

MINUTES OF THE 1st MEETING OF THE RESEARCH CONCORDAT STRATEGY GROUP HELD ON 22 January 2009

- Members present: Professor Sir Ivor Crewe (Chair)
- Sarah Brant (UCL representing the UPA)
Dr Iain Cameron (RCUK)
Professor Andy Cobb (Harper Adams representing GuildHE)
Dr David Cox (National Institute for Health Research)
Simon Denegri (Association of Medical Research Charities)
Dr Candy Hassall (Wellcome Trust)
Paul Hubbard (HEFCE)
Professor Peter Main (Institute of Physics representing the Professional Institutions)
Dr Paul McDonald (Royal Society)
Murray McVicar (representing Professor David Gani Scottish Funding Council)
Dr Janet Metcalfe (Vitae)
Professor Jeremy Pearson (representing Prof Peter Weissburg, British Heart Foundation)
Professor Ella Ritchie (Newcastle University representing the Rugby Team)
Paula Shelley (UCEA)
Dr Alison Spaul (Scottish Government)
Dr Alyson Thomas (HEFCW)
Jane Thompson (UCU)
Professor Nigel Thrift (University of Warwick representing UUK)
Dr Nicola Woodward (representing Dr John Bothwell National Research Staff Association)
- Guests:
- Office: Rosie Beales (RCUK)
Dr Chris Hale (UUK)
Dan Sumners (UUK)
- Apologies: Robert Barrett (Royal Academy of Engineering)
Dr Ken Edmond (British Academy)
Nicola Dandridge (Equality Challenge Unit)
Fergus Devitt (DELNI)
David Gani (SFC)
Professor Caroline Gipps (University of Wolverhampton representing UUK)

Draft Terms of Reference and Membership (RCSG 09-02)

1. The paper described how the Group was constituted, the suggested Terms of Reference of the Group and the working practices. The issues of particular note were as follows:
 - Membership should ensure full coverage of the sector and that appropriate expertise was available.
 - Members will promote the Concordat and this may include speaking at sector events.
 - Members should have authority to take forward actions in the implementation plan, for their organisation where appropriate.
 - The agendas, papers and minutes of the Group will be published after each meeting.

2. The main areas of discussion focussed on the broadening of the membership to include University mission groups and where appropriate inviting new signatories to join the Group. The penultimate bullet point in paragraph needed rewording to ensure clarity and the wording of paragraph 5 should be moderated.
3. There was concern to ensure that the UK Research Base Funders Forum was the appropriate body to report to for the Devolved Administrations. [Note: Devolved Administrations are represented on the Funders Forum].
4. The Group **agreed**:
 - i. To invite the University Alliance and the 1994 group to be members.
 - ii. To publish the membership and terms of reference as separate documents.
 - iii. To publish the agendas, papers and minutes of the Group.
 - iv. To agree the amended terms of reference before or at the next meeting.
 - v. To the establishment of the executive group and ask other group members to volunteer to be on the executive group.

Implementation Plan (RCSG 09-03)

5. The paper suggested the three main approaches to implementation of the Concordat, at a sector level should be communication and awareness raising, benchmarking, and targeting stakeholder groups and organisational levels. It was noted however that implementation is primarily a matter for the universities and research institutes as employers of researchers. Other bodies such as the Research Councils will develop their own implementation plans.
6. There has been an ongoing thread of work in the sector in this area particularly on sharing good practice through the Vitae programme and Roberts funding. The Vitae programme will be central to the implementation and Annex A is the Vitae Concordat Implementation Plan 2009. The Concordat Coordinator, when appointed, will work with the Strategy Group to oversee the implementation and review of the Concordat, engaging with all relevant communities and stakeholders.
7. One of the main areas of discussion was the differing views and interests of researchers, PIs etc within the universities therefore it would be important to talk to the different groups independently, perhaps from the lowest level upwards.
8. The issue of whether institutions would be 'audited' was discussed; the challenge was to ensure any process was helpful and would produce improvements. The revised CROS survey should be helpful but it is important that significant numbers of institutions take part and response rates provide a representative sample of the research staff cohort.
9. The Group noted that many institutions valued the new Concordat and were positively taking forward the implementation for their institutions and a strict 'audit' approach may not be appropriate or necessary.
10. There was concern of the lack of clarity on how the implementation of the Concordat facilitated the implementation of the EU Charter and Code, that is, would a single process ensure implementation of both the EU Charter and Code and the Concordat? It was felt

that there needs to be a clear message about what work was being undertaken by UUK and RCUK to ensure recognition of the Concordat implementation by the European Commission.

11. The Group **agreed**:
 - i. The approaches to the implementation of the Concordat.
 - ii. Noted the relation to the EU Charter and Code implementation and asked RCUK and UUK to publish clear information on the relation to the Concordat.
 - iii. Noted how the benchmarking process and Vitae support the Implementation plan.
 - iv. Agreed that an Implementation Plan paper revised to reflect progress should be a standing item for each meeting so that priorities could be considered.

Benchmarking Process (RCSG 09-04)

12. The paper described the proposed set of principles for the benchmarking process highlighting that it was proposed to benchmark the UK sector not individual institutions. The paper set out the critical aspects of the benchmarking which had led to the six suggested projects.
13. The group noted the comments sent by email from Nicola Dandridge which stressed the importance of ensuring that the experience of researchers from the different equality areas are captured in the benchmarking process.
14. The main points raised in discussion were:
 - Whether structured visits would be useful in project 3: HEI approaches to embedding career development for researchers in HEI strategies.
 - The data from the HR directors benchmarking (based on the UPA self assessment tool?) should be used as a comparator.
 - The need to publicise and ensure the sharing of good examples of practice and to inform HEIs of poor practice.
 - The 2009 benchmarking would not be used for 'league tables' however the group did not rule out the option of considering them in the future.
 - The Athena Swan process was considered a good example of a system that in the future could be adapted to enable HEIs to 'badge' themselves as Concordat compliant.
 - The main obstacles were ensuring engagement of researchers and PIs.
 - The work should be linked to the HEFCE work looking at the effectiveness of HEI research and HR strategies.
15. Members of the group were invited to volunteer to champion one or more benchmarking projects.
16. The Group **agreed**:
 - i. The principles of the benchmarking process.
 - ii. The six projects, with priority to be given to projects 1 (cohort data), 2 (CROS), and 3 (HEI strategies).
 - iii. The executive group would sign off the specifications and budget.

Mapping of the Concordat to the EU Charter and Code RCSG 09-05/06

17. The paper noted that a new mapping exercise had been undertaken mapping the Concordat and other UK guidance etc. to the EU Charter and Code. It noted that two specific areas of the Charter, IPR and co-authorship are not covered in the Concordat.
18. The mapping was useful but required further narrative as noted in paragraph 11ii) before publication
19. The Group **noted** the mapping of the Concordat to the EU Charter and Code

Any other business (oral item)

20. The post of the Concordat Coordinator, as an employee of UUK, would be advertised shortly, following agreement by the funders.
21. The office would arrange the next Research Concordat Strategy Group meeting possibly at the end of June or July.