

Review of Progress against Concordat Action Plan 2015-2017

The Action Plan 2017-19 builds on our previous action plans from 2011, 2013 and 2015. These plans can be found at:

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/policies-and-other-important-documents>

PROPOSED ACTIONS (2015)		LEAD	STATUS / PROGRESS
A: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION			
Principle 1: Recognition and the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.			
1a	Enhance the induction process for research staff. We will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a focus group to identify issues and shortcomings around the induction process; - Enhance the PI checklist to include better signposting to resources to support researcher induction; - Monitor the impact of changes made to the process through an annual internal evaluation and through CROS and PIRLS 2017. 	GS / RSA Research Institutes / Researcher Concordat Implementation Group	Completed. Success measures delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey was run by the RSA and reported to RCIG – October 2016. Report produced and proposed actions discussed with HR and staff development. - Central University induction process revised and updated. Supplementary induction process designed by collaboration of internal stakeholders for termly delivery from Oct 2017. - PI checklist revised and updated March 2016. - CROS 2017 showed 20% increase in ‘induction completed and was useful’ measure in comparison to CROS 2015.
1b	Work with HR to promote and increase opportunities for research staff to be involved in the recruitment and selection of staff to projects.	RCIG / HR	Partially completed. Success measures delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment procedure for researchers was reviewed by HR Business Partner and reported to RCIG. - Discussions were held with senior management and HR Director; decisions placed on hold due to complexity of configuration of selection panels and schedules often involved.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research staff were encouraged to undertake training in recruitment and selection, resulting in a small increased number of participants but generally only where involvement in recruitment and selection had already been identified as likely (i.e. senior research fellows and grant holders). - Inclusion of research staff in selection panels encouraged where appropriate and relevant – encouraged but not fully achieved. - Outcomes and findings reported to Equal Opportunities and Human Resources Committee. <p>Action to be carried forward – further monitoring of practice and encouragement of researcher inclusion in recruitment and selection.</p>
1c	<p>The HR director will continue to lead on reviewing our processes and procedures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring the number and use of fixed-term contracts issued; - Opportunities for staff promotion and progression. 	HR	<p>Completed</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative data relating to number of fixed term research contracts collated, reported, reviewed and analysed through Athena SWAN committee and further actions proposed within new action plan. - Staff promotions and progression analysed by contract status, gender, age and ethnicity to identify any patterns of under / over-representation – on-going action with full consultation of research staff. Proposed changes to promotions procedure drafted and circulated to senior staff for discussion.
<p>B: RECOGNITION AND VALUE</p> <p>Principle 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.</p>			
2a	<p>Create a handbook for research staff / post-docs that provides a code of practice and clearly signposts the support and resources available to them.</p>	GS / RSA / RIs / RCIG	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of information needs conducted with research staff by RSA and reported to RCIG. - Handbooks produced by other HEIs reviewed and good practice identified. - Finalisation of handbook delayed by need for completion of reviews of other internal processes and procedures (e.g. project TIGER) and HR approval. <p>Action carried forward:</p> <p>To complete and distribute handbook by July 2018.</p>

