

Code of Practice for the employment of research staff

1 Scope

The University of Bath recognises that the contributions of research staff towards University life are central to the University's status as a world class research institution. The University acknowledges that this key group of staff need the highest quality of leadership and management. Consequently, the University of Bath has adopted the following Code of Practice (the "Code") to:

- emphasise the importance and commitment it places on supporting its research staff
- set out the expectations and mutual responsibility of research managers, research staff, Heads of Departments and the University for the productive and rewarding employment of research staff
- encourage uptake of professional and career development activities by research staff

This Code of Practice provides guidance to Heads of Departments, research managers and Departmental Research Staff Co-ordinators on how they can create a supportive environment which is both managed and empowering, in which researchers are able to work effectively in pursuit of their project goals and to develop their career. In addition, it illustrates how research staff can actively create an effective work environment, and sets out their responsibilities in pursuing a successful career.

All groups are expected to be aware of and comply with the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) (the "Concordat").

The Code in particular highlights roles and responsibilities in regards to:

- Induction
- Probation and end of contract
- Staff Development Performance Review (SDPR)
- Equality and inclusivity
- Professional and personal development
- Good management practice

Further information on support for research staff, the Code of Practice for the Employment of research staff, the Concordat and the HR excellence in research award can be found at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/learningandteaching/rdu/researchersatbath/index.html>.

2 Responsibilities

Heads of Departments are responsible for:

- promoting and encouraging good management practice and in particular implementation of the Code

- appointing a Departmental Research Staff Co-ordinator from among the permanent members of staff, who has sufficient interest and status to carry out the role.

Research managers (typically Principal Investigators) are responsible for:

- recruiting researchers within the University's recruitment and selection code of practice
- ensuring that research staff are properly inducted into the University, their department, place of work and project
- ensuring clarity about their role and responsibilities within the research project
- managing researchers in a way that encourages engagement, maximises the research performance of the University, allows researchers to reach their full potential and discuss career development opportunities.

Research staff are responsible for:

- ensuring that they meet, as far as possible, the objectives of their research
- ensuring clarity about their role and responsibilities within the research project
- pro-actively engaging in their own personal and career development
- engaging in departmental and University life by taking part in events such as induction etc.

The Researcher development Unit, Academic Staff development and HR will provide support and training for both managers and research staff in pursuit of the above.

Departmental Research Staff Co-ordinators (DRSC) are responsible for:

- supporting the department in enacting the new code of practice for the employment of research staff, and feeding back on progress to the Departmental Research Committee.

3 Employment Cycle

3.1 Job design, recruitment and selection

The recruiting manager is responsible for recruiting new members of research staff according to the Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice of the University of Bath.

3.2 Induction

Induction is a vital part of an employee's time with an organisation during which expectations are set about working practices, management relationships and longer term issues such as career progression.

It is the responsibility of the recruiting manager/research manager to ensure that every new member of research staff has a comprehensive induction to their role and workplace, based on the following framework:

3.2.1 To the institution - general

All new staff should be encouraged to attend the "Introduction to the University of Bath" session, which covers the general mission, organisation and facilities of the University.

3.2.2 To the institution – research staff specific

Information useful for new research staff and their managers can be found in the online "[Induction for research staff](#)" (– access by logging in using your BUCS username and password).

The online induction includes:

- an induction checklist
- information on probation procedures and staff development performance review
- information on training and career development opportunities
- national and international policy

3.2.3 To the Department

Induction to the department should cover basic information such as departmental layout, organisation and safety, key contacts and other useful information held by the community. Department-level co-ordination, both formally and informally, is therefore necessary to ensure the most complete induction possible for new members of research staff.

- Research managers and DRSCs to ensure basic induction
- The research manager should ensure that research staff have been introduced to local staff.
- Local research staff networks, if existing, to collate key information and ensure welcome to new staff.
- DRSCs to monitor research manager induction / progress checks.

