



# Best Practice

## Supporting researchers

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was launched in June 2008 and sets out the duties of universities, research managers and funders to support researchers' careers. The full text can be found at [www.researchconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk). A Strategy Group will now oversee implementation.

This factsheet includes a selection of examples from Athena SWAN award-winners, which address many of the key points in the Research Concordat. To find out more about these initiatives and other SWAN-related work, contact the universities directly. Contact details for SWAN members can be found at [www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/membership](http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/membership).

### Data

- Collect data on the career progression of contract research staff (*Lancaster University*).
- Ensure that data-gathering considers different aspects, e.g. gender plus ability to combine an academic career with having a family (*Manchester University*).
- Examine gender data in relation to transfer from fixed-term to open-ended contracts (*Leicester University*).
- Conduct exit interviews with contract research staff (*School of Physical and Geographical Sciences, Keele University*).
- Conduct a destination survey of PhD students and postdocs who have left the department (*Psychology Department, York University*).

### Induction and mentoring

- Provide a tailored induction seminar from an experienced colleague in the school, covering all aspects of the position, both formal and informal (*School of Psychology, Nottingham University*).
- Use existing forums to provide induction for new early-career research staff (*Psychology Department, York University*).
- Supplement the Staff Handbook with 'Things I Wish I'd been Told', drawing on comments from previous new arrivals (*Psychology Department, York University*).
- Inform research staff individually, and on the website, about mentoring schemes and the support to be expected from mentors (*Department of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering, Nottingham University*).



## Moving onto permanent contracts

- Introduce a Fixed-term Contract Agreement to systematically move staff from fixed-term to open-ended contracts (*Biochemistry Department, Bristol University*).
- Provide bridging funds to departments to cover the salaries of key research staff, to enable them to move from fixed-term to standard contracts (*Bedfordshire University*).

## Inclusion

- Include research staff in consultation exercises and gather enough information to make informed decisions on tackling their issues (*Leicester University*).
- Organise workshops specifically for postdoctoral researchers, to determine their key concerns (*Bedfordshire University*).
- Hold a 'next generation leaders' retreat for early-career researchers so they can inform the development of research priorities (*Queen Mary, University of London*).
- Hold an annual Research Staff Conference to provide an opportunity for networking with other research staff across the university (*Bristol University*).

## Maternity/paternity leave

- Consider extending contracts to enable fixed-term researchers to return from maternity leave and complete the outstanding months on their original contract (*Reading University*).
- Allow maternity leavers with research grants to place those grants in abeyance, while the school employs the other contract research staff from the grant as temporary teaching fellows until the grant is resumed on the staff member's return from maternity leave (*School of Psychology, Nottingham University*).

## Sources of further information

**Equality Challenge Unit** – research and advice on equality and diversity in higher education.  
[www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)

**UK Resource Centre for Women in SET** – advice, statistics and information about women in SET. [www.ukrc4setwomen.org.uk](http://www.ukrc4setwomen.org.uk)

**Research Councils UK** – a strategic partnership between the seven Research Councils, working together to enhance the overall impact and effectiveness of their research. [www.rcuk.ac.uk](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk)

**Vitae** – tools and advice for researchers, their supervisors, managers and employers.  
[www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk)