

SFC involvement with Concordat implementation

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has been closely involved throughout the development and implementation of the Concordat – from our membership of the Revised Concordat Working Group (concluded in 2007) to both the Concordat Strategy and Executive Groups in 2011-12. As a signatory to the Concordat we are committed to working with the Scottish sector to embed its principles within the delivery of high quality training, support and management processes for all researchers in our HEIs.

Process

During 2011-2012 officers in the Research and Innovation group of SFC carried out an initial analysis of SFC activities, identifying those which had been currently or recently conducted and which supported the principles of the Concordat. This involved an analysis of SFC's policy and funding as well as calendar scanning. Input was then sought from a range of SFC colleagues with current or previous responsibility for institutional governance, skills development, employability, equality and diversity as well as research and innovation, the Council's internal HR practices and the Chief Executive.

During the course of the gap analysis the Scottish Government published their vision for the post-16 education system in Scotland: *Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering our ambition for Post 16 Education*¹. The vision which they have set out firmly establishes the individual learner at the heart of the system – a vision which SFC is playing a key role in delivering. Our action plan should be read in the context of this wide ranging reform agenda.

We were keen to ensure that the experiences of research staff and students were taken into account and to this end the gap analysis results were compared with the recommendations from the following surveys: Principal Investigators and Research Leaders (PIRLS), Careers in Research Online (CROS) and the Postgraduate Research Experience (PRES). These surveys together with the recommendations from the (draft) three year review of progress on implementing the Concordat were

¹ Available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/15103949/15>

compared with the gap analysis and helped to shape the action plan. Direct stakeholder input was requested through the SFC Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC)², to which a paper on the gap analysis and action plan was presented in January 2012 asking for comment and suggestions.

The table below presents our current and recent work towards implementing the Concordat as well as highlighting our ongoing commitments and any additional action which we have identified is required. Responsibility for implementing the action plan ultimately lies with the Chief Executive although authority will be delegated to the Director of Research and Innovation. In implementing the action plan we will continue to work closely with the Scottish HE sector, seeking guidance from our RKEC where required and working in partnership with the sector and other stakeholders.

Principle ³	Activity/Policy/ Funding	Description		Deadline
		Current/recent tasks	Action plan	
1-7	Activities specifically to support implementation of the Concordat	<p>Membership of Concordat Executive and Strategy Groups</p> <p>Support for Concordat implementation activities and events [eg.CEO speech and Scottish Funding Council (SFC) participation in one-day event focused on the progress made in Scotland on researcher development since the launch of the Concordat</p>	<p>Gaining the HR Excellence in Research badge as sign to sector of importance of agenda</p> <p>Further collaborative activity to share good practice among Scottish and UK institutions</p>	<p>Early 2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

² The RKEC responds to, recommends and advises the Council on research and knowledge exchange strategy, policy and funding issues relevant to Scottish higher education institutions and colleges. It is chaired by a member of the SFC Board and its membership is drawn from academic and research management in university and college sectors as well as from business, with observers from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Government and UK Government.

³ Full detail of all seven Concordat principles is given at the end of the action plan table on page 17.

		(14.11.11)] Support for the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research badge (SFC speech at workshop 11.03.11)		
1-5	Co-funding and support for Research Pooling	Created by SFC in 2003 to encourage researchers across Scottish higher education to pool their resources and respond to increasing international competition thus facilitating the recruitment and retention of internationally significant researchers at all levels to Scottish institutions. The pools offer a wide range of innovative training and development opportunities both to the staff and students within them. Collaborative graduate student recruitment and training within the pools has opened opportunities for more students to benefit from specialised training. SINAPSE, the research pool in imaging, recently involved its students in the design of their own curriculum, demonstrating how such structures	Aligned with both the Scottish Government's policy and the UK Research Council's focus on quality and scale, SFC will continue to work towards collaborative, quality driven and multi-institutional HE provision where appropriate.	Ongoing

		facilitate researchers sharing responsibility for their own personal and career development.		
1	Research Excellence Grant	<p>SFC allocates research funding based predominantly on quality, with volume being quantified through indicators including numbers of academic staff, research assistants and research students, as well as external income received.</p> <p>SFC's key policy driver is to improve the international competitiveness of our research and our funding is provided in part to recruit researchers with the highest potential for excellence. Reflecting the letter of guidance from the Cabinet Secretary from 21 September 2011 the SFC now requires universities to target their REG allocations predominantly on world-leading and internationally excellent research</p>	<p>We will begin a process of reviewing the underlying model for the distribution of the REG in advance of the Research Excellence Framework in 2014.</p> <p>International competitiveness in research to be included within institutional outcome agreements.</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>September 2012</p>
	Research Excellence Framework	SFC together with the other HE funding bodies has been developing the REF as the replacement for the Research	SFC to continue working with the UK REF Steering Group to develop and implement the REF	Ongoing

	Supervision of postgraduate research students (PGRs)	<p>Assessment Exercise (RAE) since 2006. Representatives of SFC sit on the UK REF Steering Group, which shapes the development and implementation of the Framework. SFC has therefore been central in shaping the REF (and the RAE) towards its primary objective - the production of assessment outcomes for each submission made by institutions. The exercises recognise world leading research and researchers and are used to inform the allocation of public research funding to HEIs. The assessment outcomes establish reputational yardsticks, therefore facilitating the recruitment and retention of researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.</p> <p>Results from PRES 2011 show that, as with previous years, supervision was the scale that was rated as most important by respondents. Although it is the area about which respondents were most positive, the analysis shows that the quality of supervision received has the</p>	<p>and consider whether links between the Concordat and REF can be strengthened.</p> <p>The REF Equalities and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) has been established from 2012 until 2014, to provide advice to the REF team, REF panel chairs and the UK funding bodies on the implementation and evaluation of the REF equality and diversity measures.</p> <p>Explore with sector further work in this area, including collaborative provision.</p>	<p>September 2014</p> <p>Discussion to be initiated by December 2012, with potential action, if appropriate,</p>
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		strongest impact of all the scales on how research students rated their overall experience.		agreed in early 2013
2	Institutional HR practice	<p>SFC has moved from a focus on HR enhancement activities to governance based on institutional autonomy – this approach sees us monitor any relevant issues through a monthly review of employment tribunals with appropriate action if required.</p> <p>SFC has a Financial Memorandum with all the institutions it funds. This requires that the institution adheres to the Council’s mandatory requirements (as notified to the institution in circular letters) and that the institution takes account of relevant good practice in the management of all its activities and resources including its staff, human resources and industrial relations practices.</p> <p>SFC is currently in its third year of Strategic Dialogue Meetings with individual institutions, which strengthen</p>	Explore relationship building with HE HR Community of Practice.	Discussion to be initiated by mid-2013, with potential action, if appropriate, agreed by December 2013

		SFC understanding and knowledge of institutional practice.		
3	Putting Learners at the Centre: Post-16 Educational reform.	The Scottish Government's Post-16 educational reform is centred on equipping and supporting individuals to be adaptable and flexible to meet the demands of the workplace. SFC has begun work on the postgraduate work stream of reform; has issued letters of award for Postdoctoral and Early Career Researcher Exchanges to provide research training and development opportunities for the most able postgraduates and early career researchers working within the Scottish Research pools and SFC has been working with the sector to enhance industry – university interactions.	SFC to continue on postgraduate work stream of reform and KE reform, as well as monitoring uptake of postdoctoral and early career exchanges.	Ongoing <i>*PG Reform discussions, with actions agreed, by end of 2012</i> <i>*KE Reform: discussions in mid 2012</i>
	Clinical Academics	Co-funding for the clinical academic scheme providing 20 fellowships to world leading clinician scientists.	Continued work and further alignment with other public sector agencies tasked with delivery of reform agenda, specifically Scottish Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland to enhance the opportunities available for researchers.	Ongoing
	ScotChem SPIRIT	Co-funding for 30 PhD studentships in	Continued support for studentship programmes which offer innovative training pathways equipping students for a diverse, mobile, global research	Ongoing

	<p>studentships</p> <p>Technology Innovation Centre</p> <p>Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee - Skills Committee Joint Working Group: High Level Skills for Postgraduates</p>	<p>Scottish SMEs to include enterprise and knowledge transfer training.</p> <p>Co-funding for the centre which will house researchers, engineers and project managers from academia and industry, offering training and development opportunities for both students and researchers.</p> <p>In 2010, a joint research and skills working group was set up to consider high level skills for postgraduates. The group proposed two courses of action – one would address generic employability skills gaps among postgraduates, and the other would address sector-specific skills issues in the low carbon/renewables sector.</p>	<p>environment.</p> <p>Continue to work with sector to develop further employability focused collaborative skills provision for PGRs.</p> <p>SFC has identified an opportunity for investment to integrate employer demand in the energy sector with educational provision at multiple levels across FE and HE.</p> <p>Work with institutions to increase recognition and use of the Researcher Development Framework.</p>	<p>Ongoing with focus of activity in mid-2012</p> <p>March 2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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2, 3 and 4	Graduate Schools	<p>Funding for multi-institutional Graduate Schools in the research pools for improved PGR provision.</p> <p>Funding for the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science.</p>	Continued and further partnership and funding for collaborative skills and training provision for postgraduate students.	Ongoing
3 and 4	<p>Research Postgraduate Grant</p> <p>Working with Vitae, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland, Vitae, HEA and the HE sector</p>	<p>Formulaic funding provided for universities to invest in the environment for high quality research training and development for PGRs.</p> <p>Founding member of Scottish Research Career Coordination Forum exploring challenges and opportunities in PGR provision and good practice in responding.</p> <p>Observer status on QAA Scotland's International Benchmarking Working Group.</p> <p>Support for events focused on</p>	<p>We will begin a process of reviewing the underlying model for the distribution of the RPG in advance of the Research Excellence Framework in 2014.</p> <p>Discussions with Vitae, Research Councils UK (RCUK) and other HE funding bodies over future partnership.</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>Mid 2012</p>

		<p>researcher skills and career development (eg. speaking at Researcher Skills and Career Development day at Edinburgh University on 21.01.11).</p> <p>Learning to Work is SFC's employability strategy covering university (and college) work to build capacity and good practice for enhancing the employability of students at all levels. Through Learning to Work Two SFC has funded four work placement projects in SMEs, the IT industry, the Third Sector and key economic sectors with each project offering opportunities to postgraduate students.</p>	<p>In line with the recommendations of the 2011 CROS, SFC to explore working with the sector on developing work placements and secondments for staff.</p>	<p>Discussion to be initiated by mid-2013, with potential action, if appropriate, agreed by December 2013</p>
3,4 and 5	<p>Scottish Crucible Programme</p> <p>Knowledge Transfer Scotland</p>	<p>Funding for the professional and personal leadership and development programme for post-doctoral researchers and those in their first academic position, which facilitates individual researchers to engage with their own career development.</p> <p>Funding and support for conference for early career researchers to learn about</p>	<p>Continued support for collaborative leadership and development programmes.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

