduled in. At that point the relationships will commence.

It was queried why the pilot had only been offered to science departments. KC responded by confirming that the intention is to open it out to all departments but this is resource dependent.

6. **Update on CIG membership**

DS welcomed Lisa Kim from Education who is a new member of CIG. Lisa is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow and the Chair of the Early Career Researchers Forum in the Department of Education.

John Clark has now left the University so the group is in need of another academic member, preferably a PI from the Arts and Humanities or Social Sciences. It may be useful to go via Associate Deans for Research and CIG members for suggestions.

Action: CIG to let KC know if they have any suggestions – the main issue to consider is researcher representation.

7. AOB

Research Staff Liaison Officer post

KC reported that a new Research Staff Liaison Officer opportunity will be advertised shortly. This will provide an individual with the opportunity to represent and liaise with all staff on a research-only contract and their responsibilities will involve activities including:

- Being a member of the RET Ops Group
- Being a member of the Research Staff Conference Group
- Cascading relevant information to and from research staff from the RET Ops Group
- Liaising with Research Staff/Postdoc Societies
- Writing proposals around work to support research staff
- Convening face to face shared practice opportunities for researchers

In return, the individual will receive an honorarium of £1000 to be used on their personal and professional development. The application form is [available to view here](#) and closing date is 31 March 2017.

Use of CROS survey data

It had been agreed that we wouldn't send out a Careers in Research Online Survey this year due to the staff survey going out and the potential for survey fatigue. We therefore wanted the option to insert some of our questions into the staff survey but have been told that cannot do this due to the problems it raised around benchmarking which makes them resistant to adding new questions. This raises some concerns as there are questions that we need information on around careers support, mentoring, etc and it also opens us up to some vulnerability with regards to Athena SWAN. There is an option for us to have an extra section added which would only be for researchers to complete but HR have indicated that payment for analysis of additional questions would be required.

We have an option to still go ahead with CROS but we would need to put things into place quickly and ensure that we have the resource available.

Action: KC to send the email which came from HR to DS

Action: DS to look at the email and then discuss the options with HR

Next meeting

Thursday 29 June, 1.30-3.30pm, H/G17 Heslington Hall