

CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guide

1

Designing an Effective Institutional
Strengthening Programme for Researcher
Career Development



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About this Guide

This Guide is number 1 of a series of 6 CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guides developed by the CIRCLE Programme to help institutions design and deliver a successful Institutional Strengthening Programme, a change management process, to support the career development of researchers as part of research capacity strengthening.

This Guide draws on the experience of the CIRCLE Programme, and the lessons learnt by the institutions that have taken part.

It will show you how to set up your own Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development by introducing each of the design and delivery stages. This includes how to establish your ISP Implementation Group, carrying out your Gap Analysis, preparing and implementing your Action Plan, and how to monitor success.

Content in this Guide is expanded and developed upon in further Guides.

You can access all of our Guides on both the [ACU website](#) and the [Vitae website](#).

The CIRCLE Institutional Strengthening Programme

Experience from existing international postgraduate scholarship and fellowship schemes, including the Commonwealth Scholarships, indicates that, where a returning scholar or fellow works in an academic role, the long-term impact of any scholarship or fellowship programme is in large part determined by the institutional context into which the scholar or fellow returns. After spending time working and/or studying in another country, many African academics struggle to establish successful research careers after returning to institutions that, for a wide variety of reasons, either constrain or do not adequately support their career and professional development. Accentuation of the importance of providing targeted professional development support to early career researchers, especially in the form of academic mentoring, was borne out of the Nairobi Process¹ – a series of research reports conducted by the ACU in partnership with the British Academy.

The Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa (CIRCLE) programme is an initiative of the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) which aims to address the above issues. The project adopted the dual approach of supporting individual academics to undertake research while also working with their institutions to develop better professional development systems for their researchers.

The purpose of the Institutional Strengthening Programme (ISP) is to help home institutions create a more enabling environment in which the returning fellows’ research could flourish over the long-term. This would

enhance the potential of the CIRCLE Visiting Fellows (CVFs) to capitalise on the experience gained during the fellowship, build successful research careers, and share their expertise, thereby helping to secure the long-term contribution of African scientists to the body of knowledge on climate impacts. Active participation in the ISP was a requirement for all CIRCLE home institutions as a condition of being able to nominate staff to undertake a CIRCLE Visiting Fellowship. Participation was optional for host institutions, although most elected to join the programme. In all, 31 institutions across 9 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa participated in the ISP between 2016 and 2019.

The CIRCLE ISP programme is informed by the Principles embodied in the UK’s Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers² (the Concordat) and in the European Union’s Charter for Researchers and its Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

The primary objective of the ISP is to strengthen the capacity of participating universities to support and enhance the career progression of researchers early in their careers. The ISP aimed to achieve this objective by focusing on three areas: institutional policies and frameworks; academic mentoring; training and support provision. The ISP is in effect an institutional change process.

Progress made by participating institutions involved in the programme is shown below:

When the ISP began, the 31 institutions taking part reported the following:



The 31 institutions involved in the CIRCLE ISP reported the following successes:

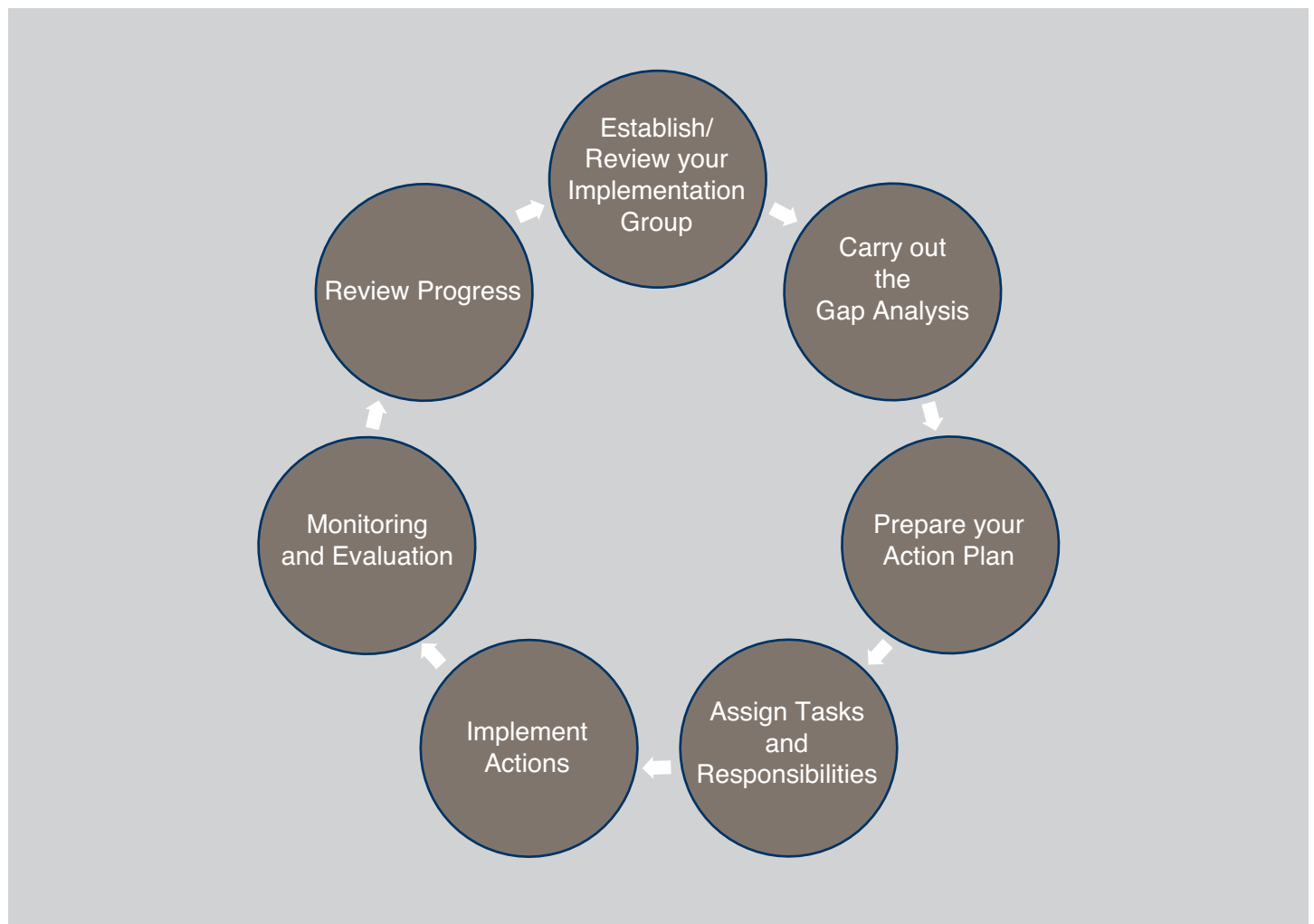


¹ You can read about the Nairobi Process here: <https://www.acu.ac.uk/focus-areas/early-careers/nairobi-process>

² See Appendix 1 for full details of the Concordat Principles

Stages in the Design and Delivery of your ISP

There are a series of stages in the design and delivery of an ISP:



ESTABLISH YOUR IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

Bring together 'the right team' of staff and researchers from across your institution.

CARRY OUT THE GAP ANALYSIS

Undertake a structured evaluation of support provision within your institution.

PREPARE YOUR ACTION PLAN

Use your gap analysis to plan actions that will improve support provision.

ASSIGN TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Assign tasks based on the skills, expertise and positions of your Implementation Group.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS

Carry out your actions!

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitor progress of actions and evaluate their success.

REVIEW

Once actions have been completed, review your progress and achievements. You may use this review to start another gap analysis, update your Action Plan, or bring new people into your Implementation Group.

Each of these stages will be discussed throughout the following guide.

Establish your Implementation Group

It's essential to set up an Implementation Group that is able to champion, lead and manage the implementation of your ISP.

There are several different approaches that might be used to establish an Implementation Group. Here are some general points for your consideration:

SIZE OF YOUR GROUP

Your Implementation Group can consist of any number of members, although experience from CIRCLE suggests having Groups of between 8 - 10 members makes for an effective Group.

CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups with higher numbers of members reported a higher proportion of completed actions compared to those reported by smaller Implementation Groups. It may be that Implementation Groups with more members are better able to distribute responsibility in the delivery of actions and related tasks. They may also benefit from a wider pool of experience and resources than institutions with smaller Implementation Groups.

GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Your ISP relies on the successful delivery of actions to strengthen provision for all researchers in your institution, so members of your ISP Implementation Group should be in a position of influence to enable the ISP across your institution.

ISP Implementation Groups can vary in composition with a combination that might include academics, academic leads, human resources and finance personnel. It's also essential to include representation of researchers, early career academics and administrative staff to ensure that views and perspectives from all stakeholders and departments are considered. Ensuring that you have a representative ISP Implementation Group can help to implement actions quicker, as there will be established links with key decision makers across the institution.

CIRCLE found that the most successful ISP Groups included Vice Chancellors (VCs), Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVCs) and/or Heads of Department. These Implementation Groups reported a higher overall number of completed actions and were more likely to have achieved higher level actions such as implementation of new policies or introduction of new training courses.

Not all your members need to be senior, however. CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups consisted of members from a variety of roles including researchers, lecturers, professors, managers, HR Staff, Deans, Directors, Heads of Department and VCs or DVCs. Each member should bring a unique perspective along with specialist expertise and institutional connections.

For more junior members of your Group, it is important to secure agreement from their Head of Department or line manager for them to contribute time to the ISP.

SUSTAINABILITY

It is important that the Implementation Group plans for the sustainable future of the ISP across the institution. When inviting members to take part in the Implementation Group, consider their availability and the nature of their role. For example, if a member of your Implementation Group is on a fixed-term contract, you may want to consider how their role will be managed if and when their contract ends.

Groups should also consider the long-term goals of their action plan and ensure that the tasks are appropriately assigned to Group members.

NOMINATED LEAD

As part of your ISP, we recommended that you nominate a Lead member to take responsibility for the management of the Action Plan implementation. ISP Leads may not necessarily be the most senior member of staff within the Implementation Group but should be selected based on their experience and connections with the wider institution, as well as their ability to devote time to the process.

During CIRCLE, 25% of the ISP Implementation Groups were led by individuals with Researcher or Lecturer roles. It was these Implementation Groups that reported the highest number of completed actions, perhaps due to their proximity to individuals directly affected by the gaps identified in the Action Plans, and the ability to dedicate more time to the management of the programme. Many Leads reported that support from more senior members of their ISP Group was beneficial.

ANTICIPATED TASKS

All members of the Implementation Group are likely to play a major part in the ISP, rather than act only as an advisory group. It is up to your Group to decide how to allocate tasks for the gap analysis and action plan implementation. You may also want to consider a mechanism to report activities to other important groups or committees within the institution, and how to become embedded in the wider institutional business.

You will know what works best in your institution and within your Group. There are many approaches: individuals might take specific responsibility for particular actions; your Group may want to all work together; or they may want to create smaller working groups. You may also consider asking for input from individuals outside the group to help implement your actions.

AGREEMENT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Once you have formed your Group, you might consider writing Terms of Reference. This will ensure that everyone is aware of the size and scope of your Action Plan, and that goals and objectives are formally agreed.

Your Terms of Reference should include details on the following:

- Duration and scope of the ISP
- The process and framework involved in conducting the Gap Analysis
- The method by which the Action Plan is to be developed
- How actions within the Action Plan will be assigned and delivered
- Short and long terms goal of the ISP (based on the Gap Analysis and Action Plan)
- Topic and activity priorities
- Monitoring and Evaluation process for measuring success

Review your Terms of Reference with the Implementation Group throughout the ISP cycle.

Carry out the Gap Analysis

FRAMEWORKS FOR CONDUCTING A GAP ANALYSIS

In order to conduct an internal gap analysis of provision, it's useful to use a framework as a point of reference.

In the case of the CIRCLE ISP, participants explored Principles outlined in the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (the Concordat)² and agreed to use this framework as a point of reference in

the CIRCLE ISP process. This did not involve the wholesale adoption of the Concordat; indeed, some elements were not considered to be relevant by our institutions, with many variations being highlighted across national contexts. Nonetheless, participants agreed that the broad Principles acted as a useful way to structure their analysis.

The Concordat

The UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers can be used as a policy framework, using its Principles for the enhancement of institutional recruitment, retention and support of researchers. The areas covered by the Principles are as follows:

PRINCIPLE 1: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.

PRINCIPLE 2: RECOGNITION AND VALUE

Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.

PRINCIPLES 3 & 4: SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

PRINCIPLE 5: RESEARCHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

PRINCIPLE 6: DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

PRINCIPLE 7: IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)

