

Report on Careers in Research On-Line Survey 2005

Executive Summary

Response:

- ◆ There was a good response to the survey: 36.6% of Research Staff (RS) at Reading. This puts the University 2nd within its comparator group and 6th out of the 24 institutions in the survey.

Induction:

- ◆ Of the 48.4% of RS who attended the central induction programme 73.3% rated it positively. This puts Reading at the top of the comparator group.
- ◆ 56.5% of RS were satisfied with their departmental induction. This result is 15.3% up on 2003.
- ◆ 40.8% were negative about the induction to their role as a researcher. This shows no real improvement since 2003 and Reading is second from bottom within the comparator group on this issue.

Supervision:

- ◆ 82% of Reading RS have regular meetings with their supervisors. This is almost identical to the 2003 report and puts Reading fourth from bottom of its comparator group.
- ◆ Of that group 89.6% gave positive feedback about their meetings. This result mirrors that of 2003 and puts Reading bottom of the comparator group.

Careers Issues:

- ◆ 56.2% of Reading RS discussed careers issues with their supervisors, on this measurement Reading was top of its comparator group. 87.5% of Reading RS who did have these discussions found them helpful.
- ◆ 87.5% of RS at Reading who used the University's Career Service found it 'helpful' or 'very helpful'.

Access to Training and Development:

- ◆ Accessibility of information on training at the University was considered to be 'good' or 'excellent' by 89% of RS at Reading.
- ◆ Just under a third of Reading RS do not consider it easy to attend training sessions. 82.9% of that group gave their reason for non-attendance as "lack of time". Reading RS used this explanation more than RS in any of the comparator institutions. This result is over 10% higher than the mean of all the other institutions in the survey.

Staff Development Review:

- ◆ 64.8% of RS at Reading have participated in SDR, putting the University top within its comparator group. This is an increase in 14.8% over 2003.
- ◆ 52.4% found SDR useful in leading to training. 25% thought it useful in leading to changes in work practices. 67.8% said it was useful in highlighting problems, however only 44.1% said it was useful in solving them. 58.3% scored the SDR

favourably on 'helping you to focus on your career aspirations and how these are met by your current role'. All these results put Reading in the middle or top half of the comparator group.

Training and development in research skills

- ◆ 29.2% of Reading RS attended courses directly related to their research. 97.3% of the former gave positive feedback about the training.
- ◆ Just over 50% of Reading RS received research skills training at work and 98.5% of this group were positive about it.

Training and Development in transferable skills:

- ◆ The University was top of its comparator group when providing experience for its RS in the areas of: using information technology; collaborating with industry and writing for reports and publication.
- ◆ A significant majority of Reading RS (over 70%) did not believe that training in key areas such as IT and project and resource planning are available within the University although they are. Of this number, 68 % thought they would benefit from such training.
- ◆ A 26.2% rise since 2003 in those who participated in staff and team management training. 100% positive about the training.
- ◆ A 20.2% increase in the staff who gave positive feedback on the courses in lecturing and teaching over the 2003 figures.

RS relationship with the University of Reading:

- ◆ 50 % or more of Reading's RS consider communication from the University at all levels (Intra-School Department, School etc) good or very good.
- ◆ An average of 77.2 % of RS considered themselves unequally treated with academic staff over participation in decision making processes at all levels and opportunities for promotion
- ◆ In areas such as terms and conditions of employment, access to facilities and staff training the majority of RS consider that they are treated equally.

RS Comment at Reading:

- ◆ The negative statements concerned the need for a clear path of career progression for RS through academia.
- ◆ The positive comments were almost entirely dedicated to praise for the level of staff training provided.

Additional Question

- ◆ 56.6% of RS at Reading said they would be "interested in training and development opportunities" similar to those outlined in the CROS survey "that would combine to make a post-graduate qualification".

Recommendations

The first recommendation of the report is that the results of it should be published in an article in the *Bulletin* acknowledging the positive results and indicating what the University will do concerning the areas that need improving.

Issues

- ◆ Poor induction for RS to individual role
- ◆ Eighteen percent of RS without regular supervision
- ◆ Perceived lack of time for RS to engage with development opportunities
- ◆ SDR poor at leading to changes in work practices and in solving problems

- ◆ Perceived inequality that RS feel with academics over opportunities for promotion and involvement in decision-making processes.

- ◆ Lack of clear career progression for RS through academia.

