



Research Staff Working Party
ANNUAL REPORT 2005/6
Information | Training | Support

“I WANTED TO SAY THANK YOU FOR ALL THE WORK YOU’VE DONE OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS AND MORE TO FURTHER THE CAUSE OF RS IN BRISTOL, ESPECIALLY IN ORGANISING THE REPS SYSTEM AND THE RS CONFERENCES. MANY UNIQUE AND POSITIVE THINGS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED OVER THIS TIME, LARGELY DUE TO YOUR COMMITMENT, IMAGINATION AND VISION, AND WHICH HAVE MADE BRISTOL A FINE EXAMPLE FOR OTHER UNIVERSITIES TO FOLLOW. LONG MAY IT CONTINUE!”
BRISTOL RESEARCHER

Executive summary 2005/6

This year Bristol University has received widely publicised acclaim for both its innovative development of Research Staff (RS) and its commitment to improving their working conditions. The activities that have been praised are part of a strategy designed to ensure that Bristol can recruit and retain the best RS and by doing so maintain its reputation as a world class research institution.

COMMUNICATION

For training and development of RS to be successful, provision must be carefully targeted at the needs of researchers and delivered accessibly to them. To ensure this is achieved the University has invested in innovative methods of communicating with RS. These include the University's Annual Research Staff Conference, the Research Staff Representatives Committee and the Research Staff web site. The University has received several independent plaudits for this communication strategy. Sir Gareth Roberts, author of the Treasury Report which led to additional funds for the development of researchers, has used Bristol as an example of good practice, highlighting the conference in particular. Careers in Research On-line Survey (CROS) results indicate that 74% of RS at Bristol think that the system of RS representatives has had a positive impact on their working environment. Finally, the communication strategy has been short-listed for the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) Award for Innovative Research Staff Development.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The number of workshops specifically designed for RS has increased to 48. In recognition of the increasingly international nature of the RS workforce the University has employed an International Staff Adviser to ensure a smooth and rapid transition to work at Bristol. This service has received positive feedback from both international researchers and their PIs. The commitment to RS development has been recognised by being highly commended in this years University Personnel Association Award in the category of Excellence in Development.

Executive summary 2005/6

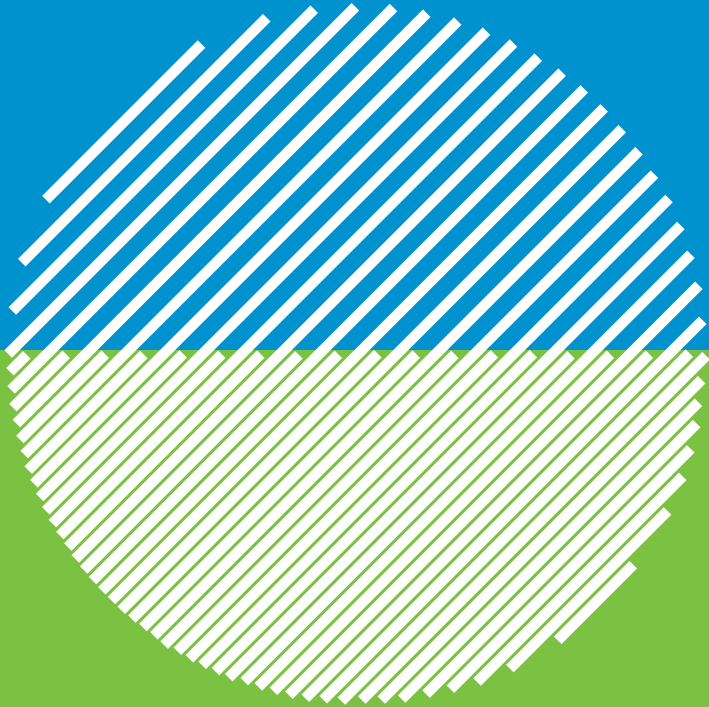
WORKING CONDITIONS

In implementing the European Fixed Term Contract Legislation, the University moved more than 50% of RS on to open-ended contracts. An article in the THES prior to the implementation deadline praised Bristol for employing more RS on open-ended contracts than any other UK university. The University also has good anecdotal evidence that this proactive stance on RS contracts is having a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of researchers. The nature of the contract is just one element of RS working conditions however. A survey of RS by the magazine 'Science' found that Bristol was the best university to work in the UK and one of the top ten in the world (outside the USA).