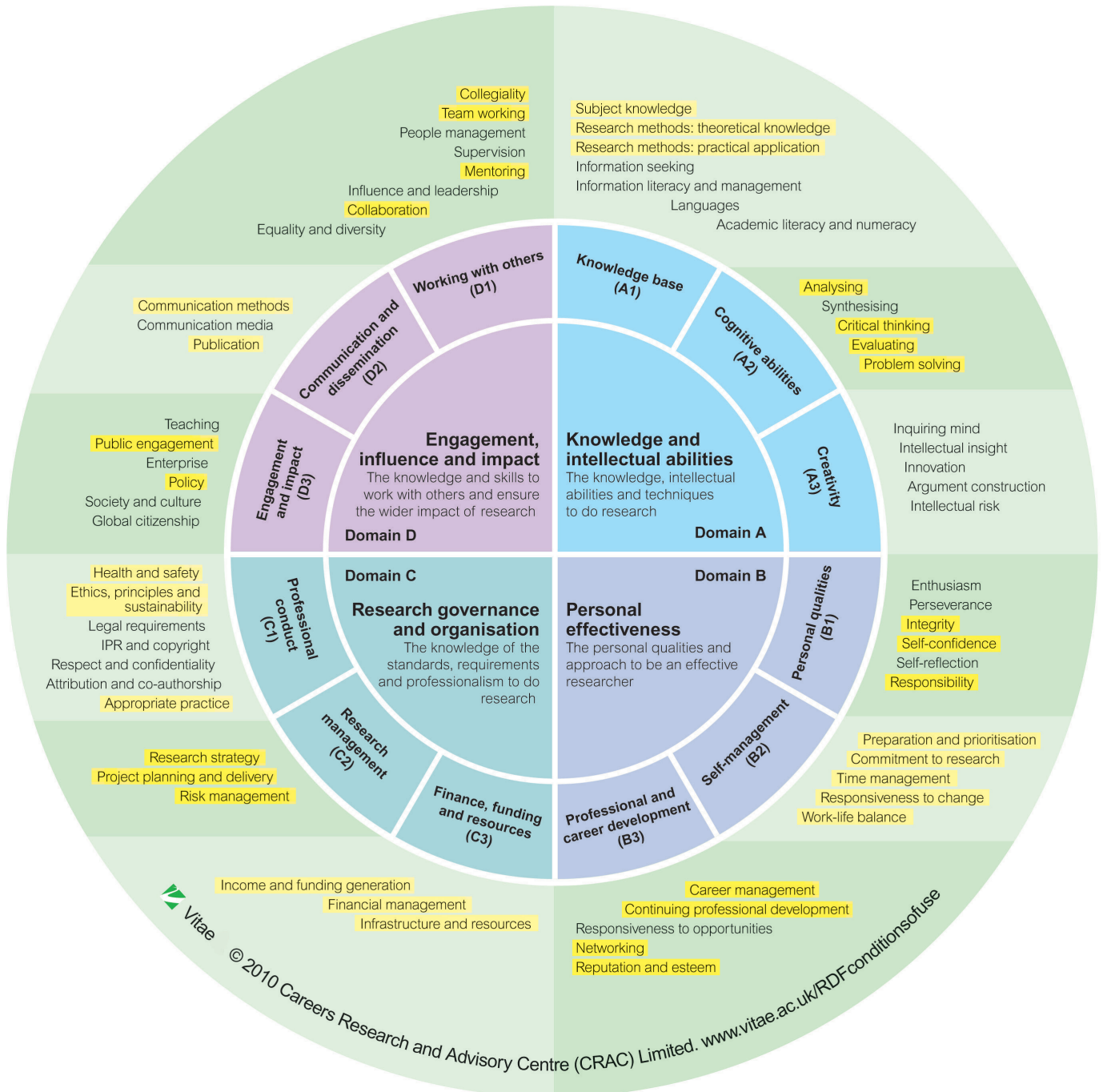


Framework 3: Vitae RDF

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is an internationally recognised framework for the development of researchers' competencies for the diversity of skills required to create excellent research with impact. The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is structured into four domains covering the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of researchers. It sets out the wide-ranging knowledge, intellectual abilities, techniques and professional standards expected to do research, as well as the personal qualities, knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research. Within each of the domains there are three sub-domains and associated descriptors.

² See Appendix 1

As part of CIRCLE, all participants reviewed the RDF to identify priority competencies for CIRCLE from both a strategic and a personal point of view. Based on this review, a CIRCLE Lens was developed, identifying career development priorities for CIRCLE. This Lens was used to inform the design of ISP Gap Analyses and Action Plans and to enable individuals to prioritise their own professional development needs.



Highlighted text = Priorities identified by ISP Champions and CVFs

Your Implementation Group may want to review the RDF⁴ and create your own Lens to assist in the development of your Gap Analysis.

To create your own Lens, please contact Vitae via email at rdfhelppdesk@vitae.ac.uk

⁴ Visit www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf for more information

Creating a document for your analysis

It's helpful to have a structured document by which to conduct your Gap Analysis and create your Action Plan. You might consider creating a document based on the frameworks you are using.

In the case of CIRCLE, we used the Concordat as the framework, with the Gap Analysis and Action Plan template documents looking at each Principle of the Concordat in turn.

Below we have provided the template developed for the Institution Gap Analysis within CIRCLE, with sample responses. The template was created as an Excel document, but some institutions preferred to use a Word document. Your Group can decide what works best for you. A blank template has been provided in Appendix 2.

Please note that use of this template is not a requirement, and you can adapt the template however you decide. You might want to add other headings or areas to assess that suit your institution. For example, some Groups may wish to identify stakeholders for each area, institutions with multiple campuses may add a column that addresses consistency between campuses, some institutions may find it helpful to add a column that includes initiatives that were previously offered at the institution but that are no longer running. It's up to your Group to decide what information you want to analyse.

Concordat Principle	Current activity/ policy/ process	Priority	Gap	Proposed action(s)	Owner	Timescale	Success Measure
Input your selected Concordat Principle here	We currently do this....	High/ Medium/ Low	Where do we want to be? What is missing?	How will we get to where we want to be? What specific action can we carry out to achieve this?	Who will own this in your Implementation Group?	Who has wider responsibility within the institution? When do you want this to be achieved?	How will you measure success? What SMART measures can you establish for this action?
1: Recruitment and Selection	Informal induction takes place at local level	High	Researchers do not have formal induction to institution	Devise formal induction programme specific to researchers	Head of HR	July	50% of researchers will have taken part in induction
3&4: Support and Career Development	Irregular training opportunities for PIs	Medium	Training for PIs with responsibility for staff not regular	Embed regular HR training for all PIs with responsibility for staff	Head of HR	March	% PIs trained Increased by 60%
3&4: Support and Career Development	Leadership programmes are available for Senior leaders	High	No leadership programmes to develop from middle manager to senior, or lower level aspiring leaders	Develop and deliver leadership programmes:	Heads of Department	August	Introduction of annual formal leadership training to staff support package across every Department.

Completing your Gap Analysis

There are some key questions you should ask when completing your Gap Analysis. Not only do you need to consider questions for specific areas of your Framework, but also some broader questions about steps to take before you are able to begin your Gap Analysis.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Who will carry out the Gap Analysis within your group? Will one person carry out the whole activity, or will individuals be assigned Principles or Areas to lead on?
- How will the Gap Analysis be managed and reported to the Group?
- Has your institution already carried out an assessment of provision? If yes, when was this carried out? It might be that you can use information from other projects. If no, have you informed the right people that you will be carrying one out?
- Have you identified staff, departments or offices within your institution that may be able to provide data or information on current provision? For example, the HR Department or Student Enrolment.
- Have you considered gathering information directly from early career researchers or student cohorts? If so, how will you do this?
- Do you have relevant/useful documents for reference during the Gap Analysis? For example, your institutional strategy or training calendars.

DURING THE ANALYSIS

Once you have prepared your data, you can begin your Gap Analysis by looking first at what the data says about where you are now. You may find it easier to assess each area of provision in turn or you could decide to focus intensively on one Principle first. CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups used the Concordat Principles as a framework, assessing provision of support under each Principle Subsection⁵.

In order to carry out your Gap Analysis, you should prepare a series of questions to guide the activity.

Here is an example of the types of questions that can be asked when assessing provision under a subsection of Concordat Principle 1 covering Recruitment and Selection:

Concordat Principle Subsection 1.1: All members of the research community should understand that researchers are chosen primarily for their ability to advance research at an institution

ANALYSING CURRENT ACTIVITY/POLICY/PROCESS

- Do you have any institutional examples of how you currently meet this?
- Does the research community within your institution understand that they are chosen primarily for their ability to advance your research?
- Do you give guidance/information on this in your institutional strategy, HR policies, departmental or corporate plan or in some other way?
- What guidance to researchers do you currently provide and how?
- If there is provision, do all researchers understand this?
- How can you assess this? You might need to gather some objective evidence or carry out a survey or focus group.

FINDING THE 'GAPS'

The Gap is the difference between where you are now and where you would like to be in the future. You are likely to need to have discussions within the group and with other key colleagues, look at your data carefully, and review your institutional strategy to decide what you want to improve and in what time scale. Consider what change or success will look like. Gaps can come in many forms; you may find that there is already sufficient support available in the areas you are assessing, but that opportunities are not being successfully communicated to potential users.

CREATING A VISION FOR YOUR ISP

Before you think about designing your Action Plan, you should consider what success would look like for your Implementation Group. What is your Vision for Change?

In order to get wider engagement with your ISP, your Vision for Change will act as an engaging proposition about the strategic direction of your institution. This vision is fundamental to explain the benefits of engaging with institutional strengthening and to support the work being carried out by your Group.

Here are some of the benefits that you might consider in supporting your vision. The below list has been gathered from CIRCLE institutions who have undertaken institutional strengthening successfully.