2b	Review data from the local university-wide staff survey (Brunel Voice). This was conducted for the first time in May 2015. The results were not stratified for research staff as a separate group, so we will explore the possibility of doing this in future iterations of the survey, which will be conducted biannually.	HR / SD / GS	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A year on year increase in completion rate was achieved for the survey (59% - 62%). - The additional cost of survey analysis by staff group explored but discounted due to cost. - Survey analysis conducted and shared for 2015 and 2016 (not yet for 2017) - Data was collated and shared with all staff groups - Enhancement activities / outcomes stemming from the survey were promoted across the University. - Overlapping these explored with CROS & PIRLS. <p>Action carried forward:</p> <p>Further analysis and comparison following release of 2017 data.</p>
2c	Introduce a new PDR process – mandatory for all University staff – and review participation rates for different staff groups. Evaluate researchers’ experiences of the process through annual focus groups and through analysis of feedback from the biennial CROS survey.	HR / Staff Development Review (GS / RSA / RCIG)	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PDR process has been delivered with overall staff completion rate of 87% (for 2016). Completion data for 2017 not available at the time of this report. - It was not possible to analyse completion rates by group. However, CROS 2017 participants reported 70% engagement with the process. However, this figure relates to CROS participants <u>only</u>. - Participation rate shows increase on reported participation rate in 2015. - Focus groups led by BUL RSA completed and outcomes reported to RCIG.
2d	Evaluate and review the MINT and the Research Award schemes (numbers awarded, outcomes and progress of participants).	Research Institutes / RCIG	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MINT scheme awarded one grant only during the review period. However the award has resulted in an external fellowship award. Review of process presented to research staff in special workshop. Successful applicant provided feedback to peers on the process and value of application. - A new field has been created in BRAD to enable a review of publication activity amongst research staff within the University.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, the number of grants led by research staff has increased over planning period – percentage of research income gained by non-professorial staff, including research staff, increased from 42% in 2014/15 to 69% in 2016/17.
2e	Re-establish regular meetings of the Brunel Research Administrators and Managers Network (BRAMNET) to provide a forum for information sharing and updates, planning and discussion amongst this particular staff group.	Planning / Research Institutes	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <p>BRAMNET re-established in autumn 2015, under coordination of the Research Institutes Manager. Four meetings have been held within the review period. All research administrators and managers invited to attend meetings.</p>
2f	Introduce explicit mechanisms for recognising and rewarding PIs / research leaders / supervisors who support the development of their staff and manage their research teams well. This will be a bottom up mechanism involving researchers and will be used as a focus for highlighting and sharing good practice.	RCIG / GS / RSA / Deputy VC (Research) / Dean of Research / College Vice Deans of Research VC	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new University-wide award to recognise good supervision has been planned. BUL RSA held discussions with national RSA to determine best method of recognising / rewarding good research management. Review of schemes run within the sector conducted and nothing was found. National RSA proposal to take this forward as a larger project / review has delayed BUL action in this area. <p>Finalisation of recognition process to be carried forward to new action plan.</p>
<p>C: SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.</p> <p>Principle 4: The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.</p>			
3a	Pilot a Springboard programme for junior female research and academic staff. Evaluate programme and report to relevant committees. Establish links with other similar programmes within the region in order to explore facilitating a larger network for female researchers.	GS / HR	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot successfully completed by Jun 2016. Springboard now continued as annual programme through HR (E&D). Increase in participation recorded for research and academic staff although majority of participants continue to be from 'professional staff groups'. Outcomes reported to GS Committee and Equal Opportunities and HR Committee. Feasibility of regional network for female research staff explored and unable to be developed further at present.

3b	Improve mechanisms for regular coordinated communication about development opportunities for research staff, making better use of the University's new SharePoint system. Monitor engagement with system by research staff.	RSA / GS / Marketing & Communications	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SharePoint site for research staff created but review revealed limited usage of resource by research staff. Maintenance of up-to-date central staff list for access proved difficult without identifiable admin support for this. - Better communication with staff achieved through more regular face-to-face consultation, e-updates from Senate representatives and the Graduate School.
3c	Increase researcher engagement with University-wide programmes and schemes (e.g. coaching and mentoring) and encourage wider participation through programme improvements, better promotion and stronger peer-communication strategies. Encourage engagement of researchers, where appropriate, both as trained coaches / mentors and coachees / mentees.	HR (staff development) / GS / PDC RCIG / RIs	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central coaching and mentoring schemes launched in 2015 and 2016 and promoted to all staff. 10 qualified coaches within University central coaching pool includes two research staff. - Workshops provided to highlight coaching and mentoring opportunities to staff; 2 workshops for mentees delivered to 48 participants. - Increased involvement of PGR students on the University's <i>READY</i> programme, supporting employability skills and led by the Professional Development Centre. - 36 women supported to attend the LFHE <i>Aurora</i> programme since 2015 and provided with institutional mentors. - 6 BME staff supported to participate in <i>Diversity in Leadership</i> programme.
3d	Pilot a collaborative cross-University development programme to help researchers develop skills required to enhance research performance (including securing funding, profile and output management, knowledge exchange and impact delivery). We will measure impact by exploring a range of success measures, including monitoring the number of grants on which research staff and ECRs are named as lead or co-applicants.	RSDO / RIs / College Vice-Deans Research	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A <i>Collaboration in research</i> event was delivered as a collaborative workshop (BUL, QMUL, UCL and East London University) in November 2015, attended by 48 researchers. - Leadership in action workshop run collaboratively twice between 2015 and 2017 for total of 80 participants. - It has been difficult to extract data on the number of ECRs and research staff named as lead or co-applicants because of data extraction issues within current system. However, 43 % increase in the percentage of research income gained by non-professorial staff, 2015-2017, has been reported.

