

Code of practice for the career management of contract research staff

This code of practice and the arrangements contained within it, apply to all employees of the University who work in research as defined in the University's Research Policy for more than six months.

The University has adopted the terms of the Research Concordat between the UK Research Councils and the HE sector as the basis for the conditions of employment which it offers to research workers on fixed term contracts, and will keep this code of practice under review to reflect any changes in the terms of the Concordat. Additionally, the University has been accredited under the European HR Excellence in Research scheme and the Athena Swan scheme in respect of the conditions of employment for research workers. The terms of these accreditations will also be kept under review so that any changes can be adopted into this code of practice.

In general terms, it is important to stress that research workers are regarded as full members of academic staff, and will be afforded the same consideration as all other comparable employees in relation to the day to day life of their Faculty and Department. Research staff are represented on Faculty and University Research and Knowledge Transfer Committees, and on the University Academic Board.

Contracts of employment

At the time of offering employment, the precise nature of the post concerned and the terms of the contract of employment must be clear and must be understood by both sides. The role of both of these in the employee's further career development must be clearly articulated and understood. In particular, the point of termination of the contract and the chances of an extension must be clearly stated and understood.

It is important to give a realistic assessment of the prospect for future employment to the employee. The University will seek to secure further employment which builds on the experience and skills of the employee and, during the period in which they are employed in Oxford Brookes University, will provide appropriate opportunities for personal development.

Training and assistance in career development will be available to all contract employees. Bearing in mind that their future careers may lie outside the HE sector, training in general subjects that could relate to employment in other areas will be offered.

The main general training areas are likely to be in the transferable skills that are required in employment, whether in HE or elsewhere. Additionally, there may be conferences, seminars or other professional meetings that are related to the employee's interests but are not immediately relevant to their current work. Faculties should agree with the employee the broad pattern that such training will follow before the employee joins the University and develop the training plans in more detail as part of the day to day performance management and appraisal systems. The Faculty will give consideration to the amount of time that can be allocated for the employee's wider training and development, in relation to the demands of the research work for which the employee has been engaged, but it should be a minimum of five working days per year .

General training that is available to all employees of the University should be offered, as it is to other employees, through the courses available in the University (including undergraduate courses, postgraduate courses, language courses, Computer Services courses and other courses which are offered to employees).

Faculties may also wish to offer research staff the opportunity to attend training courses for contract researchers provided by outside bodies and it is the responsibility of the Faculty to fund any such arrangements.

It is an important principle of the Concordat that individual researchers should engage pro-actively with their manager(s) and other colleagues in identifying the training and development that will be of significant value for their personal development as researchers; and should use the performance management and appraisal processes to plan their careers and longer term learning objectives. The University's First Three Years programme offers a range of opportunities to engage in this process of defining career trajectories and acquiring the skills that will be supportive of individual career aspirations.

Re-entry to research

Faculties are especially encouraged to consider contract research posts as opportunities for re-entry into research for those who have taken a mid-career break. This will be particularly appropriate where the length of the contract and/or the nature of the research do not require rapid results, or where the work does not require an employee to be immediately up-to-date in subject knowledge. For many contracts the requirements is a proven ability at research, not the immediacy of up-to-date knowledge. In cases where up-to-date knowledge is required, it should not be assumed that someone who has taken a mid-career break does not have it, since they may have had both the motivation and the time to maintain familiarity with the subject areas concerned.

Contract research supervision and mentorship

On employment, all contract researchers are allocated a research supervisor. The role of the research supervisor is to ensure that any research training of the contracted researcher is in place, appropriate to the individual and to the research, and supports the individual in their personal and professional development. The Researcher Development Framework www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-Researcher-Development-Framework.pdf should form the basis of discussions for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers. The supervisor has responsibility for all research aspects of the researcher's career and work, including agreeing the research training offered management of the employee as a researcher and to ensure that the research carried out is consistent with the Faculty or Department research strategy. The researcher and supervisor should meet regularly. Annual PDR provides the opportunity to formally review training and research progress and to agree plans for personal and professional development.