A POTTED HISTORY OF INVESTMENT

Developments in the employment environment for our RS have been a key and resourced commitment by the University since 1999 when the first survey of RS views was issued at Bristol. The publication of 'SET for success' (Sir Gareth Roberts' review for Government into the supply of science and engineering skills in the UK, April 2002) led to a 'step change' in practice not only at Bristol but across the HE sector.

The first 'Roberts' Review' funds flowed into universities during 2004. Up to this point funding had been provided by the University (around £50,000 per annum). The Roberts' Review has led to an additional £180,000 per annum. Similar 'ring fenced' funding is guaranteed until the end of 2007/8; the longer term funding outlook is still unclear, pending decisions to be made as part of the Government Comprehensive Spending Review due to report in 2007.



JUST OVER HALF (51%) OF THE UNIVERSITY'S 2228 ACADEMIC STAFF ARE RS. THEY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE UNIVERSITY'S ABILITY TO ACHIEVE ITS AIMS. THEIR DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTES TO OUR ABILITY TO THRIVE AS AN ORGANISATION.

Actions

The 2004/5 RS Working Party Annual Report highlighted twelve objectives for this year:



ONE.

APPOINT AN INTERNATIONAL STAFF ADVISER

International staff is a growing group of staff at the University comprising 35% of the 1100 RS. Feedback suggests that a dedicated resource to support their employment and development has a significant impact on the individual and the research output. Ri'Anna Stueber was appointed to the post of International Staff Adviser in November 2005. The service now offers:

- A web site specifically for international staff (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/international/centre/staffsupport>)
- Dedicated e-mail and telephone support
- A programme of development events for international staff
- An e-mail contacts database so that new international staff can be put in contact with another Bristol employee from their country
- A number of named 'country representatives' advertised on the web site
- An annual web survey of international staff to ensure the service is meeting their needs

We have received positive feedback from senior academics and personnel managers who report that the service provides high quality information and saves them time.

TWO.

OFFER A THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR RS

The Third Annual Research Staff Conference was held at At-Bristol on 10th February 2006. The event attracts Bristol RS and UKHERD members with the largest ever sign-up this year of 220. Gareth Roberts mentioned the conference as an example of best practice in the UK. 100% of attendees said that they would recommend this event to others with feedback including:

- It's been a great experience
- very good! Keep it
- Thank you, I'm glad I'm working in such a wonderful place
- Well organised conference, thank you!
- Best bit - to realise that I'm not alone in my situation
- I wish some of my previous supervisors could have seen the role-play exercise!

“IT HAS BEEN TRULY GREAT WORKING AT BRISTOL FOR TWO YEARS. AS I HAVE BEEN TELLING ALL NEWCOMERS, RS ARE VERY WELL LOOKED AFTER AND SUPPORTED HERE, SOMETHING WHICH YOU [SARAH MUSSON] AND CHRISTIAN [CARTER] ARE PARTICULARLY TO THANK FOR!”

BRISTOL RESEARCHER

THREE.

CONDUCT A SURVEY OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

A pilot survey to assess the views of PIs was developed to complement RS' views gathered via the national Careers in Research On-line Survey (CROS). The survey question set was designed at Bristol and, after consultation with the CROS Steering Group, was offered to the sector as a pilot project during January 2006. This data is being used to develop PI training next year.

FOUR.

MENTORING

The newly appointed Staff Development Manager for RS will develop the mentoring scheme aimed at the specific needs of RS.

FIVE.

DEVELOP NATIONAL LINKS THROUGH UKHERD

UKHERD (Higher Education Researcher Development) is a national network of development practitioners and stakeholders with interests in the careers of researchers in UK Higher Education.

The organisation:

- Shares good practice
- Builds effective policy
- Influences key decision makers

UKHERD's network (250) includes Staff Development, HR and Careers professionals as well as Research Office/School staff. Other stakeholders represented in the current membership include RCUK, the Wellcome Trust and UKGRAD. Sarah Musson and Christian Carter are on the UKHERD National 'Task Force' (Christian is Deputy Chair). In undertaking these roles they ensure that the University of Bristol is at the cutting edge of the very latest national developments.