4a	Enhance and evaluate the provision of online training opportunities as an on-going part of the Researcher Development Programme. Promote and integrate the online courses that have been developed and establish mechanisms to evaluate usage and engagement. Collate feedback from researchers.	ULRSD / GS / BEEC (Learning Technology Team)	<p>Not completed due to external changes to management and ownership of course development company.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliverables delayed by management changes to external course developers (Epigeum purchase by Oxford University Press). This has resulted in the schedules associated with Implementation Group outcomes being pushed back, including a delay in our ability to review and report on usage data analysed. - Feedback from course users has been positive (mandatory participation for PGR students – Research Integrity, and integration of courses within BUL Integrated Pathways PhD). <p>Actions to be carried forward:</p> <p>To complete evaluations re course engagement and usage, followed by recommendations (Sept 2018).</p>
4b	Improve our Career Development provision for researchers with input from the Professional Development Centre (Careers), RIs and Colleges.	<p>PDC / RSA</p> <p>Regional Network(s) / ULRSD / PDC</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9 career development focused workshops or events were delivered specifically for researchers by the Graduate School and the Professional Development Centre. An event was organised in Feb 2017 focusing on non-academic careers for researchers. - The feasibility of a London-wide career development event for researchers is currently being explored and discussed within the London regional network with a next meeting scheduled for November 2017.
4c	Launch Postdoc Career Development Programme targeting and supporting the most promising researchers.	Research Institutes (with support from HR / RSDO / PDC)	<p>Not completed – action modified to accommodate changes to availability of internal funding and new opportunities under apprenticeship scheme umbrella.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new leadership programme for junior to mid-career postdoctoral researchers was proposed and discussed. This has been halted in consideration of creating a programme of training for researchers within an institutional apprenticeship scheme model. Guidance from Vitae on criteria are awaited in order to move forward with discussions about this. - A collaborative Leadership in Action event ran in June 2017 specifically for post-doctoral early -career researchers. This was attended by 6 BUL research staff.

4d	Purchase a site license for the Vitae RDF planner for researchers. This will be supported by a series of implementation workshops and the level of engagement will be monitored quarterly. Use of the planner will be encouraged to support the PDR process for researcher staff.	GS / RSA / Research Managers / PIs	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RDF planner was promoted with a moderate increase in usage by research staff (12% engaged with the online planner at some point over the last 24 months). Those using the planner evaluated it positively as 'a flexible and helpful PDP tool'. - Increased interest was expressed in the planner by PhD students, who were permitted access it on a 'by request' basis only, otherwise being directed to the Brunel 3-D Development Planner. - Engagement with the RDF planner was integrated as an assessed activity within the Brunel Integrated Pathways PhD, where researchers evaluated it positively. - Research staff showed increased recognition of the RDF over the review period (CROS 2015 & 2017). <p>Action to be carried forward</p> <p>RDF planner to be promoted to researchers (reviewers and reviewees) as a useful tool to support PDR process.</p>
4e	Launch a new programme of workshops and seminars as part of the University's new Academic Practice and Professional Excellence Framework (APEX). These will offer support and opportunities for researchers and staff to develop / enhance their skills in academic practice and to pursue HEA accreditation.	BEEC	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - APEX OPEN was delivered by BEEC, providing academic practice skills training for staff. With HEA and TEF requirements, resources did not permit the establishment of a separate dedicated programme. - Higher proportion of researchers report engaging with teaching and learning activities and with the APEX OPEN programme (CROS 2017; internal review)
4f	Organise three Professorial Workshops, to provide a collegial forum for PIs to discuss a range of issues pertinent to their roles.	Dean of Research	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three workshops were organised and delivered by June 2016.

