

University of St Andrews

RESEARCH AND TEACHING STAFF FORUM

**Report on the meeting of the Research and Teaching Staff Forum
held on Thursday 15 November 2018**

Attendance: Professor Derek Woollins, Ms Louise Milne, Dr Diane Munday, Mr Tom Jones, Dr Michael Morrissey, Dr Bela Bode, Dr Laure Kuhfuss, Dr Sarah White, Dr Rebeca Diaz-Vazquez, Dr Aimee Joyce, Dr Paul Egan, Dr Jane Illes, Dr Elyse Allender, Dr Charles Lovatt, Dr Iain Smellie.

Apologies: Dr Richard Malham, Mr Sukhi Bains, Dr Sarah Bennison, Dr Graham Smith, Dr Anita Laidlaw

1 Approval of previous minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 April 2018 were approved with no amendments.

2 Matters arising

Louise Milne had discussed the visa concern that arose during the meeting of 3 April 2018 with Cameron Little, HR Business Partner for Immigration. The Forum had queried whether there was any effect on a working visa if staff were involved in industrial action. Cameron had confirmed that staff on a visa are allowed up to 20 unpaid days so strike action is covered, this is not classed as unauthorised absence which would not be covered.

3 Equality and Diversity/Athena Swan Update

Athena SWAN

The University has retained a Bronze award, confirmed again as of 7 May 2018.

Awards -

School of Biology - Silver - 7 May 2018.

School of History – Bronze – 25 October 2018

School of Maths and Statistics – 25 October 2018

School of Psychology and Neuroscience – Silver – 7 May 2018

Louise drew the Forum's attention to networks that Sukhi Bains now has running – Early Careers Women, Staff Carers, LGBT Plus, Women in Science. Sukhi is also looking at setting up a Staff Disability Network, the Forum were asked to email Sukhi Bains on sb104@st-andrews.ac.uk to register interest or ask any questions.

Diane asked when the Family/Parents Network was likely to be set up, Louise will discuss with Sukhi and inform the Forum.

4 Update on contractual profile for Research Fellows and Associate Lecturers (Education Focused)

Teaching – Education Focused.

Teaching	Gender	
	Female	Male
124	64 (51.6%)	60 (48.4%)
45 – Fixed Term	24 (53.3%)	21 (46.7%)
79 – Standard	45 (56.6%)	34 (43.4%)

There is a reasonable balance within teaching at the University. Gender split within 21 senior roles is also – 11 male / 10 female – which is well balanced.

Research

Research	Gender	
	Female	Male
367	149 (40.6%)	218 (59.4%)
278 - Fixed	124 (44.6%)	154 (55.4%)
89 – Standard	25 (28.1%)	64 (71.9%)

The Research figures do need to be looked at and discussed. Louise will look at length of service and profile numbers. Many of the staff on fixed term contracts may have only been employed for a short time which would account for the number of fixed term contracts and/or will have been given a contract which relies on grant funding. Staff may be employed on cover posts for research or maternity leave and may then be moved around cover posts and can then be employed for more than 4 years.

The Forum discussed whether more staff return to Education Focused roles after a career break rather than returning to research.

Derek Woollins noted that there is a need for further data investigation. Is there also a reluctance for Schools to make roles standard as this affects staff/student ratio? Derek asked that HR identify how many contracts people have had in 4 years.

Diane and Louise will look at the CROS/PIRLS surveys to see what opinions are and how the fixed term contracts affect staff. What are the issues? How does the Fixed term contracts policy tie in?

Tom Jones had noted that the Union has no information and it would be useful if Human Resources could provide statistics.

5 Update from CAPOD including HR Excellence

Diane updated the Forum on the HR Excellence award which is a European wide award, in alignment with the principals laid out in Vitae's Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. There is both an internal and external review. This requires keeping to the 7 principles of Concordant, the University has successfully retained this award for 10 years and the award now requires a refresh.

There is a working group which meets every 6 weeks, Research Fellows, Postdoctoral Researchers and Policy Officers, which looks at reviewing and updating the action plan. The Working Group welcome attendance of these meetings. The Group are currently looking for a new Research Fellow rep as Duncan Robertson has taken up a new role within the University. Diane can send on documentation if anybody is interested in attending.

Everything discussed at the Forum feeds back to assist the Working Group with the HR Excellence.

6 Role profile: RTSF representatives – final draft for comments and next steps.

Diane re-issued the approved role profile document for RTSF representatives which offers further clarity of expectations. Forum members will be able to provide document to a deputy if they are unable to attend. The document was discussed at focus groups and early career coffee meetings. Points that were made were that Forum members don't generally appoint deputies to attend in their place if they cannot attend a meeting or canvas opinions before meetings. If Forum members would like CAPOD assistance, they can get in contact with Diane and CAPOD can provide support with the role. CAPOD would like Forum members to become 'Champions for the Research and Teaching community'.

The Forum were asked if they would find an interim meeting to discuss any issues that may arise in the time between meetings, perhaps a training hour in a more informal setting or to discuss any issues that cannot wait until the next meeting. The Forum felt that this was not necessary, if an urgent issue arose members would find a relevant person to discuss with at that time.

It was thought that people are currently not convinced that the Forum was an effective use of time. It was agreed that further marketing of the Forum is required, a refresh and reminder to Schools that the Forum exists and request reps from all Schools. Derek offered to mention the Forum at the next Head of School lunch.

7 UK wide consultation: Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Diane issued papers for discussion from the Concordat Strategy Group which state a recommendation that 20% of a researcher's time should be allowed for developing independent research and skills. Diane will send out link to one drive folder and will also send information by email so that members can discuss within Schools and return comments.

The Concordat rules can be recommended but the University does not enforce. Diane noted that the Working Group felt that the review group had recommended a 'perfect world' approach, however it is felt that in reality researchers do not have the time to commit, i.e. if you are on a fixed 3 year contract that is one day per week.

Derek felt that this would require the UKRI to be willing to put money aside for research staff development in grants and for PIs to assist post docs in developing in their career. Derek noted that he had attended planning meetings recently with the ESRC and EPSRC where there was no enthusiasm for the 20% allowed time as they could not see where money for resources would come from.

Diane asked the Forum to form groups, discuss and comment.

There were many queries as the Concordat document is not clear on the recommendation.

- Why does Recommendation 4 state two opposing points –
 1. *'There should be increased emphasis and support, by both funders and employers, for uptake of researchers' 10 days training allowance.*
 2. *'20% of a researcher's time should be allowed for developing independent research and skills'*
- Would this be implemented for people on other contract types?
- Is there further data on the demand for extra training? What is this recommendation based on?
- Is the 20% *pro rata* for part time staff? What is based this on?

Positive Comments

- Developing skills in a positive manner.
- Attractive to future employers
- Support for independent research and encouraging skills
- If staff are applying for funding or their contract is coming to an end and they are looking for a new position it would provide time to do this.
- Would protect time for development and stop PI's taking advantage.
- If a Research Fellow is on a short term grant or has caring commitments beyond work it is positive.
- More attractive to recruiting excellent researchers.

Negative Comments

- PIs may ask for this 20% on top of job requirements and duties. There are concerns that this wouldn't be supported by PI's as it would make their Research Fellow less productive. Implications would be reliant on individual PIs, would they include the 20% with the 100% of employment, or would this be additional. There is a danger of staff over-reaching.
- Many researchers already include this 20% in their working week. When this isn't happening anyway, it's a choice as to how an individual works and this will be restraining.
- Might create inequity between postdocs and funding. Depending on what is required of individual positions and different funding bodies. Some councils have restrictions on teaching, etc.. Would be preferable if all funding bodies include the 20% with the award descriptor.

The University can pull data from Athena SWAN which would provide information on time on Passport for Research, etc. It will be difficult to measure the impact and cost to benefit ratio, is training in lab on equipment, time recorded? It is felt the extra 20% may create an artificial divide between completing the job requirements of a role and independent research. What is independent research is hard to divide.

Derek considered that there was no obvious answer but a midway compromise would be to encourage PI's to be responsible and promote good behaviours in encouraging training, updating skills, and attending conferences.

8 Draft Policy on the Use of Fixed Term and Standard Contracts for final consultation.

The new policy has been reviewed by the Unions and comments have been received from back from Unite and UCU. Unison have as yet made no comment. All comments will be taken on board. UCU asked to consider reducing service time to 1 or 2 years rather than 3 years. HR feel that this would be too much, too soon and would still recommend reducing to 3 years and then review. HR would prefer a slow reduction to see what the impact is and have time to look at redundancy processes in Schools so that they can work on these to ensure they are robust. There is a need to ensure that fixed term contracts are not raised when there is no justification. Once the policy is launched HR can raise awareness of this type of thing.

Most Research Fellow contracts are not originally more than 3 years and many may be short term depending on the funding. Unions on the whole would like to see broader consideration of strategic goals of school when looking at fixed term or standard contracts dependant on funding and the time a particular project should take to complete.

For external reasons, such as making it easier to get mortgage, etc, it will be beneficial.

The next step is to take the policy to the Office of the Principal for final comment.

9 Consultation on new annual review form for postdoctoral staff.

Louise had received feedback on the Annual Review Form which many of the Schools consider 'not fit for purpose' for Research Fellows. No concerns were raised for teaching staff. The new form is based on the form that Physics created. Comes hand in hand with HR Excellence, increasing the amount of annual reviews that are done for Research Fellow staff, as a high proportion report that they do not currently get reviews. This also fits with the Concordat principles.

