

Researcher Development Concordat - Annual Report 2021

In November 2020, Kingston University retained its HR Excellence in Research Award after our 4-year review. The award is recognition that we are demonstrating our long-term commitment to the career development of researchers and implementing the principles of Vitae's Researcher Development Concordat.

Activities during 2021

The strategy is overseen by our Researcher Career Development Group, which contains Early Career Researcher and Principal Investigator representatives from all Faculties, as well as representatives from HR and Research & Innovation Directorate. The Group was chaired by the Head of Research and the Graduate School, Prof Phil Terry, until his retirement in September 2021. The Group is currently chaired by the Pro-vice Chancellor Research, Prof Simon Wortham, until a replacement for Phil Terry is appointed. The group meets each term, and reports to Research, Business & Innovation Committee.

• Researcher Training

Fourteen training events for researchers were facilitated by Research and Innovation Directorate during the 2020/21 academic year, with a total of 404 attendances (see appendix 1). They included visits by external funding bodies, with the RAEng, AHRC and UKRIO hosting information sessions. VITAE also led sessions on open access, and project management for team leaders. Other sessions were led by KU's internal expertise, for example Prof Mark Fielder (Prof of Medical Microbiology), who has appeared regularly in the media, held a session on presentation skills.

We also hold at least two training sessions per term that are specifically of interest to Early Career Researchers and are promoted via our Early Career Researcher Network. This is an informal network, where anyone who considers themselves in the early stages of their research career subscribes to the network mailing list, which is used for circulating details of training events and any items of interest. It currently has 120 subscribers.

• Researcher Mentoring

Work is on-going to understand the range of good practice mentoring programmes across the University. One such programme is The RISE Research Leadership Academy, established between January and December 2020 and led by the Associate Dean for Research of FHSCE, Professor Cilla Harries, it was set up in order support academic and research staff's research leadership development in the Faculty. The programme was to include visits to HEI Centre of Research Excellence; Action Learning Sets; workshops to develop key research leadership qualities and essential skills; and informal talks by successful research leaders about their journeys. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the programme was simplified to include only presentations and workshops, 16 in total, offered fully online. A final one-to-one mentorship session with Professor Harries was also offered to participants.

Twenty academics from across various schools and departments of FHSCE and at different stages of their career were enrolled onto the programme, following a formal application process.

In Spring 2021, a brief evaluation of the RISE 2020 programme was conducted to capture feedback using an online questionnaire and one-to-one interviews with RISE participants (n=15). Generally, evaluation participants were very positive toward the programme. The 2022 programme is being expanded across all Faculties, with regular sessions planned until June.

• Researcher funding schemes

In October 2021, KU launched several funding schemes to support researchers at different stages of their career.

- **First KU Grants:** Pump priming funds for external bidding for 3 groups of staff; New academics who have not yet held external funding as PI; New Joiners started at KU since August 2019 and who want a boost to start their research; Any academic who has not yet initiated external bidding as a PI at KU

- **Returning to Research:** Pump priming funds for external bidding for established researchers who have who have not been able to publish/produce research outputs in the public domain for a period of 2 years or more (e.g. additional responsibilities, illness etc.)
- **Research Impact Awards:** Tiered, internal funding, designed to support researchers to create and enhance impacts arising from their research, from early stage to final evaluation. Supporting researchers to enhance collaboration, plan impact activities and evaluate that impact leading to effective research impact case studies.
- **Bidding Champions Academy:** A pilot scheme for academic staff who have started their bidding careers but wish to extend and refine their ability. Provides targeted training to help expand skills and knowledge to facilitate submission of a significant funding bid. Awardees will be requested to champion bidding for external funding within their Faculties.

- **Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS)**

In 2021 KU took part in CEDARS, which replaced the previous biennial CROS & PIRLS surveys, by combining into a single survey. CEDARS more closely matches the revised Researcher Concordat (Sept 2019) and first ran as a pilot in 2020. Whilst our surveys results matched well with many national bench-mark findings, we would like to improve on our response rate of 30% when next participating. Nationally, 15% of respondents said they had engaged in 10 or more development days over the last year (a key aim of the Concordat). For Kingston the figure was 20%. This highlights a key challenge for the sector, in supporting professional development activities and encouraging uptake. This is also highlighted by 30% of KU correspondents not being aware of the Concordat (45% nationally) and 43% not being aware of the Research Integrity Concordat (52% nationally).

At Kingston, all respondents agreed their manager encourages them to engage in personal and career development activities. However, only 29% agreed they were encouraged to consider a wide range of career options both within and beyond academia. And none had discussed their development with a careers specialist. This highlights the relevance of our long-term aims to strengthen our personal development plan protocols for researchers and improve support around a broader range of careers advice.