D: RESEARCHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development and lifelong learning.

5a	The Research Staff Association will continue to liaise with internal stakeholders to help raise awareness of the Concordat implementation strategy and promote its activities to researchers. It will work to encourage broader membership of the group from the research staff community.	RSA (facilitated by GS)	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RSA met at least once per term. - Annual Research Staff Conference ran successfully in June 2016 and June 2017, with participant feedback from conference collated and reported to RCIG. - Four focus groups were organised and facilitated by the BUL RSA between 2015 and 2017. - Research staff input on Concordat implementation included and obtained through their membership of RCIG - Three additional dedicated concordat review meetings were held with research staff only before September 2017.
5b	Help research staff to develop a better online presence and improve links to resources, following University website redevelopment (by Mar 2016).	GS / RSA	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A process to update and change the University web system began in 2016. This has a completion date of November 2017 for migration of content from old system to new. - A new page entitled 'Support for Research Staff' has been set up under a new pathway linked to research at Brunel, with signposting and links currently being updated. - The Research Life resource of 36 podcasts is accessible through the website and also accessible via YouTube. The resource has been highlighted at events for PG and post-doctoral researchers, such as our Researcher Development Series and Research Staff Conferences. - RSDO established a new internal communications platform to facilitate more targeted communication of research funding opportunities. - We have a dedicated site for Fellowship opportunities, supported by a Research Development Officer.

			<p>Action to be carried forward:</p> <p>Monitoring of engagement and access (e.g. site visits, link access, 'likes', feedback and comments) to be reviewed and reported via the new system.</p>
5c	Work with the alumni office, with a view to improving support for staff at end of contract, and to help build a stronger career development network for researchers.	PDC	<p>Not completed, action carried forward.</p> <p>Action to be carried forward:</p> <p>Activity to monitor and engage postdocs who have left the University to be scoped and reported to RCIG.</p>
5d	Extend channels of communication about Concordat action plan and outcomes from Concordat Implementation Group to better inform local activity at College / Departmental level (e.g. Staff Development Strategy Group, College Research Boards, and Institute Management Board).	Concordat Implementation Group / GS	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual report produced and delivered to College Research Committees and Research Institutes Committee - Reporting was extended to include other relevant Committees, such as the Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee and the Research Strategy Committee. - Greater input has been invited from College Research Committees.
<p>E: DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY</p> <p>Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.</p>			
6a	Support actions within the University's Athena SWAN (AS) strategy (2015 – 2018) and the University's Equality and Diversity (E&D) Strategy (2015 – 2020)	HR / E&D / Athena SWAN Committee / PVC E & D / College Vice Deans and Associate Deans E & D	<p>Completed with continued action in this area.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Athena SWAN strategy specifically encompassed Research staff within its remit – review and recommendations in preparation of AS Action Plan. - AS coordinator was invited to join RCIG in 2016 to ensure coordination of plans and share relevant data and observations. E&D sub-group also created and met 3 times in period 2016-17 - Delivery of AS strategy evidenced through review of relevant data and impact measures available at end of planning period (<i>please see Athena SWAN action plan for reference</i>). <p>Delivery of E&D strategy evidenced through review of relevant data and impact measures available at end of planning period (<i>please see Equality and Diversity action plan for reference</i>).</p>