It was noted by the Forum that the new form does not include the reflection on the past year which was previously found useful for the discussion of challenges. Currently responsibility lies in Schools, HRBP will remind the Head of School each year. A review by the KPMG suggested that HR should be responsible for making sure reviews are completed. Louse confirmed that this was historically done this way, however Schools didn't like it. Changing to a light touch, achieves more investment of the Schools and creates more ownership. Each School could adapt the new form to meet their own needs. Externally viewed positively if Research Fellow receive annual reviews.

Derek approved of the new form but asked that a section was added re independent research, asking questions on how the School is adding to the creative element of the Research Fellow to change the tone of the question therefore making the form more proactive. How is department adding to creative element? Derek will raise discussion at the Head of School lunch to encourage uptake.

10 Draft promotion criteria for grade 6 to 7 education focused.

Louise circulated a draft paper which is currently an unapproved working document. The document has not yet been circulated to the Unions. This was the first year that Grade 6 Education Focused applications to Grade 7 have come through Promotions, this was previously done via Grading Review submission. The Master, incoming Master and Proctor

have had input and more change may happen within the document. The expectation is that this will be used next promotion round.

Louise asked that members review the document and email Louise (lm80@st-andrews.ac.uk) with any comments.

11 General teaching and research matters

CAPOD – IED Master Training Course

The Forum queried a CAPOD training course for PhD tutors for teacher training that has limited numbers, teaching staff would like more courses to be provided. Diane confirmed these are the IED Master level programmes, run over a semester by Heather McKiggan-Fee and they can only enrol 14 per year. CAPOD are aware this course is popular, Heather does prioritise candidates but they would require another member of staff to run another course. There is a workshop that has been created for people making independent applications and there is support to do a reflective report through an independent route.

It was noted that these courses are no longer HEA accredited but there is funding available.

Relocation expenses for fixed term staff.

Sarah Bennison had raised a concern via email that there is a relocation allowance for standard contracts but not for fixed term contracts. Initial contract has to be for a period of more than 12 months and the post has to be funded by the University and not external money to be eligible for expenses.

Derek will discuss with the Office of Principal to see if there is any room to change, but this is a resources issue. It would be beneficial to discuss this along with strategic planning for the University. Currently the University's policy is in line with other institutions, if staff are transferring due to their manager moving institution the receiving University do not pay relocation expenses and the PI often has to find money in a class grant. It is felt that the University should be looking at what the best is that we can do/offer. Research Council should take some responsibility to take this forward as this could be an equality/diversity issue. Some contribution would be much appreciated but the University has to look at what is achievable. The Forum felt this would assist with widening recruitment strategy to recruiting excellent individuals.

Promoting Internally

Aimee Joyce raised a query on behalf of Sarah Bennison –

There had been a discussion among Research Fellows surrounding whether enough permanent opportunities were offered to internal staff, there was a concern that the University sought to offer these posts to 'big names – big hitters with a big profile'. Could the University seek to prioritise internal staff members for permanent posts? The University would be increasing loyalty, retaining talent, 'growing our own' early career staff.

Andy Goor and Garry Taylor have been going out to Schools to give talk on finance, from a research perspective things like Edinburgh Chancellor Fellowship scheme which we should be engaging in. Leverhulme Scheme would also be encouraging talent and succession planning. The Forum felt that big profile new appointments can often be expensive and the dowry can outway the benefits.

There was also a query on whether the University is prioritising outside candidates. A member of the Forum had heard a complaint that a staff member had attended interview but felt the external candidate was always going to be automatically appointed. Louise Milne commented that interview candidates would need to feedback to HR immediately after interview if they thought they were being unfairly treated.

Selection panels should be following procedures for interviewing, a candidate should not be interviewed unless they are a serious contender based on experience and qualifications. Derek and Louise both commented that they were not aware of and had never seen any internal/external bias. They did feel that PI's are often keen to be able to give post docs a position, keep on own staff.

12 General update from Vice Principal (Research)

The recent University Framework, as approved by Court will be looking at changes in behaviour and initiatives.

University finances are looking healthy in research terms, grants that have been submitted are likely to bring in over 50 million pounds. Using funds as a predictor of the next couple of years, there are likely to be many more positions appointed.

The University is waiting on further information connected to Brexit, the University will try and comment as soon as information comes in. Still ongoing working groups looking at a Brexit deal and also failure to make a deal.

13 AOCB

CAPOD have updated PDMS to record training. There is a new programmes tab, if staff want to join a Passport, or PGR or public engagement portfolio, they can go on new programs tab and sign up. Everything in the program they are on will bring up their record, looking back 3 years to see what they have completed so this will be more efficient

The recent GDPR training issued by Chris Milne, Head of Information Assurance and Governance, was thought to be given at short notice, time consuming and overly complicated for the majority of staff. Diane noted that this type of course could in future be run through CAPOD if they are approached.