	<p>KE Step Change Scotland</p> <p>Scottish Institute for Enterprise</p>	<p>the KT skills researchers can develop.</p> <p>Funding for KE Step Change Scotland 2009 for project to build on KE knowledge and skills and develop a distinctively Scottish approach to how researchers are encouraged and supported to engage in KE. Five events were run from February to June 2009 working with a broad cross-section of staff at Scottish HEIs to develop KE and leadership skills as well as enhance partnership working.</p> <p>We have supported this organisation since 2004 to help students at all levels set up student businesses and social enterprises.</p>		
5	Strategic Dialogue Meetings with individual institutions	Through the involvement of the institution's students as well as Board members and senior management, SFC receives feedback directly from those affected by institutional policy and facilitates the involvement of staff and students in the enhancement of the opportunities offered by the institution.	The delivery of 'Putting Learners at the Centre' requires working in direct partnership with staff and students in universities enabling individuals to share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development,	Ongoing with key milestones to be achieved in 2012-2013

			and lifelong learning.	
6	SFC Equality and Diversity Action Plan	The plan outlines the key actions required for the Council to embed equality and diversity within its core activity. The following is an example of our ongoing work:	Targets for retention, articulation and widening access to be included within institutional outcome agreements.	July each year starting 2012
	Improved understanding of under representation of certain groups within research	Using the Equality Challenge Unit's (ECU) Statistical Report and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data to generate improved understanding of under representation among staff and students with reference to gender.	Using ECU Statistical Report and HESA data to generate improved understanding of under representation among staff and students with reference to ethnicity and disability.	December 2012
			Working with institutions to further understand the impact and potential impact of our funding for strategic initiatives, on different underrepresented groups in research.	December 2012
	Every Researcher Counts (ERC)	Support for project focused on improving equality and diversity in research careers: funding, facilitating and speaking at events (eg. 26 August 2011) and funding production of training	Working with institutions to promote and implement materials developed in ERC project.	Mid 2012

	<p>Gender inequality in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM)</p>	<p>materials.</p> <p>Funding and support for Athena Swan Charter that recognises and promotes good employment practice for women in STEM.</p> <p>Work to identify major inequality in participation and retention rates within certain subject areas and suggested activities to tackle issue.</p>	<p>Working with ECU and other funders and potential funders, to establish a sustainable future for the Charter.</p> <p>Working with ECU on development of similar schemes for other under-represented groups.</p> <p>Identify how data collection and monitoring of both SFC formulaic research grants and strategic research funding can be enhanced, to facilitate potential development of gender focused outcomes for both types of grant.</p> <p>SFC to consider how the issues noted regarding male and female participation and retention across the sector can be addressed through the outcome agreements.</p>	<p>September 2013</p> <p>December 2013</p> <p>September 2013</p> <p>September 2012</p>
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	REF Equality and Diversity Panel and Group(EDAG) and Equalities and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP)	EDAG was convened to advise the funding bodies on the development of the measures to promote E&D in the REF. The EDAP has been established from 2012 until 2014, to provide advice to the REF team, REF panel chairs and the UK funding bodies on the implementation and evaluation of the REF equality and diversity measures. It includes a representative nominated by	<p>Development and implementation of SFC Occupational Segregation Strategy.</p> <p>Through all this work, and initially through Athena Swan and Every Researcher Counts, SFC will seek to work with the sector to drive the shift in research culture that is required to ensure that every individual with the potential and desire to be an excellent researcher is recognised and adequately supported to realise that potential.</p> <p>SFC to provide Secretariat support to EDAP through 2012.</p> <p>EDAP to give advice to SFC which will promote equality and diversity within universities through the REF.</p>	<p>Development by June 2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>September 2012</p> <p>September 2014</p>
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		SFC.		
7	Data collection	SFC representative in HESA Staff Record Review. Encouragement for increased participation in surveys (The Distance Travelled – 14 November)	Work (in partnership with HESA, RCUK, other funding bodies) to improve data collection on researcher careers. Work (in partnership with institutions) to encourage wider participation in surveys tracking progress in implementation (eg. CROS and PIRLS). In line with CROS 2011 recommendations to institutions, SFC to explore further analysis of CROS and PIRLS results as a Scottish level.	Ongoing Ongoing September 2013

The Concordat's key principles:

1. Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.

2. Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.
3. Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.
4. The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.
5. Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.
6. Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.
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.