SIX.

WORK WITH LEICESTER RESEARCHERS

The 'Learning as Work' project is a four-year ESRC funded project being carried out by researchers at Cardiff University, the University of Southampton and the University of London. The University of Bristol is participating in this project to extend its knowledge of the impact of recent contractual changes on RS.

SEVEN.

IMPLEMENT A NEW JOB EVALUATION SCHEME AND CAREER PATHWAYS FOR RS

The 'Reward' agenda at Bristol is nearing completion. For many years RS have queried the basis on which pay rates are assigned to roles and what duties a researcher can be expected to undertake as he/she progresses up the research career ladder. For the first time all RS roles will be professionally evaluated and fitted into one of four role profiles. As a result RS will be able to assess the skills they need to progress and access appropriate training and development.

EIGHT.

DEVELOP THE RS DEPARTMENTAL PROJECT FUND

The aim of the fund is to give RS greater input into the way they are supported and developed through RS conceiving and implementing new and local schemes run by RS themselves. A fund of £15,000 was established, with up to £5,000 to be granted at three points over the year, with each project applying for as little or as much of the fund as appropriate. RS see the fund as a way of:

- Practising their fund-writing skills
- Running development ideas within departments
- Having a direct impact on their work environment

NINE.

PILOT THE 'POSSIBLE JOBS' RESEARCH INTERESTS DATABASE

Possible jobs is a tool being developed to manage redundancy and redeployment of RS. Some funds have been spent on a small 'scoping study'. This revealed a significant amount of development work especially around the integration of the software into the fEC system.

TEN.

APPOINT ADDITIONAL CAREERS ADVISER

Such has been the demand for, and popularity of, the careers support for RS that a Careers Adviser has been appointed for all staff across the University. Clare Brophy started at the University of Bristol on 1st March.

ELEVEN.

DEVELOP RS-SPECIFIC INDUCTION

A one-day University-wide induction has been designed for RS, with the emphasis on RS meeting counterparts from across the University and hearing from senior decision-makers. Four dates are booked for 2006-7.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT TAKE-UP BY RS FOR PERIOD 1ST AUGUST 2005 – 31ST JULY 2006:

Type of contact	2005 – 2006	2004 – 2005	2003 – 2004
Number of 1:1 guidance sessions	210	163	90
Number of workshop delegates	102	136	101
Number of e-mails offering guidance	382	429	225
Number of careers contacts overall	694	728	416



69% OF RS RATE THE
UNIVERSITY AS 'GOOD'
AT COMMUNICATING
WITH THEM

**CROS 2005 REVEALED THAT 80% OF
RS WERE AWARE OF THE CAREER
DEVELOPMENT SERVICE.**

"Thank you for all your help, support, patience and positivity. You were immensely helpful"

" I really appreciate the clarity with which you helped me to think through my options/concerns about the future"

"It was particularly useful to chat about a wide range of career paths and to gain information on how to best seek out further information on these careers. I found the one to one chats extremely useful, it was very easy to talk about any career doubts that I had".

On-going core activities

OVER 120
INTERNATIONAL
STAFF VOLUNTEER
TO BE 'COUNTRY
E-MAIL
CONTACTS'
FOR NEW
STAFF

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 48 workshops for RS (an increase from 45 last year)
- Two Management Development Programmes for RS with 26 people achieving a Level 4 'Introductory Diploma in Management' accredited by the Chartered Management Institute
- 382 attendees on 'generic skills' workshops specifically for RS
- 153 attendances by RS on the Teaching and Learning in Higher Education programme

Once again the extensive training and development programme specifically tailored to the needs of RS proved to be very popular. Highlights this year included the introduction of acting-led workshops in which professional actors helped RS 'act out' workplace scenarios to develop confidence and positive working relationships.

INFORMATION

The RS web site receives an average of 350 'hits' per month and in the CROS survey of 2005 93% of RS said it provided the information they needed. In addition, we are able to communicate with all RS via an e-mail list. CROS 2005 revealed that 69% of RS are of the opinion that the University is 'good' at communicating with them.