Recommendations

- Publish a booklet on University guidance on “Good Practice for the Management of Research Staff”. The guidance will be in line with the expectations of the external funding bodies.
- Introduction of peer mentoring scheme. More experienced research staff to mentor new ones. Part of the role of mentors should be to challenge the new staff on issues of development.
- Introduction of the Staff Educational Development Association Professional Development Framework for Research Staff. An accredited post-graduate qualification for researchers.
- CSTD to offer lunchtime compact courses for a range of subjects for Research Staff.
- The “Good Practice for the Management of Research Staff” should contain within it the procedure for the promotion of research staff via the newly established Research & Analagous Staff Sub-Committee.
- Do the Board have a view on the representation of research staff at School or University level?
- There is little the University can do about this issue independently. It is dependent on changes on a National and European basis

Introduction

This report compares the responses of research staff at the University of Reading with 3,318 researchers at 23 other Higher Education Institutions in the UK. It also benchmarks the University's results against a smaller number of Universities from the Russell and the 1994 Group.¹ The analysis also compares results with the CROS 2003 survey. The 2005 survey at Reading received a good response with 36.6% of researchers responding. This is a drop of only 2.3% over 2003 and puts Reading second within its comparator group. The University's response was 13.2% higher than the mean for the rest of the institutions in the survey.

The results of the survey were positive for the University in some areas. RS at Reading continue to value the quality of their supervision concerning their research. RS still rate the central induction, the staff training provision and the careers service highly. There are a number of areas where RS consider the University's provision has improved: departmental induction; communication from the University at a central, departmental and school level; and the courses in team management and lecturing and teaching. The survey also indicates a significant improvement in the percentage of staff development reviews being conducted. However the research staff still consider that the local induction to their individual role is poor, they continue to feel excluded from decision-making processes and from opportunities for promotion. The survey also reveals that there is a weak culture of attending training amongst researchers at Reading.

¹ Leicester, University College London, Liverpool, Nottingham, Surrey, Warwick, Leeds, Imperial College London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Bath.

Profile of Research Staff at the University

The composition of research staff (RS) at Reading has not changed significantly since 2003. The majority of RS are between 24 and 35 years of age. There are slightly more male research staff than female and when compared against the British population the black and minority ethnic grouping is marginally over represented. There is a diverse range of nationalities within RS, although the vast majority are from the UK. Seven point two percent of RS have a disability. The largest group of RS are on their first contract with the University and that will terminate within the next two years. The subject area where the University has most research staff is biological sciences, followed by physical sciences and agriculture and related subjects. The European Union, the Natural Environments Research Council and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council in descending order fund the largest numbers of RS at the University.

Induction Issues

Forty eight point four percent of the research staff surveyed attended induction when they started at Reading. This result is almost identical to 2003 and puts Reading fourth from the bottom of the comparator group. The institutional induction for researchers is still rated highly with 73.3% of the survey stating that it was useful or very useful. This figure is down from last time although the drop is less than 10%. Nevertheless the result puts Reading top of the comparator group, 8.5% ahead of the nearest institution and 14.5% higher than the mean for the whole survey.

The induction provided by departments received significantly higher ratings two years on. Since 2003 there has been an increase in the positive rating of 15.3% with 56.5% of those canvassed

finding departmental induction either 'useful' or 'very useful'. Despite this Reading was placed fourth from bottom within the comparator group on this measure.

Unfortunately the figures on researchers induction to their role remained almost identical to that in the 2003 survey. Forty point eight percent of those respondents for whom this question was applicable were negative about the induction they received to their current role. Amongst the comparator group there was only one institution that received a lower rating than Reading. This negative feedback was nearly twice the level of the mean response for the HEIs in the rest of the survey.

Supervision Issues

The number of researchers who have regular meetings with their supervisor stayed within a few points of the 2003 report. Eighty two percent of researchers have regular meetings with their Supervisor/Manager, which leaves 18% who don't. This puts Reading fourth from bottom of its comparator group. However, for those who did receive regular feedback, 89.6% found it helpful or very helpful. This is practically the same result as in 2003.

Career Advice

The 2005 survey indicated that there has been a substantial increase in research staff seeking advice on careers from their supervisor (18%). More research staff at Reading took this route than their colleagues in comparator institutions, and 87.5% thought the advice they received was 'helpful' or 'very helpful'. The latter result was at the median point within the group of comparator institutions. The number of researchers accessing the University Careers Advisory

Service fell marginally in comparison with 2003, and the satisfaction rate increased slightly with 87.5% of respondents who used the service finding it helpful or very helpful. Researchers at Reading are at the median point in the comparator group for use of CAS, but for those who express satisfaction with the service they are at the top of the group. There was a significant rise in the number of researchers asking for careers advice from colleagues, either in or outside their departments. The rise of 12.2% over the 2003 figures meant that 70.3% of the sample asked colleagues for careers advice. The advice given was considered to be helpful or very helpful by 93.3% of the recipients.

Access to Training and Development

The initial questions in this section have results that mimic those given in 2003 to a great extent. Therefore the accessibility of information on training for researchers at Reading was given a high rating with 89% of the survey saying it was either ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. This puts Reading second within the comparator group.

Seventy point three percent consider it to be easy or fairly easy to attend training activities. Of the 29.6% who found it not easy or very difficult to attend training the vast majority (82.9%) gave “lack of time” as their reason. In comparison to the group that the University is being benchmarked against this is the highest percentage. It is over ten percent greater than the mean of all the other institutions in the survey.

Just under half those questioned (47.7%) had attended a training course in the last 12 months, a marginal increase over 2003. Within the comparator group Reading is third. As in 2003 there is

a significant majority of researchers (averaging over 70%) who are unaware that training in areas such as IT and Project Resource planning are available. Of these respondents a mean of 68% state they would have found such courses useful had they known about them.

This result is disappointing as information about training is readily available. In response to the 2003 survey information about relevant training is sent out to researchers every month via email. Research staff also receive a Staff Training Brochure every year which contains section dedicated to their needs. Also every two weeks in term time there is an update on what training is available in the *Bulletin* which all staff receive.

Staff Development Review

The figures on the usage of the Staff Development Review in 2005 have changed dramatically since the earlier survey with an increase in participation rates of 14.6%. This result put Reading at the head of the comparator group and just under 30% better than the mean of all the other HEIs in the survey. The feedback indicates that more participants are finding the process useful in leading to training with an increase of 9.6% over the 2003 figures. However, only 25% of participants thought that their SDR had been 'useful' or 'very useful' in leading to changes in work practice, this was a drop of 10.8% over the previous survey. This result put Reading at the bottom of the comparator group.

Sixty seven point eight percent of respondents considered that their SDR had been good at highlighting problems, but only 44.1% thought the process helped them solve problems. There was a minor increase in those who considered that their SDR had helped them think about career

aspirations and how they were met by their existing role, with 58.3% saying this was the case.

These figures show increases over those in 2003 and all of them put Reading in the middle or the top half of the comparator group.

Training and Development in Research Skills

Twenty nine point two percent of researchers go on training courses directly related to their research. This result makes Reading average within the comparator group and the rest of the survey.² Ninety seven point three percent of the respondents who went on these training courses found them 'useful' or 'very useful'.

Training and Development in Transferable Skills

The survey examines thirteen different areas in which research staff may have gained experience in transferable skills.³ In six of the areas the 2005 survey shows there has been little change in the percentage of research staff gaining experience, another six areas shows there had been marginal increases or decreases. When set against the comparator group Reading was average in seven areas. However Reading was amongst the leading Universities in the comparator group in giving its RS opportunities to experience teaching and lecturing, demonstrating, and explaining work to people outside their field. The percentage of RS at the University who gained experience in the use of information technology, of collaborating with industry and of writing for reports and publication was greater than in all the comparator institutions.

² This puts Reading at just below the median within the control group but above the mean of the rest of the survey.

³ Staff and Team Management, Coaching Others, Managing Budgets, Project and Resource Planning, Teaching and Lecturing, Demonstrating, Information Technology, Collaboration with Industry, Explaining Work to People

There has been a positive and significant response to courses in the area of staff and team management where there has been a 26.2% rise since 2003 in those who participated in the training with all of them finding the training useful or very useful. On this measurement the University is sixth within the comparator group.

Likewise there was a 20.2% increase in the staff who gave positive feedback on the courses in lecturing and teaching over the 2003 figures. This result puts Reading fifth within the comparator group.

Career Development

Discussion with colleagues within and outside the University are still overwhelmingly the two most popular approaches to Career Development for researchers. The two areas that researchers are making significantly more use of since 2003 are the University training courses, and staff development review.⁴

RS Relationship with University of Reading

There has been little change since 2003 in the opinion of the vast majority of research staff that they are not treated equally with permanent academic staff concerning certain issues. These are: participation in decision making processes at all levels throughout the University and the opportunities researchers have for promotion.⁵ However, there is now a clear majority of researchers who believe that they are treated equally in comparison with permanent academics

Outside Your Field, Writing Proposals, Writing for Reports and Publication, Making Formal Presentations and Legal and Procedural Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

⁴ Figures are difficult to compare because researchers use multiple approaches to their career development. However despite a small decrease in respondents there was an increase of over 25% in the use of these approaches.

with regard to the terms and conditions of employment.⁶ Though this question does exclude the issue of fixed term nature of their contract. On a positive note, over 85% of respondents considered that they had equal access to training and development and the institutions facilities. When measured against the comparator group over these issues Reading is in or around the median position over participation in the decision-making process at the school /faculty and departmental level. However, Reading was one from the bottom of the group over the questions of participation in the decision-making processes at an institutional level and opportunities for promotion. Over the issues of contract and access to the institutions facilities and training Reading is respectively first, fourth and second in the comparator group.

On the question of how the different sectors of the University of Reading communicate with researchers over policy and guidance that is relevant to them there has been a significant improvement in how those surveyed rate the University. Communication from the institution, the departments, and the faculties/schools all received an increase in their ratings of 12.5% or more. In all these categories communication is considered to be good or very good by more than 50% of the respondents, this was not the case in the 2003 survey. Against the comparator institutions Reading sits mostly in or around the median apart from the issue of communication with departments where it is at the top of the group. However this is not significant as there is only a 5% divergence between all the scores of the comparator institutions over this issue.

⁵ A mean of 77.2 % of researchers considered their treatment unequal over these issues.

⁶ 61.6 % of respondents held this view.

RS Comment at Reading

As in 2003 the comment on the survey responses that those replying felt strongly about threw up the issue of a lack of clear career progression for research staff at Reading. Other popular responses were the lack of time available for attending courses due to the pressures of research, and general complaints that research staff are exploited by the University. A suggestion for the improvement of support for research staff was to increase their level of representation within decision-making structures of the University.

The section on positive feedback was almost entirely taken up with praise for the information, availability and quality of training at the University.

Additional Question

Research Staff at Reading were asked if they would be, “interested in training and development opportunities as listed above that would combine to make a post-graduate qualification?”. Fifty six point six percent of the participants stated that they were interested in such a scheme.

Appendix 1 2003 & 2005

Development in Transferable Skills

Experience	Survey year	Opportunity for experience - yes/no (%)		If ans no would it have been useful/not useful (%)		If ans yes was it useful/not useful (%)	
		Yes	No	Useful	Not Useful	Useful	Not Useful
Staff & team management	2003	34	65.4	60	40	96.1	3.9
	2005	26.2	73.8	63.5	36.5	94.1	5.9
Coaching others	2003	55.1	44.9	55.1	44.9	93.7	6.4
	2005	44.6	55.4	56.9	43.1	94.8	5.2
Managing Budgets	2003	22.8	77.2	60.6	39.4	96.9	3.1
	2005	22.3	77.7	64.4	35.6	89.7	10.3
Project and resource planning	2003	44.1	55.9	75.6	24.4	100	0
	2005	40	60	84.6	15.4	90.4	9.6
Teaching or Lecturing	2003	36	64	64.8	35.2	92.5	7.5
	2005	44.6	55.4	66.7	33.3	94.8	5.2
Demonstrating	2003	31.6	68.4	36.5	63.5	87.2	12.8
	2005	30.8	69.2	34.4	65.6	85.0	15.0
Information Technology	2003	54.4	45.6	51.5	48.5	85.9	14.1
	2005	56.2	43.8	35.1	64.9	85.0	15
Collaboration with Industry	2003	43.4	56.6	57.5	42.5	100	0
	2005	34.6	65.4	56.5	43.5	91.1	8.9
Explaining work to people outside your field	2003	41.2	58.8	56.8	43.2	90	10
	2005	46.2	53.8	70.0	30.0	91.7	8.3
Writing proposals or grant applications	2003	36	64	82	18	96.1	3.9
	2005	44.6	55.4	87.5	12.5	98.3	1.7
Writing for reports and publication	2003	69.9	30.1	72.7	27.3	97.9	2.1
	2005	75.4	24.6	71.9	28.1	94.9	5.1
Making formal presentations to an audience	2003	66.9	33.1	62	38	96.7	3.3
	2005	63.8	36.2	65.2	34.8	95.2	4.8
Legal and procedural aspects of intellectual property rights	2003	11	89	48.8	51.2	76.5	23.5
	2005	10.1	89.9	47.4	52.6	76.9	23.1

Appendix 2 2003 & 2005
Off the job training

Training Area	Survey Year	Availability yes/no (%)		If ans no would it have been useful/not useful (%)		If ans yes was it useful/not useful/training not taken (%)			If ans yes was training provided by: Dept/Faculty or School/Funding Body/CSTD/Other (%)				
		Y	N	U	NU	U	NU	TNT	D	FS	FB	CSTD	O
Staff team management	2003	16.2	83.8	65.3	34.7	25	8.3	66.7	4.3	8.7	0	82.6	4.3
	2005	20.0	80.0	51.9	48.1	46.2	0.0	53.8	0	3.8	0	80.8	15.4
Coaching others	2003	13.2	86.8	59.7	40.3	45	10	45	22.2	5.6	5.6	66.7	N/A*
	2005	10.0	90.0	55.6	44.4	46.2	15.4	38.5	7.7	15.4	0.0	69.2	7.7
Managing Budgets	2003	8.1	91.9	62.0	38.0	23.1	15.4	61.5	0	9.1	0	90.9	N/A
	2005	10.0	90.0	64.1	35.9	30.8	0.0	69.2	0.0	15.4	0	84.6	0.00
Project and resource planning	2003	13.2	86.8	70.7	29.3	38	0	61.9	11.1	11.1	0	72.2	5.6
	2005	15.4	84.6	73.7	26.4	50	5	45.0	15.0	5.0	0	80.0	0
Teaching or Lecturing	2003	22.8	77.2	68.8	31.2	34.4	12.5	53.1	3.2	9.7	6.5	77.4	3.2
	2005	23.1	76.9	69.0	31.0	56.6	13.3	30.0	6.7	13.3	0.0	73.3	6.7
Demonstrating	2003	13.2	86.8	37.7	62.3	55	5	40	16.7	11.1	11.1	61.1	N/A
	2005	13.8	86.2	34.8	65.2	61.1	11.2	27.8	16.7	16.7	0	61.1	5.6
Information Technology	2003	35.3	64.7	64.9	35.1	64.7	9.8	25.5	10.2	12.2	4.1	69.4	2
	2005	33.1	66.9	55.2	44.8	69.8	11.6	18.6	4.7	9.3	2.3	74.4	9.3
Collaboration with Industry	2003	6.6	93.4	63.3	36.7	82.3	0	17.6	20	0	30	30	20
	2005	10.8	89.2	59.5	40.5	57.2	0	42.9	14.3	21.4	14.3	50	0.0
Explaining work to people outside your field	2003	11.8	88.2	59.8	40.2	61.9	9.5	28.6	25	0	18.8	37.5	18.8
	2005	14.6	85.4	67.6	32.4	57.9	5.3	36.8	10.5	10.5	0.0	52.6	26.3
Writing proposals or grant applications	2003	19.9	80.1	73.5	26.5	50.	0	50	11.1	7.4	0	77.8	3.7
	2005	27.7	72.3	81.9	18.1	50.	0	44.4	5.4	2.7	2.7	75.7	13.5
Writing for reports and publication	2003	23.5	76.5	71	29	51.3	2.7	45.9	20.6	5.9	2.9	70.6	N/A
	2005	30.0	70.0	73.6	26.4	43.6	7.7	48.7	10.3	5.1	0.0	79.5	5.1
Making formal presentations to an audience	2003	26.5	73.5	66.1	33.9	65	5	30	15.8	10.5	7.9	52.6	13.2
	2005	25.4	74.6	64.9	35.1	54.6	12.1	33.3	6.1	9.1	3.0	66.7	15.2
Legal and procedural aspects of intellectual property rights	2003	6.6	93.4	50	50	45.5	0	54.5	18.2	9.1	9.1	54.5	9.1
	2005	6.9	93.1	47.9	52.1	22.1	11.1	66.7	0	11.1	0.0	88.9	0.0

* N/A – Question Not Asked