



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

## **QMU Concordat Four Year Review Report Internal Review of the Concordat Action Plan 2010-2014**

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### **Further Information on our Website**

[http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research\\_knowledge/concordat.aspx](http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research_knowledge/concordat.aspx)

### **Case Studies:**

Scottish Crucible [http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research\\_knowledge/scottish-crucible.aspx](http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research_knowledge/scottish-crucible.aspx)

Edinburgh Beltane [http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research\\_knowledge/qmu-and-the-beltane-public-engagement-network\(beltane\).aspx](http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research_knowledge/qmu-and-the-beltane-public-engagement-network(beltane).aspx)

Euraxess [http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research\\_knowledge/euraxess.aspx](http://www.qmu.ac.uk/research_knowledge/euraxess.aspx)

QMU welcomes and is committed to the Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers. Since receiving the HR Excellence Award in 2010 we have endeavoured to embed its principles in key University strategy and policy, and continued to work with our researchers and managers to implement and mainstream these into our research culture and longer term vision. Our Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy aims to ensure that institutional objectives and individual excellence are mutually illuminating in creating an inclusive and sustainable research environment. As with our two year review, it should be noted that, given the small number (21) of Contract Research Staff (CRS), QMU includes all researchers in its approach to the Concordat, where appropriate.

### **Internal Evaluation**

Our internal four year review was led by the Concordat Review Working Group (CRWG), chaired by the Deputy Principal. The Group, comprising representation from a range of academic, research and professional services staff and representatives from the CRS, coordinated the review of the initial plan (submitted in 2010, and the two year review in 2012). Supplementary to the CRWG and since the publication of the original plan in 2010, progress and revision of the plan has been monitored by the Strategic Research Themes Group, chaired by the Deputy Principal and the Research Strategy Committee, chaired by the Dean of Arts, Social Sciences and Management.

Bi-annual meetings between the CRS and the Deputy Principal form a key part of the research calendar and provide a lively forum for face to face consultation, and act as a formal catalyst for discussing staff development needs, feedback and the on-going roll out of the action plan.

QMU continues to actively monitor and evaluate its support for researcher development through existing Quality Assurance mechanisms for research, including the Research Strategy Committee, and School Research and KE Strategy Meetings chaired by the Deans. On-going feedback is elicited by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Unit (RKEDU) and the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP). The feedback received through these mechanisms allows for the continuous enhancement of development programmes for researchers.

As part of the four year review process, the review was informed by:

- The QMU Staff Survey.
- National CROS & PIRLS survey findings.
- REF 2014 internal audit exercises.
- Direct input from the Research Theme Leads, Heads of Division and Deans, Professoriate, and Contract Research Staff Group.
- REF strategy sessions, post REF away day and series of post REF working groups.
- Bi-annual meetings with the Contract Research Staff and the Deputy Principal.
- QMU 150 Strategic Planning Exercise.

## Key Achievements and Progress Against Concordat Principles

**Principle 1:** Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research; and **Principle 2:** Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resource and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world class research.

- Since 2010 an increasing number of informative but ad hoc induction sessions for CRS have been offered. In July 2014 we consolidated these and a new dedicated CRS staff induction programme was launched in July 2014.
- In response to CRS feedback over the period 2012-2104, HR have revised the policy for the end of fixed term contracts; the new policy is the 'Exit Management Policy'. This policy adopts a best practice approach to the treatment of fixed term contracts within QMU. Aligned to this is a new, transparent policy on access to bridging funds.
- All those CRS placed at risk of redundancy when nearing the end of their fixed term funding continue to be placed on the University's re-deployment register which provides them with advance notification of all university vacancies prior to vacancies being advertised.
- CRS were integral to our REF 2014 submission - publications, impact case studies and environment. A series of dedicated CRS REF 2014 briefing sessions were introduced in 2012.
- In 2014 strategic funds were allocated to support CRS attendance at key sector events and researcher development initiatives, including the Vitae Part Time Researcher Conference.
- All CRS were aligned to Themes in 2011 and to ensure early involvement of CRS in our REF planning, all CRS were aligned to REF UoA. CRS representation on Post REF Working Groups has been invaluable in foresighting the validity and future direction of strategic research priorities and consequently future research strategy.
- In 2012 a new internal peer review process was rolled out to improve: the quality of external research bids; the proportion of successful awards; and to comply with Research Council requirements on demand management.

**Principle 3:** Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

- The specific targeting of CRS in our REF 2014 strategy briefings allowed opportunities for our researchers to participate in sector-wide policy development. Going forward CRS representatives have been actively involved in our post REF strategy working groups looking at Leadership and Management; Review of Strategic Research Themes; and Research Funding and Resources.
- Since 2012 we have actively sought to enhance career development opportunities for CRS to engage in knowledge exchange activities through the translation of research to SMEs in specific Scottish Government priority economic sectors. KE is included in the new researcher induction programme, and an increasing number of CRS are engaging in SME activity. In 2012 QMU employed a dedicated Business Development Manager to support CRS working in this area. Our on-campus Business Gateway (the first in Scotland), provides CRS with dedicated support for business start-up and spin out. We have actively encouraged CRS to take advantage of a number of institutional memberships with industry bodies and many have taken up opportunities to speak at industry events and conferences.

- HR are revising the Academic Promotions Policy for 2014/15 to include promotion pathways for the more junior research and teaching roles, to facilitate their progress to roles within the academic / academic research pathways.
- Previous plans to develop cross walks between QMU career pathways and other pathways have not progressed as cited in the 2012 plan. We have however progressed the spirit of this action through our collaboration in 2011 with [NHS Lothian's embedded nursing, midwifery and allied health professions \(NMAHP\) Clinical Academic Research Careers \(CARC\) Scheme](#):
- HR currently offer a range of career development tools for personal reflection as part of the Performance Enhancement Review Process (PER). In session 2014/15 MBTI/16PF (psychometric/personality profile tools) will be piloted as part of the new induction programme.
- Despite the launch of a Research and KE Mentoring programme in 2011 and a dedicated Contract Researcher mentor and champion, we recognise that this action requires further development. We have engaged with another HEI to support us in relaunching a more advanced mentoring programme, and in academic year 2014/15 we will seek to pilot initiatives such as peer grade mentoring.
- The launch of a new refreshed QMU Researcher Career Development Strategy is scheduled for October 2014. Implementation will be rolled forward in the 2014-2018 Action Plan.
- Significant progress has been made in strengthening linkage with researcher mobility networks, including the British Council and Euraxess. Indeed with support from Euraxess we hosted two Leverhulme International Research Fellows. In 2013 a new institutional membership to Scotland Europa has enhanced CRS awareness of researcher mobility initiatives linked to Horizon 2020.
- Investment in 2012 in the costing and pricing tool PFACT has provided our CRS with the latest research project resources for competitive grant modelling and estimation.

**Principle 4:** The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career; and **Principle 5:** Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

- The CRS webpages have been redeveloped with an enhanced profile on the main QMU site. The QMU intranet site for CRS continues to develop, with input from a much broader range of departments and support services.
- A new "Welcome to Research@QMU" corporate induction booklet has replaced the original CRS information pack and welcome sheet.
- New initiatives in 2013 such as Researcher Writing Retreats and collaborative training seminars with the Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Facility now supplement established training provision such as writing for publication, grant submission, navigating the digital landscape and research supervision.
- An annual QMU NHS Researcher Ethics and Governance Training Day, introduced in 2012 is now a recurring event in the research calendar. In 2014/15 we will seek to strengthen links with local NHS R&D offices through the introduction of on-campus drop in sessions with the NHS Lothian R&D Office to provide practical support for CRS on research governance, passports and ethics.
- A member of our CRS was selected, by the Scottish Crucible Panel, to represent QMU at the prestigious Scottish Crucible and European Crucible in 2014.
- Through its formal membership of [The Beltane Public Engagement Network \(Beltane\)](#) in 2011 QMU has supported its CRS in maximizing the impact of their research; we were delighted when a member of our CRS secured a Public Engagement Fellowship from the Edinburgh Beltane.

- Opportunities for CRS to gain experience in science communication and the translation of research beyond academia have been further enhanced by:
  - the ongoing roll out of our Researcher in Residence scheme in local schools.
  - the appointment of a Head of Community Engagement who works with CRS to promote research links that respond to regional and national agendas.
  - our active participation in the Children's University and pioneering "[Academies](#)" scheme, which equips secondary school pupils with the right knowledge and skills to progress their educational opportunities or seek employment in some of Scotland's key priority industries.
  - Since 2011 our annual "[Broken Bodies](#)" science education event allows CRS to get actively involved with young people in communicating research from a wide range of healthcare specialisms.
- Collaborations with our local national Science Centre have continued to grow and in 2014 our CRS participated in our high profile "Feast of the Commonwealth" showcase event at the Edinburgh International Science Festival. In 2013, our CRS secured external funding to host an event at Edinburgh's "Our Dynamic Earth" Science Centre for a week long exhibition titled "Goodness Gracious Grub" in collaboration with industry and the Moredun Institute. The hands-on event, bringing together QMU CRS from a range of disciplines, enabled visitors to find out how we use our senses when eating different types of food, and the related health benefits.
- In 2012 and as part of our EU funded collaborative "Business Innovation Exchange Project", aimed at increasing University and Industry interactions, we actively encouraged an industry focused "research sandpit" event for CRS to collaborate with partner HEIs to collectively align research expertise to the needs of particular government priority economic sectors.
- Our marketing and communications team have actively encouraged CRS to engage with the media. The QMU media training programme provides opportunities for CRS to discover how the media operates and provides practical skills in building the confidence to work with it.