FINDING OUT WHAT RS WANT

Consultation and feedback with RS 'on the ground' is essential if the quality of development provision is to remain consistently high. We have adopted a range of methods intended to achieve this:

- RS Departmental Representatives
- Careers in Research On-line Survey (CROS)
- Feedback from guidance professionals
- Inclusion of RS on University Committees

RS DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVES

The vast majority of departments across the University have a RS Rep. CROS 2005 revealed that 72% of RS knew about the system, 69% had been consulted by their Rep, and 74% thought the process had a positive impact on the working environment for RS. Meetings are held at least four times a year. Senior management attended (1 Dean, 2 PVCs) and spoke about fEC and the RAE.

CAREERS IN RESEARCH ON-LINE SURVEY (CROS)

CROS 2006 is planned for December 2006. This will once again help us assess the impact of our work as well as assisting us shape policy development for the next period.

FEEDBACK FROM GUIDANCE PROFESSIONALS

A number of guidance professionals such as the RS Career and Development Manager, Staff Counsellor and Training and Development Manager possess a unique insight to the working world of RS. Taking into account clear confidentiality agreements there are a number of themes that help shape the development of employment policy and practice.

INCLUSION OF RS ON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

Historically RS have not been involved in institutional decision-making. During 2005/6 RS participated in a number of committees and groups:

- The Equality and Diversity Working Group
- The Staff Social Facilities Working Group
- The Research Staff Conference Committee
- The Research Staff Working Party
- Many departmental and faculty staff meetings

On-going core activities

AGREEMENT ON LIMITING THE USE OF FIXED TERM CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

2005/6 has seen further implementation of the FTC agreement with an increase in the number of RS employed on open-ended contracts of employment from 44% to 55%.

This increase has taken place in parallel with the introduction of a rigorous process to ensure that any RS whose funding is coming to an end are selected for redundancy in a fair and transparent manner.



POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT (PWE)

Developments as part of the PWE agenda have taken place for all staff following the whole workforce survey during the summer of 2003. January 2007 will see a further whole workforce survey to assess the impact of actions over the preceding two years. Survey data is analysed by staff group and as a result we are able to pinpoint the issues that are having an impact on RS.

POSITIVE RECRUITMENT

All research-led universities find themselves in an increasingly competitive recruitment marketplace. We use our commitment to the development of RS as a positive recruitment tool when positioning the University in this marketplace through the web site: www.findingtheanswers.co.uk.

“Although there are no guarantees over jobs, I have to say attitudes like that [Bristol’s policy on restricting the use of FTCs] make a university much more attractive to us jobseekers! Nice one.”

**74% THINK THAT
RS REPS HAVE A
POSITIVE IMPACT
ON THE WORK
ENVIRONMENT**



Three year vision

By the end of 2007/8 the University of Bristol will be nationally and internationally recognised by RS as the leading University in the UK for the development of their careers. This recognition will be due to:

LONG-TERM GOALS

- Increase the level of PI involvement in the career development of RS
- Provide a high standard of RS transferable skills training and development
- Achieve a good level of RS understanding and involvement in University Plans
- Gain recognition of RS as central to the University Plan
- Involve more RS in ongoing RS activities and UoB life
- Develop greater links between RS across departments and the industry
- Focus more on tackling RS isolation
- Promote the benefits of 'on the job' training to develop research, management and leadership skills