All researchers have access to a mentorship scheme to support researcher career development. Through the scheme, researchers are paired with a mentor and meet regularly during a period of up to 1 year in order to support progress towards specific personal and professional objectives.

Research experience and researcher training

As noted above, the researcher should be given the opportunity to discuss and agree their training needs with their supervisor before and shortly after the start of their contract and at least annually (but preferably more often) thereafter, through the appraisal and performance management process.

Training and professional development opportunities available to research staff are summarised at: www.brookes.ac.uk/research/research-support/training-events---academic-year-2013-2014. All research staff have access to the 'First Three Years' programme. This scheme provides training in topics relevant to research careers, including:

- induction - an introduction to University structures, key people and support for researchers
- good practice in grant writing
- managing projects, project finances and staff
- knowledge transfer and commercialisation of research findings
- training for teaching
- training for supervising research and research degree students

Other opportunities, open to all research active staff, include:

- training provided by the Graduate Office for research supervisors <https://www2.brookes.ac.uk/graduateoffice/staff/researchstaff/supervisors/training>
- OCSLD staff development courses www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocslid/staffcourses/index.html
- Training provided by computer services <https://www2.brookes.ac.uk/services/cs/training/trainhm.html>
- Training provided by the University library www.brookes.ac.uk/library/training.html
- Statistics and maths training and support www.brookes.ac.uk/res/support/training/statslink

Development for staff is also provided in line with the Faculty's Learning and Development Plan and staff are able to bid for staff development funding e.g. conference attendance, through their Faculty/Department staff development fund.

Conditions of service and remuneration

The University's salary structure and conditions of service for research staff are the same as those for full-time permanent members of staff employed on similar work at the same grades, and which require similar experience and expertise. The University has adopted a job evaluation scheme which applies to all staff other than those in the Professorial and senior grades. Research staff, as all other members of the University's staff, will be entered automatically into the Teachers Pension Scheme or the Local Government Pension Scheme, although they may opt out within a specified period after taking up their post.

At the end of a fixed term contract, the University seeks through its redeployment scheme to identify alternative employment within the University for the employee concerned. The search for alternatives will normally start six months in advance of the contract end date. Employees are asked to complete a form which provides the details of their qualifications and experience, and the type of post that they would be willing to consider for further employment, and to submit this to Human Resources.

Additionally, in cases where the Principal Investigator or the employing Faculty is able to identify a very strong likelihood of further fixed term or permanent employment in the same or a related area of research, and which would begin within six months of the ending of the current contract, 'bridging' funds may be made available by the University to retain the employee for this intervening period.

The University seeks to support all staff in achieving a good work-life balance and has adopted a comprehensive flexible working policy: brookes.ac.uk/services/hr/handbook/workinghours/flex/index.html.

This policy makes provision for conditions of service which significantly exceed the statutory minimum, and allows all employees to request variations in their hours and pattern of work, subject always to the operational and business requirements of the Department or work team. The University also provides support for staff in their family lives, through generous maternity leave, adoption support leave, parental leave and paternity leave provisions. The University provides an excellent nursery, based on the Clive Booth Student Village site that is available to the children of all staff and students from the age of 6 months.

Faculty Deans' responsibilities

The PVC/Deans in each Faculty are responsible for ensuring that the spirit and letter of these arrangements are observed, and to monitor their dissemination, interpretation and understanding.

The PVC/Deans are required to ensure, in particular, that due attention is given to the training and the career development of research staff and to the successful fulfilment of research projects and the expectations of research funding bodies.

The University and Faculty Research and Knowledge Transfer Committees will undertake an annual review of the provisions made within their areas of responsibility for supporting researchers and researchers' career progression, and make recommendations as appropriate for changes and improvements that will further strengthen the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

Approved by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, 9 October 2012