- **Contribution to strategic goals:** including improving the quality and impact of research, contributing to institutional strategies to appoint, develop and retain the best staff to pursue excellence, and the preparation of researchers for wide employability and economic contribution
- **Impetus for change:** supporting culture change internally
- **Support for internal processes:** the focus on developing an action plan led to useful conversations about implementation and evaluation, also to recognise, refine and develop good practice
- **Raising the status of researcher development:** including a perception that this marked out the institution as 'being one of the best'
- **Meeting researchers' needs:** including improving managing bids and research groups
- **Attracting funding:** not only through strengthened individual capacity but to demonstrate investment from the institution in the researcher community
- **Practice sharing:** networks with other institutions in your region/internationally

Your Group will reflect on your Vision and its relevance to the wider institutional strategy throughout the ISP. It is a useful tool in maintaining motivation and understanding the purpose of your activities.

⁵ <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/vitae-concordat-vitae-2011.pdf>

CONDUCTING A SWOC ANALYSIS

Now that you have established your Implementation Group and have a better understanding of the gaps in support within your institution, you may find it useful to map your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC), before starting to prepare your Action Plan. A SWOC analysis is a strategic technique that is used in business and project planning which will help your Group to utilise your capabilities and predict obstacles that may prevent you from achieving for Vision for Change.

Here are some examples of SWOC analyses responses from our CIRCLE institutions.

STRENGTHS

- We have a strong implementation Group to take this forward
- We have the full support of our VC

WEAKNESSES

- We don't have engagement from some of our key stakeholders
- We have a distributed campus and it's difficult to reach people

OPPORTUNITIES

- To change the culture of the institution
- To focus on interventions with engaged stakeholders and demonstrate success to influence others

CHALLENGES

- We may require funding for our activities
- There may be resistance to change
- It's difficult for us to identify how many researchers we have and where they are located

See Appendix 3 for a template to carry out your own SWOC analysis.

Prepare your Action Plan

It is important to create a detailed Action Plan and think about all the factors that you could address to achieve your goals. Once you have carried out the Gap Analysis, it is often useful to obtain feedback before moving on to preparing an Action Plan.

The following questions may be useful at this stage:

- Has everyone in your Group fed into the analysis? Have you gathered feedback from all Group members, or, for larger Groups, from a selection of members?
- Have you shared your analysis with departments or individuals who provided data that was used? Have you obtained feedback from them on its accuracy?
- How will you communicate the findings of your Gap Analysis to senior staff within your institution? Will you wait until the Action Plan has been created?
- Once you have collected feedback, have any key areas of provision been missed? Does any part of the analysis need to be removed or corrected?

Once you have received sufficient feedback, you should consider mapping stakeholders for your potential actions.

MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS

Your next step is to identify the different stakeholder groups who will have an interest in your potential ISP actions or those who will be affected by changes in institutional support. These can be both within your institution or external to it. Mapping your stakeholders will help you to prepare your action plan and target your communications to different stakeholders.

Stakeholders are groups or individuals who can affect or be affected by the ISP actions, objectives and policies such as researchers, senior researchers, senior management, professional staff and external partners or local communities. It is important to consider how to engage and communicate with key stakeholder groups, for the success of ISP.⁶

IDENTIFYING ACTIONS

Once you have decided where you want to be and when, and have considered the impact of proposed changes to your stakeholders, it's time to look at how you are going to get there. This is when you will begin to form your actions and proposed activities. You will need to consider the following:

- What exactly needs to change? Is it communication, a policy, funding opportunity or anything else?
- Will you need to carry out one action or a series of actions to facilitate this change?
- How will you make sure the action is transparently communicated and understood?
- What systems does the institution already have in place that are useful? For example, a staff intranet, newsletters, notice boards.
- What changes would need to be made for future uptake of your anticipated actions? For example, would you need to write a new policy, change job descriptions or internal appraisal documents, do handbooks or guidelines need to be developed?
- What other Principles could be linked to actions created to address this gap?
- Could the successful implementation of one action mean that other actions then need to take place?

DEVELOPING YOUR ACTION PLAN

Now you are ready to develop your Action Plan. There are various approaches you can take to prepare this.

You could work on all areas of the framework that you are using at once, as separate action plans identifying 1 or 2 actions for each area. Actions would then be carried out simultaneously by members of your Group.

Alternatively, you could pick one area of the framework and identify a priority action with which to begin. You can then identify other linked or related actions across the other framework areas.

This approach was adopted by the CIRCLE Implementation Groups when using the Concordat as a framework, and contributed to the development of the CIRCLE Institutional Strengthening Radial Planning Tool.

As the CIRCLE ISP progressed, an important approach for African contexts emerged. Although CIRCLE institutions produced actions that covered all Concordat Principles, the highest number of proposed actions fell under Principles 3 & 4: Support and Career Development. In practice, this meant that institutions initially focused on developing actions under Principles 3 & 4, but later found that they needed to create related actions under the other Concordat Principles in order to effect wider institutional change.

⁶ This is explored in more detail in CIRCLE ISP Good Practise Guide 2: Engaging People with your Institutional Strengthening Programme.

For example, when an institution aims to enhance mentoring capacity at their institution, their action may be to build the competencies of mentors and mentees within their institution, an action which would fall under Principles 3 & 4. Before learning can be efficiently embedded across the institution, they would also have to undertake a series of additional, linked actions across the other Principles, such as producing quality assessment criteria, reviewing recruitment criteria or adding recognition for mentoring responsibilities

into promotion criteria. Due to a range of dependencies, contextual considerations and resource constraints, these actions would typically need to be pursued one at a time, building cumulatively on the success of one to make progress in another. This stands in contrast to the European approach where greater human and financial resources and external policy drivers permitted and encouraged activities across all Principles to be pursued in parallel. This approach is illustrated below.

CIRCLE Institutional Strengthening Radial Planning Tool

Start with one ISP action and build your institutional strengthening plan outwards by identifying the actions that are related to its success within other principles



Vitae, © The Careers Research Advisory Centre (CRAC) Limited

Templates for your Action Plan

You may wish to use the same template you used for your Gap Analysis for your Action Plan. We have provided the Simplified ISP Action Plan template that was used in the final year of CIRCLE in Appendix 4. You may wish to add or remove columns depending on the organisation of your Group, however the most important column to keep is the one that records your success measures.

Topics of Actions

Your actions can address any number of topics, depending on the size and scope of your Action Plan. Your Action Plan may be limited to one particular area of support provision, for example research skills or recruitment, or it can be much broader, addressing a whole range of gaps in different areas.

Within the CIRCLE Programme, we found that the most common topics addressed by actions across all institutions were as follows:

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE ACTION
MENTORING	Focus on mentoring support and mentoring relationships	Expand scope of the existing mentoring scheme
CAREER DEVELOPMENT	Relating to staff promotions, career development support, opportunities	Provide guidance for early career staff on promotion criteria and relevant development support available within the institution
RESEARCH OUTPUTS	Focus on research skills and production of research publications	Improve practical and financial resources for collaborative interdisciplinary research
RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT	Development for individual researchers, often related to the RDF	Cohort of Researchers to be trained in use of Professional Development Planning and Continuing Professional Development using the RDF Planner
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY	Focused on topics such as gender, ethnicity, disability, return to work etc.	Provide additional support and career development opportunities to women in science related disciplines
SALARIES, PAY SCALES & STAFF BENEFITS	Improvements to salaries, pay scales and staff rewards and incentives	Salary scales made available to researchers

Other topics included, but were not limited to, researcher funding, new staff orientation, research ethics, stakeholder management and researcher networking.

We also found that topics of actions varied between the countries in which institutions were based. For example, career development was the topic most commonly addressed by institutions based in Ethiopia, research outputs were most commonly addressed by institutions based in Kenya and Zimbabwe, and mentoring was most commonly addressed by institutions based in Ghana and Uganda. It might be useful to investigate if there are any common challenges facing institutions in your country, as collaboration or sharing of good practice may be useful in the future.

Types of Actions

Your Group may come up with many different types of actions and will vary according to the gap in provision they are addressing.

Within CIRCLE, we found that the following types of actions were most popular with our Implementation Groups:

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE ACTION
SUPPORT PROVISION IMPROVEMENT	General enforcement or improvement to support offerings at institution already in place	Increase the number of funding opportunities for researchers to attend research conferences
TRAINING	Delivery of training workshops or distribution of training materials	Hold one workshop for supervisors to explain topic formulations, proposal writing, project supervision, writing for publication, identifying authentic quality peer reviewed journals
POLICY DEVELOPMENT/CHANGE	Development and/or implementation of new policies, or changes to those in place	Amend the promotion policy and place more weight on the extension aspect of research to make the university more relevant to the society and industry
AWARENESS RAISING	General promotion of actions/activities/developments relating to ISP action plan	Design a weekly or bi-weekly staff newsletter to inform staff of professional development opportunities for female researchers
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Monitoring of progress and evaluation of success of actions/events	Develop feedback surveys and reporting templates for in-house training workshops
SMALL-SCALE EVENT	For example, seminars, presentations	Half day presentation on developing the culture and discipline of conducting and publishing research

Other types of actions included, but were not limited to, large-scale events (such as conferences, institution-wide forums), development of institutional targets and specific needs-assessment for training provision.