A suggested induction checklist –specific for research staff- can be found in the online induction course for research staff (<http://moodle.bath.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=54137>).

3.2.4 To the role

The research manager (line management responsibility is specified in contracts) shall be responsible for providing research staff with an introduction to their role. This process is a crucial part of the relationship between researcher and research manager, and sets much of the tone for the conduct of the project. It sets the groundwork for meaningful probation review and staff development performance review.

The following should be discussed in early meetings:

- clarification of job description and performance standards
- expectations of working practices including feedback, project meetings and working hours
- clarification of funder expectations, including terms and conditions of grant that are relevant for the researcher e.g. funders of research grants may state maximum number of hours per week that can be spent on teaching and demonstrating.
- key targets for mid- and end-probation
- frequency, format and documentation (e.g. minutes/notes) of meetings between research manager and research staff
- where to go for help and advice
- resources available in terms of library, computing, laboratory facilities and materials, and technical assistance.
- ethical standards (including published codes where they exist)
- laboratory procedure and practice (where appropriate)
- reasonable expectations of output
- protocol for publication (authorships, favoured publication methods)

Early meetings are also an opportunity for the member of research staff to explain their own needs and aspirations, and to mention any skills they may have that could contribute to the project or more widely to the group or department.

Where the research manager is not directly involved in inducting the new member of staff (for example, in explaining use of the library) they should at least check that the member of staff is happy that they have the information they need.

Research staff are strongly encouraged to ask further questions if they feel an issue has not been covered or not been covered sufficiently during their introduction to avoid grievances.

3.3 Probation

Research staff are subject to a six month probation period. During this time it is important that clear goals and objectives are set, in line with the duties and responsibilities of the post as set out in the job description. Progress should be reviewed at regular meetings and problems dealt with promptly; formal reports will be requested by HR at mid and end of probation and should be planned for. Failure to meet objectives, despite opportunities for improvement and necessary training or development, may lead to termination of the appointment. Further information on probation can be found in the Probation Policy and Procedure on the HR website or from your HR manager.

Mid-probation report: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/hr/docs/midprobreport.doc>

End of probation report: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/hr/docs/endprobreport.doc>

3.4 Staff development and performance review (SDPR)

It is mandatory to take part in the annual performance review. The staff development and performance review will be undertaken as an opportunity for staff to receive feedback on their performance, to discuss and set objectives for the coming year, and to explore and be supported in career aspirations. Development of non-research (ie transferable) skills could be discussed.

Heads of Department / School are responsible for establishing the reviewing structure. Reviewers will normally be group leader or principal investigator. Where appropriate, staff members may request to be reviewed by someone who is not their main line manager, provided that the reviewer is sufficiently familiar with their work, in an appropriate role to act as a reviewer and has received appropriate training.

3.5 Contribution and Merit Pay

The University recognizes and rewards staff for exceptional performance, commitment and professionalism within their current grade. To be eligible for an award you need to have undertaken a staff development performance review.

3.6 End of contract

There is a defined University procedure for handling the end of a contract. This procedure needs to be followed and can be found on the HR webpages.

Research staff and their applicable research manager should meet in good time before the end of the contract to achieve the most satisfactory ending to a contract (e.g. by discussing procedures, needs and work to be finished). A research manager should be ready to give honest advice about a person's future plans and aspirations, clear indications of the likelihood of continued funding and respect a researcher's need and desire to make a career move.

Research staff on fixed-term contracts are responsible for knowing when their contract or funding ends and for planning to deal with the consequences (e.g. changes to immigration status). If in doubt, ask your research manager or the Research Development and Support Office.

4 Inclusivity in University life and equity of status

Research staff should be fully integrated into the academic life of the University, recognising that their status and contribution to the institution's success is equal to any other staff group. The underpinning principles should be **inclusivity** and **equity of status** between members of research staff and other staff groups. Research staff should only be distinguished from other staff when there are clear and objective reasons for doing so.

