HR Excellence in Research Application
Executive Summary

University of Kent

Background on the HR Excellence in Research framework

The European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award has been devised to measure and demonstrate universities' compliance with the principles of the _Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers_. Award attainment serves as an indicator of an institution's development of researchers and will be increasingly expected by RCUK and EU funders, collaborators and job applicants.

In the UK, compliance requires national evaluation and benchmarking overseen by Vitae (the UK organisation supported by RCUK for championing researcher development). Over 1200 institutions from 35 European countries have expressed support for the HR Excellence in Research framework and to date 102 institutions have obtained the Commission's "HR Excellence in Research" Award (Appendix 1).

Development of Kent' Award Application

Process of Consultation and Gap Analysis

The University has conducted a gap analysis against the principles of the _Concordat_ and has identified actions which relate to members of staff engaged in research and postgraduate students. The primary focus is on staff with fixed term contracts. Consultation steps taken during the gap analysis included:

a. Focus groups involving interested research staff, facilitated by HR

b. A survey of researchers' experiences and expectations (51% response rate)

c. Input from related working parties (Athena SWAN, Stonewall)

d. Engagement with staff through a set of researcher network meetings

e. Development of an action plan by a _Researcher Development Working Group_

The actions have been aligned with staff policies and will be fully integrated into the University's forthcoming _Human Resources Strategy_ and _Research & Impact Strategy 2013-2016_. The plan will be overseen by a Researcher Development Working Group.
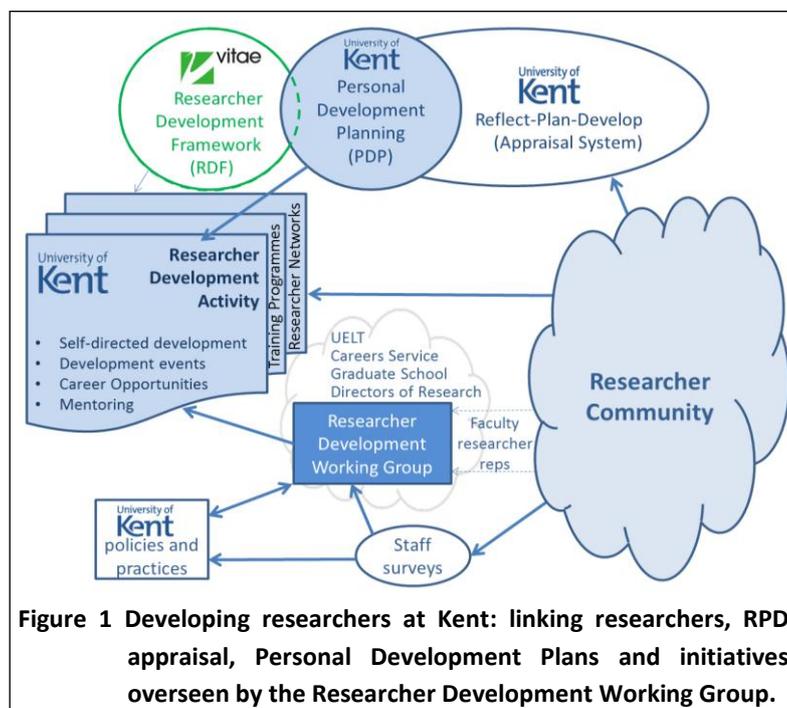
Figure 1 Developing researchers at Kent: linking researchers, RPD appraisal, Personal Development Plans and initiatives overseen by the Researcher Development Working Group.

The Award Application Process and Benefits

To achieve recognition of the Award, Kent's gap analysis, action plan and details of the process of consultation and development are reviewed by an external panel of experts from across Europe. The panel reviews the application for content, relevance, links to Kent's existing commitments and visibility of the processes discussed in the application document and assesses the Kent application against good practice in researcher development. If Kent's plan of action is deemed to be robust, thorough and realistic in relation to the university's existing strategies, then the University will receive public recognition that it has met the principles of the Concordat. A formal decision from Vitae on our application is expected by mid-May 2013.

External recognition for the Award will allow Kent to display the _HR Excellence in Research_ badge and to use the logo to publicise its achievement of the standard. Achievement of the standard is a strong indicator of good research practice which will count favourably in the REF submission in 2013. Furthermore, reference to achievement of the Award can be included in the recruitment and induction of new staff.

Researcher Development (HR Excellence in Research) Working group

The Researcher Development Working Group will involve:

- Research Services

- HR and Organisational Development

(Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity; Operations; Information & Systems; Learning & Development; Employment, Support & Resourcing)

- Postdoc and research staff from Schools in all 3 Faculties

- Unit for Enhancement of Learning & Teaching (UELT)

- Graduate School

- Researcher representatives

- Faculty representatives (as advised by Faculty DoRs)

- Careers Services
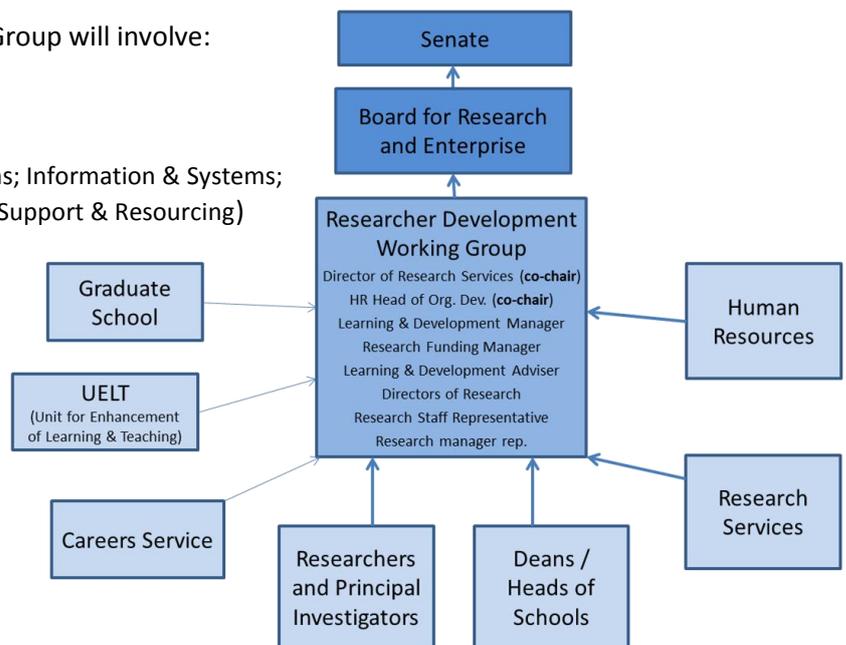
Figure 2. Governance structure for the Researcher Development Working Group

The purpose of the Researcher Development Working Group will be to:

- Identify suitable working group members with support from Faculty Directors of Research
- Translate the researcher development action plan into good practice development in Faculties
- Identify actions as a demonstration of commitment to the principles of the Concordat
- Develop actions and responsibilities to ensure that Kent develops beyond compliance
- Align actions with University policy, strategy and other actions and initiatives
- Review relevant policy and monitor processes as they are applied throughout the University.

The Working Group will be co-chaired by the Director of Research Services and Head of Organisational Development and facilitated by an assigned Learning & Development Adviser. It will formally report to the University of Kent Board for Research and Enterprise. The implementation of the overall plan will be reviewed by the Researcher Development Working Group initially on a quarterly basis.

The University's Priorities for Action

1. Implement and monitor the Reflect, Plan, Develop process ('appraisal') for research staff and provide skills development to research managers/academics in facilitating positive RPD discussions

2. Develop the new 'Staff Connect' HR information system to monitor RPD, uptake of development opportunities and to support workforce planning for researchers across the University

3. Document and demonstrate evidence of new skills being developed and applied by researchers (e.g. teaching, managing) through HR 'Staff Connect', network events, training/development and role models

4. Develop and encourage the continued development of a network of researchers through researchers' forum meetings for all research staff and encouragement of local researcher network meetings in each faculty, in a form relevant to faculty research staff

5. Enable access to management training for research staff in supervisory positions, as a continuation of current leadership development for academic leaders and professional service managers

6. Develop and promote personal development tools (including the Vitae RDF) for use by researchers in line with the University's Personal Development planning process (PDP)

7. Expand and signpost researcher development opportunities (HR, Induction, the Graduate School, UELT)

8. Enhance external profile through tangible progress with Athena SWAN, Two Ticks, Stonewall and Vitae

9. Recognise the importance of support for researchers through career pathways which are relevant both to the University and to an individual's career.

The Kent HR Excellence in Research Plan details the agreed action & responsibilities to meet the Concordat.

Appendix 1: UK institutions accredited with the HR Excellence in Research Award

1. University of Aberdeen
2. Aberystwyth University
3. Aston University
4. Bangor University
5. Bath Spa University
6. Bournemouth University
7. Brunel University
8. University of Bath
9. University of Birmingham
10. University of Brighton
11. University of Bristol
12. University of Cambridge
13. Cardiff University
14. City University London
15. Coventry University
16. University of Chester
17. De Montfort University
18. Durham University
19. University of Dundee
20. University of East Anglia
21. Edinburgh Napier University
22. Edinburgh University
23. University of Exeter
24. University of Glasgow
25. Goldsmiths, Univ. of London
26. University of Greenwich
27. Heriot-Watt University
28. University of Hertfordshire
29. University of Huddersfield
30. University of Hull
31. Imperial College London
32. Institute of Cancer Research
33. Institute of Education
34. King's College London
35. Lancaster University
36. Univ. of Central Lancashire
37. University of Liverpool
38. Liverpool John Moores Univ.
39. University of Leeds
40. University of Leicester
41. London School of Economics
42. Loughborough University
43. University of Manchester
44. Newcastle University
45. Northumbria University
46. Nottingham Trent University
47. University of Nottingham
48. The Open University
49. University of Oxford
50. Oxford Brookes University
51. Plymouth University
52. Queen Margaret University Edinburgh
53. Queen Mary University of London
54. Queen's University Belfast
55. University of Reading
56. Royal Veterinary College
57. Salford University
58. School of Oriental and African Studies
59. Scottish Funding Council
60. University of Sheffield
61. Sheffield Hallam University
62. University of Southampton
63. Swansea University
64. University of St Andrews
65. University of Stirling
66. University of Strathclyde
67. University of Surrey
68. University of Ulster
69. University of Warwick
70. University of West England
71. University of Wolverhampton
72. University of York

Full list of European institutions listed at:

http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4ResearcherOrgs