6b	Revise the communication around the Athena SWAN Research Awards to make explicit that eligible independent researchers (REF definition) are encouraged to apply.	Dean of Research	<p>Partially completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AS Communication reviewed and made more explicit for all staff, however no increase in the number of applications received from research staff was observed. - Researchers were questioned about the success of communication / increased awareness of the scheme during a research staff network meeting. Feedback from that and CROS 2017 suggested more researchers have heard of AS, but confusion remains about the AS agenda and its outcomes.
6c	Work to identify female research staff who have been on successive contracts at BUL; examine data to identify any characteristics common to this group, and explore provision of additional support for their career development.	HR / PVC Equal Opportunities and Staff Development/ College Vice Deans of Research / College Deans Equal	<p>Not completed (due to delay in project TIGER completion)</p> <p>Actions to be carried forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data above to be reviewed, quantified and reported on an annual basis. <p>Equality impact assessment reporting enhanced to enable development of targeted strategic intervention.</p>
6d	Continue to run RCIG meetings 6 to 8 times per annum to oversee and review implementation of the Concordat Action Plan. Review membership annually to ensure adequate representation of internal stakeholders. Consider extending membership (e.g. to include PGR representation and representation from Communications or Marketing (e.g. Research Marketing Manager).	RCIG	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RCIG met 12 times in the period Sept 2015 – Sept 2017 (agendas and notes available internally). - Key developments were shared with researchers as regular items in RSA / Research Staff Network meetings. - Membership of RCIG was reviewed annually with changes made each time to include new / additional members and ensure representation of key stakeholders. The group was expanded to include an academic member of staff (formerly research staff and BUL doctoral student).

F: IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

Principle 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.

7a	Continue to participate in sector-wide surveys (PRES, CROS, PIRLS), relevant regional and national stakeholder consultations, conferences and meetings.	ULRSD / GS / RCIG	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both CROS and PIRSLs were run in 2017 with participation rates of 31% and 32% respectively, above sector averages of 24% and 21%. - Outcome data, in comparison to aggregate data, has been prepared for presentation and reporting to research staff and University committees by December 2017.
7b	Continue to raise awareness of the Concordat (to support the career development of researchers).	RCIG / ULRSD / Planning / Communications and Marketing	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Success measures delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We have increased our reporting on the Concordat to include regular reports to College and Research Institute Committees, and E&D Strategy Committee. - Annual report was produced for Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee. - CROS / PIRLS data and findings summarised, compared to aggregate and reported through committee structures. - The Communications team at the University supported the promotion of CROS and PIRLS in 2017, as did the DVC (R&I), RCIG and the BUL RSA. - The completion rate for CROS increased slightly from 29% in 2015 to 31%, but was lower for PIRLS (32% in 2017, 44% in 2015). This may have been partly attributable to the fact that the University's annual staff survey – Brunel Voice – was run at the same time as CROS and PIRLS.

GLOSSARY

APEX - Academic Practice and Professional Excellence Framework

BEEC – Brunel Educational Excellence Centre

BRAMNET – Brunel Research Administrators and Managers Network

BUL – Brunel University London

CROS – Careers in Research Online Survey

E&D – Equality and Diversity team

GS – Graduate School

HR – Human Resources

MINT – Monthly **I**nternship Scheme for Postdoctoral Researchers

PDC – Professional Development Centre

PDP – Professional Development Plan

PDR – Performance and Development Review

PIRLS – Principal Investigators and Research leaders Survey

RCIG – (Researcher) Concordat Implementation Group

RIs – Research Institutes

RSA – Research Staff Association

RSDO – Research Support and Development Office

SD – Staff Development

ULRSD - University Lead for Research Staff Development

VLS – Virtual Learning Environment