4.1 Departmental Committees

- Research staff should be invited to relevant departmental meetings and have appropriate representation on other relevant committees. It may be necessary to appoint a representative number of research staff where it is impractical for a large research staff population to attend. Research staff will receive notification of meetings, minutes, papers and agenda.
- Research staff who teach undergraduate and postgraduate students should be involved fully in the teaching and assessment process, as appropriate to their role and as permitted under the QA Regulations. This will include membership of unit boards and other boards relevant to their area of activity. Such research staff will receive notification of meetings, minutes, papers and agenda.
- The rights detailed above have an attendant obligation for research staff to take advantage of opportunities and contribute to the life of the Department and University.

4.2 Supervision and Teaching

- Research staff, who have received appropriate training, should be encouraged to take a meaningful role in teaching and research supervision, as far as is permitted under QA7 and the terms and conditions of the funders.
- Where research staff undertakes teaching activities, their contribution should be recognised.
- In the case of project supervision, this should be by co-appointment as supervisor. This will lead, for example, to research staff being present at supervisory team meetings, being provided with a copy of project reports, dissertations and theses that result from work that they have co-supervised, and co-authored on any publications. A judgement needs to be made – usually by unit convenors or directors of studies - about whether the level of involvement of research staff in these activities justifies a co-appointment.

4.3 Grant applications

- Research staff who make a significant contribution to the writing of an application should be included as a co-applicant (co-investigator) or be given other recognition allowed by the regulations of the funding body concerned. Research staff can apply as PI on a grant (if allowed by regulations of the funding body and letter of support by HoD)

4.4 Publications

- Research staff who contribute to publications should receive appropriate recognition. Clearly agreed authorship conventions, and the significance of different types of publication, should be part of the induction process.

4.5 Commercial development

- Research staff should be associated fully with any commercialisation of the research to which they have made a significant contribution.

4.6 Public face

- Research staff should be encouraged and supported to contribute to publicity arising from their research.
- Research staff should have equal opportunity with other staff for a place in the public face of the department, including photo boards and web pages. The arrangements should not imply that research staff have an inferior place in any hierarchy; for preference alphabetical listings should be used.
- The occupants of research staff offices should be as clearly signed as those of established staff. Departments should provide appropriate technology to allow labelling of offices, with a clear corporate format that is equivalent to that on other staff offices.

4.7 Personal and professional development

'Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.' (Concordat, 2008) RCUK guidelines recommend that researchers spend up to 10 days each year developing their non-research (ie transferable) skills. While the research manager should provide support it is the responsibility of the researcher to find and take part in training to develop the skills they need for their chosen career.

5 Management practice

5.1 Good ongoing management practice for research managers

A number of straightforward processes can be considered the foundation of good people management:

- 5.1.1 Good communication. Be sure to talk to your research staff regularly, especially about the progress of their work and how it fits into your bigger research plans. Listen to their concerns, and make sure you have a shared understanding of what will happen next.
- 5.1.2 Feedback. Regular, quality feedback on their work is a key motivating factor for most employees. Don't forget to be positive about good achievements.
- 5.1.3 Clear expectations. Many workplace grievances result from managers not being clear what they expect from their staff. Be sure that you have made your expectations clear, and that researchers have the opportunity to discuss with you - and potentially negotiate - anything they consider unreasonable. It is particularly important to have a mutually understood set of performance criteria for mid- and end-probation reviews.
- 5.1.4 Regular meetings and staff development performance review. It is good practice to hold regular meetings at appropriate intervals with individuals and your team. The annual staff development performance review process is special, as it provides a protected space to get away from the day-to-day project work and discuss the member of staff's longer-term performance

and aspirations, and to set agreed goals and development plans for the year ahead. You share the responsibility to follow these plans through.

- 5.1.5 Fairness, honesty and integrity. Do not treat staff differentially. Be aware of people's external responsibilities. When asked, give honest appraisals about people's prospects and performance. Being seen to act as an advocate for your team is motivating for the team members, and will strengthen your leadership.

There are particular issues in managing research staff.

