

Heriot-Watt University Concordat Action Plan

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Introduction

Heriot-Watt University's strategy "[Focus on the Future](#)" aims to place Heriot-Watt University at the forefront of research and research-led education in the UK and internationally. A University priority is to grow our academic base by 50% in ten years. This includes attracting and retaining the best research leaders to fulfil our ambitious strategy.

The principles contained within the Concordat underpin the institutional approach to realising the objectives of this strategy. The details of how the institution intends to implement the Concordat principles are contained within the University Values programme and within the Institutional People Strategy.

The Heriot-Watt Values programme recently identified the five core values that express the "Spirit of Heriot-Watt University". These values are:

- Valuing and Respecting Everyone
- Pursuing Excellence
- Pride and Belonging
- Shaping the Future
- Outward Looking

The University's People Strategy outlines the ways in which it intends to meet the seven principles of the Concordat. This strategy includes the following University priorities:

- To retain people who are contributing to University strategy in what is a competitive international market place.
- To promote excellence in leadership and management.
- To reward staff fairly and equitably for their contribution and recognise high performance.
- To manage performance more effectively, positively acknowledging high performance and managing sensitively shortfalls in performance.
- To manage change effectively by engaging with and involving staff to secure their commitment.
- To measure people performance against statutory requirements, against sector competitors.

Structures and Committees

The overall implementation of the Concordat is overseen by the Deputy Principal (Research and Knowledge Transfer), who provides regular updates to the University's Research Coordination Board. The Research Staff Group provides a forum for identifying areas where improvements can be made. The Research Staff Group includes research staff representatives from all Schools within the University, the Director of People and Organisational Development, the Researcher Development Coordinator and the Entrepreneurship Development Manager. This group provides a forum for discussion of all issues relating to research staff and takes responsibility for coordinating efforts across the University to improve the support and provision for research staff.

The Roberts agenda for research staff at Heriot-Watt is well developed and Heriot-Watt is represented on numerous Scottish and UK committees related to researcher development. Through these activities, the University is in a strong position to learn from good practice in other institutions and to avail of collaborative opportunities for research staff development initiatives.

The Research Staff Group uses the results of many initiatives within the University to inform its deliberations. These include the institutional CROS 2009 results, the results of the recent Staff Survey as well as the outcomes from the institutional Performance and Development Review (PDR) process. The University intends to participate in the 2011 CROS and in the proposed 2011 Research Leaders Survey. These surveys will provide good information on how well the Concordat implementation is progressing.

The Heriot-Watt Approach to Implementing the Concordat

The first step to implementing the Concordat at Heriot-Watt was to undertake an internal analysis to identify how well the institutional policy and practice aligned with the principles of the Concordat. Following this broad analysis, a number of areas were identified for further scrutiny and development. Once the in-depth analysis of the selected areas is complete, new approaches or changes to existing approaches will be developed. These new approaches will then be implemented and reviewed at regular intervals.

Recent Developments

Following the initial internal analysis, the University has identified a number of areas where it seeks to better align its present approaches and provision to the principles of the Concordat. In order to achieve this improved alignment, it was decided to carry out two in-depth reviews. These reviews, which were carried out by the human resources section, focused on:

- The procedures for managing fixed-term contracts
- The promotion procedures for research staff

In addition to the reviews, it was also decided to improve our provision for research staff by including new activities within our researcher development programmes. The improvements identified included:

- A new induction event for academic and research staff
- A new series of research staff symposia
- Wider leadership development provision for academic and research staff

The Researcher Development Coordinator and the Entrepreneurship Development Manager were responsible for the overseeing these improvements.

Future Developments

In light of recent reviews and on-going development to improve the management of and support for research staff, the University is planning the following initiatives that will improve the alignment between the institutional procedures and provision and the principles contained within the concordat.

- The rolling out of a new policy for the management of fixed-term contracts. This policy will set a normal limit of fixed-term employment at 3 years. Staff

employed beyond 3 years will be offered an open-ended employment contract. It is expected that this policy, led by the Director of People and Organisational Development, will be implemented from August 1st 2010.

- A new promotions procedure for research staff, led by Human Resources, will be introduced which will increase the promotion opportunities for researchers. It is envisaged that this will be in place by October 2010.
- The Researcher Development Coordinator and the Entrepreneurship Development Manager will be devising new activities to improve the Knowledge Transfer and Knowledge exchange support for academics and research staff. It is expected that these activities will be included in the researcher development provision for the academic year 2010/11.
- It is expected that regular research staff symposia will be held on specific topics relevant to research staff. These events will provide high quality development opportunities for research staff and will provide a regular forum for the research staff community to discuss issues of relevance and to provide input into ongoing University developments. It is envisaged that there will be two or three such events annually.
- A new web site is being designed to augment the present web provision for research staff. This site will include information on forthcoming development opportunities for researchers at Heriot-Watt and will also provide access to and signposting for on-line development tools and information. This is being led by the Researcher Development Coordinator and is expected that it will be operational from October 2010.

On-going Monitoring

The implementation of the above action plan will be monitored by the Research Staff Group and by the Deputy Principal (Research and Knowledge Transfer). The University intends to participate in future HEI Surveys as organised by the Concordat Strategy Group as well as in future CROS surveys and in the proposed 2011 research Leaders survey.

Update on Progress,

August 13th 2010

Since the initial publication of the Concordat Action Plan in April 2010, there have been a number of developments to improve the alignment between Heriot-Watt policy and practice and the expectations of the principles within the Concordat.

- The new policy for the management for fixed-term contracts is now in operation. As part of the implementation strategy, the Director of People and Organisational Development has held a number of briefing sessions with Heads of Schools and with research managers and administrators.
- The new promotions procedures for research staff are going through their final review process and are expected to be in operation from October 2010.
- Following the first Research Staff Symposium last February, another symposium is being planned for October/November 2010.

- As part of the wider knowledge transfer/knowledge exchange provision, the University recently held a new Business Planning competition, which was open to all Heriot-Watt researchers as well as researchers in those Scottish Research pools of which Heriot-Watt is a member. This competition included business planning training for all participants. Further details can be found at <http://www.hw.ac.uk/Convergechallenge/index.html>
- Following an initial research focussed induction for staff at Heriot-Watt last November, a second successful event was held in May and another is planned for November 2010.
- Heriot-Watt University has recently collaborated with Edinburgh Napier University in a novel programme of leadership development for research staff. The pilot programme will run in August 2010 and three Heriot-Watt research staff are participating. If the pilot is deemed successful, we will look to increase the provision to enable more research staff to benefit.
- Plans for the new web site are well underway and the initial set of pages is expected to go live by mid-September 2010.