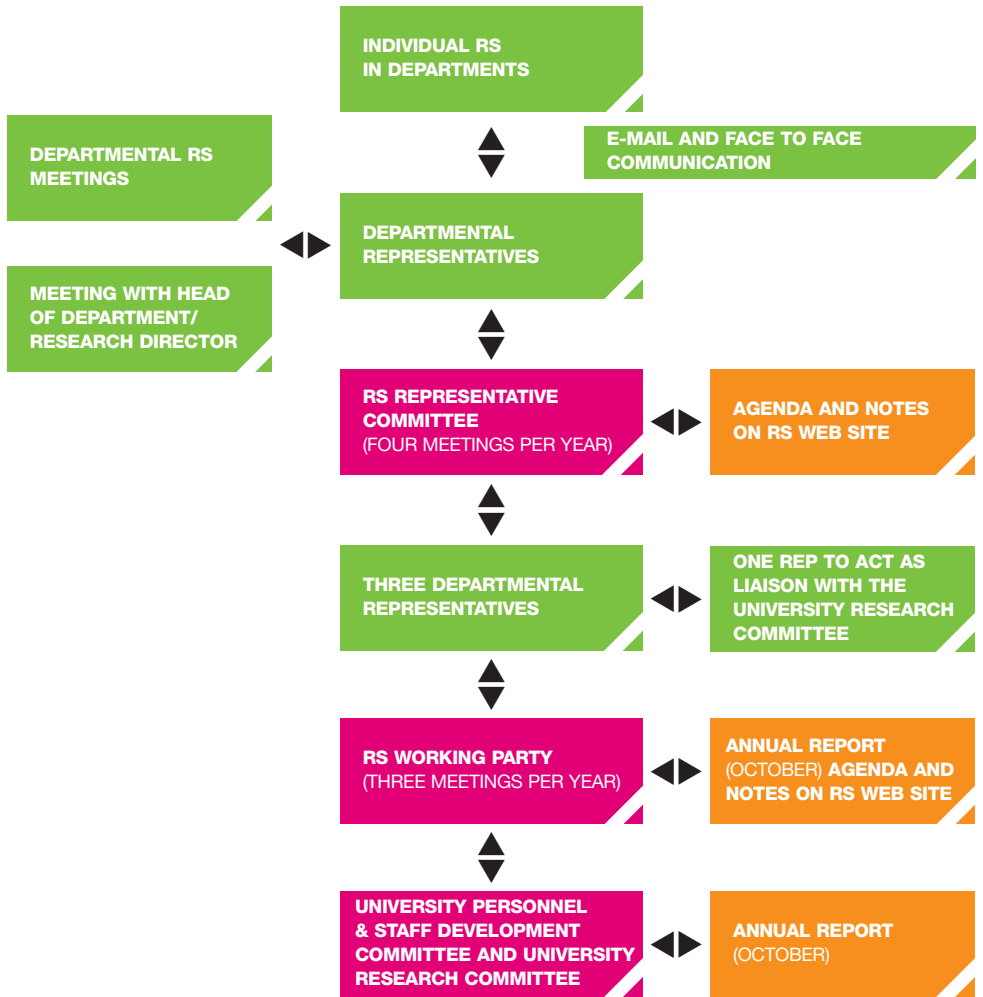
SHORT-TERM GOALS

By the end of 2006/7 the University will:

- Appoint a full time Staff Development Manager specifically for RS
- Develop an enhanced programme of staff development activity for RS
- Implement a mentoring scheme for RS
- Offer a 4th Annual Conference for RS
- Take part in the 5th CROS UK wide survey
- Further develop national links as a central part of UKHERD
- Launch an enhanced RS web site
- Develop further the services for International RS
- Develop further the quality of the RS reps system of communication
- Ensure that developments for RS are a central part of the overall University Positive Working Environment Agenda
- Seek external evaluation and recognition of our work for RS
- Continue to develop careers support
- Initiate and maintain links with the national RS Association

RS Communication Process

-  **Output**
-  **Meeting**
-  **Possible communication route**



MAKING THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL THE PLACE TO WORK FOR THE VERY BEST RESEARCH STAFF FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

Research Staff
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

Information | Training | Support

DESIGN WWW.TOTEMDESIGN.CO.UK

SUPPORT

The support team working with and for RS at Bristol comprise:

SARAH MUSSON

Career & Development Manager (100% time)

CHRISTIAN CARTER

Personnel Manager – Policy Development (50% time)

CLARE BROPHY

Career & Development Adviser (25% time)

NATALIE SMITH

Administrator (80% time)

WORKING PARTY

Guy Gregory, Director of Personnel & Staff Development (Chair)

Sarah Sullivan, Research Associate, Psychiatry

Dr Daryl Hill, Research Fellow,

Cellular & Molecular Medicine

Dr Nick Walker, Royal Society

Research Fellow, School of Chemistry

Professor Len Hall, Dean of Medical and Veterinary Sciences

Dr Rachel Flecker, Lecturer,

School of Geographical Sciences

Dr Lesly Huxley, Director of the Institute

for Learning & Research Technology

Sarah Musson, RS Career &

Development Manager

Christian Carter, Personnel Manager