- Many researchers will be employed on **fixed-term funding**, whether or not their contracts are fixed-term or open-ended/permanent. This places a serious emotional and practical load on them that may seem to take their focus away from the pursuit of the project. Know when the funding for each member of your staff ends. You will need to strike a balance between getting the work completed and supporting the onward career movement of the researcher. There is a legal requirement for anyone under threat of redundancy to have paid time off for job seeking; allowing time to prepare applications and giving your best advice for grant proposals and job applications will generally be repaid in loyalty and "making up lost time."
- Previous contract, next contract. Setting realistic goals for a contract will ensure that all work proposed in the grant application, including writing up for publication, can be done within the time frame of the funding. However, this can unfortunately not always be achieved and often some time is spent writing up the work done during the previous contract. Accept this; you'll expect people to do it after they leave.
- Power dynamics. The short-term nature of funding and a competitive job market gives the research staff life a unique power relationship; your support might be seen as essential for the next career move. Be careful not to abuse it, for example by demanding an unreasonable workload.
- Mentoring. Impartial and supportive guidance from a more experienced colleague is one of the most useful career development tools in any profession. As impartiality is key a line manager should never be a mentor, although good managers often display some mentoring behaviours. Discuss whether your staff would value a mentor, and support their efforts to make contact with suitable colleagues.

5.2 Good ongoing management practice for research staff

Research staff have an important role to play in maintaining good management:

- 5.2.1 Good communication. Keeping your research manager up to date on your work progress helps ensure that you are working towards the same research goal. Ask for meetings if your research manager does not initiate any. Voice your concerns and listen to those of your research manager. Say if you are not sure of what is happening next.
- 5.2.2 Feedback. Receiving regular, quality feedback is an excellent way of further improving your work. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback if none is given but be aware that it might differ from your own impressions.
- 5.2.3 Clear expectations. Be sure that you understand the expectations of your research manager and if unsure ask your research manager. If you consider the expectations unreasonable discuss this with your research manager. You might be expected to supervise students.

5.2.4 Regular meeting and staff development performance review. It is good practice for your research manager to hold regular meetings at appropriate intervals. Ask for those meetings if your research manager does not suggest them. The annual staff development performance review process gives you the chance to discuss your longer-term performance and aspirations, and to set agreed goals and development plans for the year ahead. You share the responsibility to follow these plans through. Avoiding reviews and staff development performance review because of possible negative comments will only enhance potential problems. Remember you have the right to request an alternative appraiser without prejudice.

6 Glossary

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The Concordat is an agreement between the funders and employers of researchers in the UK, setting out the expectations and responsibilities of each stakeholder in researcher careers – researchers themselves, their managers, employers and funders. It aims to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK and to improve the quantity, quality and impact of research for the benefit of UK society.

Funders of researchers*

Those institutions and organisations which fund public and private research. It is recognized that funders may also be employers of researchers.

Research Councils UK (RCUK)

The strategic partnership of the UK's seven Research Councils.

Research managers*

Those responsible for managing and supporting researchers, including: Supervisors, Principal and Co-Investigators (The Principal Investigator takes responsibility for the intellectual leadership of the research project, for the overall management of the research and for the management and development of researchers), Research Team Leaders, Directors of Research and Heads of Schools or Departments.

Research staff*

Researchers are broadly defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose. It is recognised that this broad category of staffing covers a wide range of staff with different disciplinary backgrounds, levels of training, experience and responsibility, types of contract (fixed or open ended, full or part time), and different career expectations and intentions. Recognising the diversity of research staff experience and expertise, it is impossible to address researchers as a homogeneous group.

Research Staff Working Group

The Research Staff Working Group (RSWG) represents research staff at the University. It seeks to improve the working practices, skill levels, job satisfaction and career management of researchers in order to recruit, retain and get optimal performance out of the best possible research staff (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/learningandteaching/rdu/researchersatbath/rswg.html>)

*Definitions taken from the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers