

Code of Practice Document for the Employment of Contract Research Staff

1. Introduction

‘Contract research staff’ is the term used for those employees of the University whose main function is research and whose appointment is on an unestablished, fixed-term basis, normally supported by grant funding from an outside body (e.g. a Research Council, charitable organisation, government department, industry). The University of Cambridge employs around 2,500 such staff and in some of its institutions they comprise the majority of the staff.

In 1996, in recognition of the particular issues relating to the employment of the 30,000 contract research staff in the U.K.’s Higher Education Institutions, a Concordat was drawn up between the major research sponsors, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and the institutions in receipt of grants from the funding bodies concerned.

The *Concordat on Contract Research Staff Career Management* (<http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk/>) provides a framework for the career management and conditions of employment of contract research staff.

The University is committed to the principles of the *Concordat* and is working towards developing policy which acknowledges best practice and the remainder of this Code clarifies the current procedures in place. Additional information may be found on the University’s website (<http://www.cam.ac.uk>). A good starting point for research staff navigating the website is <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/crs/>. The University has a Career Management Scheme for contract research staff (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/cms.html>).

2. Recruitment, Appointment and Salary

The University's Equal Opportunities Policy

The University of Cambridge is committed in its pursuit of academic excellence to equality of opportunity and to a pro-active and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture, and values diversity.

The University is therefore committed to a policy and practice which require that, for students, admission to the University and progression within undergraduate and graduate studies, will be determined only by personal merit and by performance. For staff, entry into employment with the University and progression within employment will be determined only by personal merit and by the application of criteria which are related to the duties and conditions of each particular post and the needs of the institution concerned.

Subject to statutory provisions no applicant for admission as a student, or for a staff appointment, or student, or member of staff, will be treated less favourably than another on the grounds of sex (including gender reassignment), marital or parental status, race, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or age. For students, ability to meet the requirements of the selection criteria for competitive admission and for staff, ability to perform the job, will be the primary consideration.

If any person admitted as a student or appointed as an employee considers that he or she is suffering from unequal treatment on any of the above grounds in his or her admission, appointment, or progression through the University, he or she may make a complaint, which will be dealt with through the agreed procedures for complaints or grievances or the procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment, as appropriate.

Where funding for an unnamed researcher has been provided as part of a successful grant application, the vacant post will normally be advertised openly. Advertisements will contain the limit of tenure, which will normally be for the full duration of the funded project; the appropriate grade and salary range of the post; and the necessary qualifications, experience and skills required. The three main grades assigned by this University to research posts are:-

a) Research Assistant:

For individuals with limited or no relevant research experience or where the scope of the job requires limited independent judgement and creativity. Research Assistants will normally be graduates and may be undertaking a PhD. They will act as full members of the research team. Duties will typically include data collection, analysis and some interpretation. Contribution to the publication of findings may be encouraged but would be unlikely to be a requirement. Any supervisory responsibilities would involve technical and clerical staff rather than other research staff.

Grade:	Grade 5
Salary Range:	Points 34-38 of the single pay spine

3. Contract of Employment

Contracts of employment are issued as early as possible, ideally well in advance of the start date, and not later than eight weeks after the commencement of duties. The contract specifies the main terms and conditions of the appointment, salary details, length of tenure and other important particulars. Any specific rules and practices determined by the sponsor may either be written into the contract or be provided, as an addition/amendment to the University's normal terms and conditions of employment, by the sponsor directly. Contracts of employment must be agreed and signed by both parties before payment of salary may commence.

Enclosures with the contract of employment include a comprehensive Staff Guide (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/staff/guide/>), a Safety Handbook, superannuation details and an invitation to a one-day Introductory Conference.

Upon the renewal or extension of an appointment, or following a promotion to a different grade, further letters of appointment will be issued accordingly.

4. Terms and Conditions of Employment

The University's *Statutes and Ordinances* are the official regulatory framework of the University. These regulations specify the terms and conditions of employment of all established academic, academic-related and assistant staff. Staff in unestablished positions (including contract research staff) are subject to broadly similar terms and conditions as established staff, as appropriate to their role, and also, where applicable, as specified by the external funding body.

With the creation of the Personnel (now the Human Resources) Division in 1999 to integrate the then separate arrangements for HR management of the different staff groups, the emphasis now is on harmonisation of policies and procedures, where possible, for all staff of the University.

Up to date information on the University's HR policies and procedures may be found on the University's website at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/>.

Unestablished research staff have access to the same facilities and services of the University as equivalent established staff. The Staff Guide contains details of the main University facilities.

5. Staff Management

New researchers to the University can expect to be properly inducted and supported in their post on commencement of their duties. Induction should cover, in conjunction with the mentoring facility (see below), everything from the formal responsibilities of the job through to practical issues such as the location of the nearest photocopier. Safety and emergency procedures should also be fully covered. Institutions will make the necessary

arrangements internally. In addition, the University's Staff Development Programme includes a one-day introductory conference for new academic and academic-related staff, held twice a year, normally in April and September.

New staff may also be assigned a mentor within their institution. Mentors will, where possible, have a similar background and experience to the new employee, and be available to give support and help with everyday aspects of working for the institution and the University.

The Head of Institution and the Principal Investigator (or similar supervisor/line manager) will be responsible for ensuring that new research staff fully understand the duties of the post, the standards expected, institutional practices, reporting requirements of the sponsor and other such management issues. The nature of the supervision should be clarified and regular progress meetings/discussions should be established.

An appraisal scheme exists for all staff of the University and each institution has developed its own procedures for appraising staff. Contract research staff can expect to be appraised, normally by their supervisor, at least biennially.

It is the duty of the grant holder/supervisor to ensure that appropriate acknowledgement and credit is given for the contribution of research staff to the results of the project, including recognition in publications and further grant applications. It is the duty of the researcher to report the results of project work to the grant holder/supervisor and not publish or communicate findings outside the research group without the consent of the grant holder/supervisor. The University's policies on Intellectual Property Rights apply equally to unestablished research staff as to established academic staff (contracts of employment contain more detailed information regarding intellectual property and publication).

6. Training and Development

Contract research staff are encouraged to make use of the University's Staff Development Programme (including courses run by the Computing Service). Courses are open to all staff as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities and cover a wide range of issues under such categories as Educational Development, Professional Development and Career and Personal Development. Many of the courses are run specifically with contract research staff in mind. Details of the courses may be found on the website at <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/staffdev/>.

Training needs, of course, may also be met in other ways. 'On-the-job' training can be very valuable and be geared to specific needs. Colleagues within the institution may be able to offer guidance on such issues as preparing grant applications, managing budgets, making presentations and writing publications. There may also be the opportunity to undertake some teaching/demonstrating duties if appropriate.

Attendance at external courses, seminars, workshops or conferences may also be highly beneficial to all concerned. Staff should expect to be allowed reasonable time away from their work to attend relevant training and to have access to funds if so provided by sponsors to undertake such training/development.

It is important that training/development needs are identified during the course of employment, during induction, mentoring and appraisal and at other times, and discussed with the relevant supervisor and Head of Institution.

7. Career Management

Contract research staff are a highly qualified, skilled and experienced workforce and it is in the best interests of the University to retain and utilise their expertise. However, due to the nature of funding of the majority of research projects, it is inevitable that the University will sometimes have to terminate the appointment of a researcher at the end of a project. It is important that research staff are fully equipped for such an eventuality by taking responsibility for the management of their future career throughout their appointment.

The University will endeavour to assist staff in managing their career. Professional advice is on hand from the University's Careers Service. The Service is available to all students, alumni and graduate staff and provides a comprehensive service in all aspects of career management and job searching.

The Staff Development Programme (see above) contains several courses specifically tailored towards taking stock of one's career direction and assisting with job hunting. These include the *Early Career Review* and *Securing the Next Position* (4 separate courses).

Job opportunities are advertised in a number of sources including the University's internal vacancy list (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/jobs/>), *Reporter*, departmental websites, local and national publications, and specific internet-based employment sites.

Research staff should consider developing a portfolio of research-related skills during their appointment. Colleagues within the institution may be able to contribute towards this and provide advice on career directions/aspirations.

8. Approaching the End of Contract

A fixed-term contract (FTC) may only be issued in one of three situations:-

- (a) Where a post will terminate on a specified date;
- (b) Where a post will terminate on completion of a specified task; or
- (c) Where a post will terminate when a specified event happens.

The majority of contract research staff will be appointed in accordance with situation (a) above i.e. they will be employed for the period funded by the sponsor. The termination of a FTC is technically a dismissal and the employee is entitled to be consulted and to receive notice of the termination. Although notice is built in to fixed-term contracts of

employment, staff will be informed in good time (at least three to four months before their contract is due to expire) of the situation regarding the future funding of the post.

If further funding for the project has already been guaranteed, a renewal of contract will be offered for the further duration of funding. If funding is to terminate or if further funding is still being sought, consultation will take place between the employee and the supervisor and/or departmental administrator.

Consultation should take the form of clarification of the current situation (including reaffirmation of the termination date of the contract), inviting suggestions of ways in which further funds may be raised, and assistance, where desired, with seeking appropriate alternative employment with the University (redeployment). Employees seeking redeployment are entitled to receive copies of the internal vacancies list and relevant vacancies in *Reporter* for up to 6 months after their employment has terminated, and will normally be interviewed for any internal post they apply for providing they possess the necessary qualifications, experience and skills for the post.

If there is a strong possibility that further funding may be secured, but not formally confirmed before the termination of the current contract, some institutions may be able to provide bridging funds to maintain employment with no break in service. However, this should not be regarded as a guarantee of future employment past the limit of the bridging fund.

Research staff with over two years' continuous service with the University will receive a redundancy payment if the funding for their post ceases and they do not secure alternative employment in the University.