- **Equality Diversity and Inclusion**

Kingston is striving to ensure that everyone in our university feels like they belong, can be their authentic selves, and are empowered to reach their full potential as part of our commitment to working in a diverse vibrant learning community. As such, Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter (REC) are important accreditations for the University. As part of the 2021 EDI Governance Review, the Athena SWAN SAT now clearly sits within the overall governance structure for EDI, this will allow all future submissions to be fully embedded across the University. We are seeking to renew Athena Swan Bronze in 2022, with plans for Silver under the new framework by 2025. The School of Life Sciences, Pharmacy and Chemistry plan to submit for a Silver Award in April 2022. Kingston University was one of the first Universities to attain a REC Bronze in 2015 which was successfully renewed in 2019.

- **Well-being initiatives**

The support Kingston provides for the well-being of all staff is set out in its Well-being hub. Which has a range of resources to enhance staff health and wellbeing. The resources are based around the Five Ways to Wellbeing, which are tried and tested, evidence-based actions and ideas that people can incorporate into their daily lives. The Five Ways to Wellbeing are Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Learn, Give. They are widely used by diverse organisations for promoting wellbeing as a framework. Key activities in 2021 included Well-being Week in November, which had range of events, both online and on campus, planned for our staff and students. A staff pulse survey – How are you managing during the covid pandemic? was also conducted in March and was the 5th such survey during the pandemic. The survey's

aim is to help build a better picture of the circumstances of staff, to help provide the most appropriate and useful support for everyone.

- **Looking forward**

As well as continuing with the work of 2021, there are a number of areas where further work is needed in 2022-2024 to meet our aims.

- We will continue to review our training portfolio to ensure it best supports the Academic Domains CF and has an appropriate balance of online and in-person events. The explicit link with career progression should improve uptake of management training by PIs (currently only 29% of PIs over the last two years: we aim to achieve >80% by 2024).
- CEDARS has shown we need stronger engagement with our contract research staff, to better understand their needs, and support work towards ensuring that all researchers engage with 10 development days.
- Researcher mentoring schemes will be supported and reviewed, to encourage best practice and take up.
- Whilst most research staff engage with the appraisal process, better personal development plan protocols are needed. These should take into account the particular requirements of those on fixed-term contracts, where career planning and support are needed in the early stages of the role. Matched to this, further exploration is needed on what professional careers advice and resources may be developed.
- Delivery of the institutional plans and higher accreditations in Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter (REC) by the end of 2024.

Appendix 1. R&I training and events

Month	Title	Description	attendance
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Oct 2020	Facing the Media	A full day workshop on how to present your research professionally to the press	15
Nov 2020	Virtual visit by the RAEng	Royal Academy of Engineering held a presentation on R&E funding opportunities followed by Q&A and one-to one appointments.	13
	Introduction to Research, Business and Innovation at KU	The RBI Directorate information session on the support that is provided internally at the University to researchers.	22
Dec 2020	Presentation skills	Workshop ran by Prof Mark Fielder on how to present in person and online, making the most of information provided, body language, slide and presentation etiquette	25
Jan 2021	Introduction to Epigeum	Nick Broom from Oxford University Press introducing Epigeum to KU staff	59
Mar 2021	What makes a really strong bid	Members of the KU Research Development Team will present key tips and information on how to identify suitable funding calls and strengthen applications for research funding	26
	Workshop- Writing for Journal Publication of Research	Inter-active workshop run by Prof Vari Drennan MBE	32
	Computer assisted discovery of themes in text	KU Associate Professor Stephen Gourlay provided an overview of a wide range of techniques for analysing text with an emphasis on the range of semi-automated or algorithmic approaches now available.	23
	Applying to AHRC Research Networking Grant Scheme	Introduction to the AHRC's Research Networking scheme which involves funding for collaboration between arts and humanities researchers across UK universities and internationally.	13
April 2021	An overview of the Bloomberg database	Introduction to the Bloomberg database which brings together real-time data on every financial market, breaking news, and powerful analytics.	17
	Online conference presentation skills	A workshop is designed to help participants improve their contributions to online conferences.	33
	How to say more with less	It will cover how to pitch your research to academic and non-academic audiences through succinct and informative written text	29
May 2021	Introduction to R&I with Business	A session informing on how this directorate facilitate research and business activities across the university.	13
	A brief guide to European Clusters	Information session held by UKRIO	21
	How Horizon Europe proposals are evaluated	Information session held by UKRIO	22
	Introduction to Horizon Europe-	Information session held by UKRIO	23
July 2021	The open researcher - Open access	Information session held by VITAE	15
	Project management for team leaders	Information session held by VITAE	18