**Principle 6:** Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

- QMU secured the Athena Swan Bronze Award in 2013.
- Key issues for groups with protected equality characteristics are being dealt with via post REF equality impact assessments. In 2013 we published our Equality Code of Practice for Research and Equality Impact Assessment on our website. Consequently the Concordat is a regular agenda item for the Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC) which now monitors and reviews the mainstreaming of REF good practice in terms of researcher output, standard tariff reductions and equality and diversity in research careers. Active QMU participation in the Vitae Every Researcher Counts project has supported work in this area.
- CRS continue to have a voice at institutional level via representation at the Research Strategy Committee, with the Concordat forming a standing item.
- Since 2013 CRS have had access to the Aurora programme, our new women-only leadership development initiative. One of the four institutional places was offered to a member of CRS.

**Principle 7:** The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

- Our CRS/Deputy Principal bi-annual meetings provide CRS with direct access to senior management and chart progress on our research careers development.

- The QMU annual staff survey provides valuable feedback and researcher-related items will be reviewed by a new strategic Research Culture Working Group, chaired by a member of the Professoriate.

### **Strategy for the Next Four Years ( 2014-2018)**

Over the next four years, QMU will focus on developing the following areas:

- Investing in excellent research while balancing the needs of early and mid career researchers.
- Continuing to develop a spirit of leadership and management that is consultative and emphasises transparency at all levels, whilst promoting personal responsibility and accountability.
- Responding to the increasing importance of Research Impact – strategy, investment, and training.
- Enhancing a vibrant research culture that will increase, celebrate and reward research activity while ensuring that the processes of academic staff development and review, and promotion, place due emphasis on research activity and performance.
- Maintaining an inclusive and collaborative research environment that attracts and retains researchers while promoting the spirit of researcher mobility.
- Monitoring and reviewing the effective implementation of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF).
- Increasing awareness and uptake of the Performance Enhancement Review (PER) by CRS to encourage more formalised dialogue about performance and professional development.
- Aligning the focus and dialogue of key stakeholder groups i.e. CRS Group and the Strategic Research Theme Leads to promote and strengthen the visibility of research staff and their representation. Embedding a more researcher-led approach to peer communication and collaboration and inspiring researcher-led initiatives.
- Continuing to enhance gender equality initiatives beyond the traditional STEM domain of Athena Swan to promote initiatives such as Aurora and the Stonewall Equality Index.
- Improving mechanisms that ensure CRS are more fully informed and regularly appraised of researcher development policy, process and opportunities.
- Enabling CRS to be well positioned in the external research environment in terms of their employability and engagement with research strategic priorities.

### **Critical Success Measures**

- Increase the number of CRS participating in the new enhanced mentoring scheme.
- Increase the number of CRS engaging in SME projects.
- Achieve international excellence in environment quality profiles in REF 2014.
- Increase the number of successful research grant bids with CRS.
- Increase the number of research active staff.
- Secure Athena Swan Silver Award.
- Increase the number of CRS represented on external committees and networks such as the Scottish and European Crucible; and the research committees of professional bodies.
- Increase the number of CRS engaging with the Edinburgh Beltane Public Engagement Network.
- Increase the number of CRS benefiting from researcher mobility initiatives.

11 September 14

## **Glossary**

**CAP** – Centre for Academic Practice

**CRS** – Contract Research Staff

**CRWG** – Concordat Review Group

**CROS/PIRLS** - Careers in Research Online Survey and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey

**HR** – Human Resources

**KE** – Knowledge Exchange

**PER** – Performance Enhancement Review

**RDF** – Researcher Development Framework

**REF** – Research Excellence Framework

**RKEDU** – Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Unit

**SME** – Small to Medium Size Enterprise

**UoA** – Unit of Assessment (used in REF to categorise disciplinary groupings)