Assign Tasks and Responsibilities

Once you have identified relevant actions, it is important to consider the following questions to ensure they are successfully managed.

IMPLEMENTATION GROUP OWNERSHIP OF EACH ACTIVITY

- Who in the Group will have responsibility for the action?
- How will responsibility be assigned?
- Will responsibility be broken down by overall principle/area or by types of actions? For example, if you plan on running multiple training workshops on different topics, is there anyone in your Group who is more experienced in training development or event planning that could take an administrative lead? Or perhaps you have a more senior member of staff who has experience in compiling policy documents that can offer proofreading or editing advice?
- Are there other individuals within your institution who can support the implementation of this action? How will the owner gain their support? How will their involvement be managed?
- How will the owner manage their action?
- Will the Lead supervise their progress, or will intermittent reports be required?

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ACTIONS

- What resources are required to enable this action to take place?
- Has staff time been taken into consideration?
- Is a budget required for your specific action?
- Do you need to hire a venue or book meeting space?
- Can you apply for funding from your institution?
- Do you need to seek external financial support?

TIMESCALE

- When would you expect this action to be completed?
- Have you set a robust deadline or is a more flexible timeline required?
- Consider the timescale for your wider action plan – does the plan cover a specific period or is it an ongoing plan?
- How will timescales for your actions be affected by this?
- Have you taken wider institutional events and holidays into consideration? For example, summer and winter holidays, exam periods, student enrolment periods.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

- What could go wrong? Contingency plan.
- How could the implementation of your action be delayed or halted?
- If the owner is unable to continue their role in the Implementation Group, who else could take over?
- Have you considered external events such as institutional strike action, issues with power supply or internet connectivity, or damage to institutional buildings or property?
- If your action relies on the approval of a senior staff member or participation of a targeted group, what contingency plans can be put into place?
- Does the success of your action rely on the delivery of other actions in the Action Plan?
- Could a delay in the implementation of your action affect the success of other actions managed by your Group?

SUCCESS MEASURES

- What exactly do you want to achieve?
- What does success look like for this action?
- How would you know your action was successful?
- How can you measure this?
- What impact will the action have?
- Consider using SMART measures to demonstrate that the action has been successful:
 - Specific – target a specific area for improvement
 - Measurable – include a quantitative or qualitative indicator of progress
 - Achievable – ensure that there is enough resources/time/support to make it happen
 - Relevant – ensure that the action will contribute to achieving your aims
 - Time-bound – clear end point or timescale in which to deliver the action

Implementation of Actions

When it comes to the actual implementation of actions, it may be useful to break your actions down into smaller, more manageable, tasks and activities.

During CIRCLE, our Groups created Gantt Charts to make an ISP Task Planner. Our Implementation Groups approached this Task Planner in two ways:

- Some Implementation Groups created a broader Task Planner for each action to provide an overview of the various activities that needed to take place to achieve success. This type of Task Planner can be used for general monitoring by the Implementation Group to review progress
- In addition to a broader Task Planner, some individuals within Groups with responsibility for certain actions also created a more detailed Task Planner that includes each step and task they needed to complete

Please note that this template is just an example. Your group does not need to use this exact template. We do however recommend that you include the following areas in your Task Planner:

- List of tasks – ideally in chronological order
- Planned start date – When will this activity begin?
- Planned duration/deadline – How long will it take? When should this be completed?
- Actual start date – Was this in line with the planned start date? Were there delays or did the activity begin earlier than anticipated?
- % complete – How much of the activity has been completed? Are you on schedule?
- Actual duration – How long did the activity take? Did it take more or less time than scheduled?

Again, these are not requirements. You may also find it useful to include the following additional information or amendments to your Task Planner that are not captured in our version. For example, you could:

- Add information on the Owner and individuals who can offer support
- Replace week numbers with set dates
- Include clear links between tasks to track delays/developments
- Add Hyperlinks to useful websites/content for reference
- Provide a space or columns for notes or comments
- Include information on links to other actions or activities that are occurring in parallel to this period

When designing your Task Planner, challenges and opportunities should be considered for each task. Ensure you have contingency plans in place for when something goes wrong or if you hit delays. This will ensure that you are well prepared in the event of changes to your plan.

You can also choose a different format for your Task Planner. Many groups adopted the Gantt chart template provided in MS Excel. You may find it easier to work from an MS Word document, or on a shared online workspace. You could also create a shared calendar, with deadlines and tasks included for each day. Ensure that your wider Group agrees on the format and that you work in the best way that suits everyone.

Task Planner for wider group

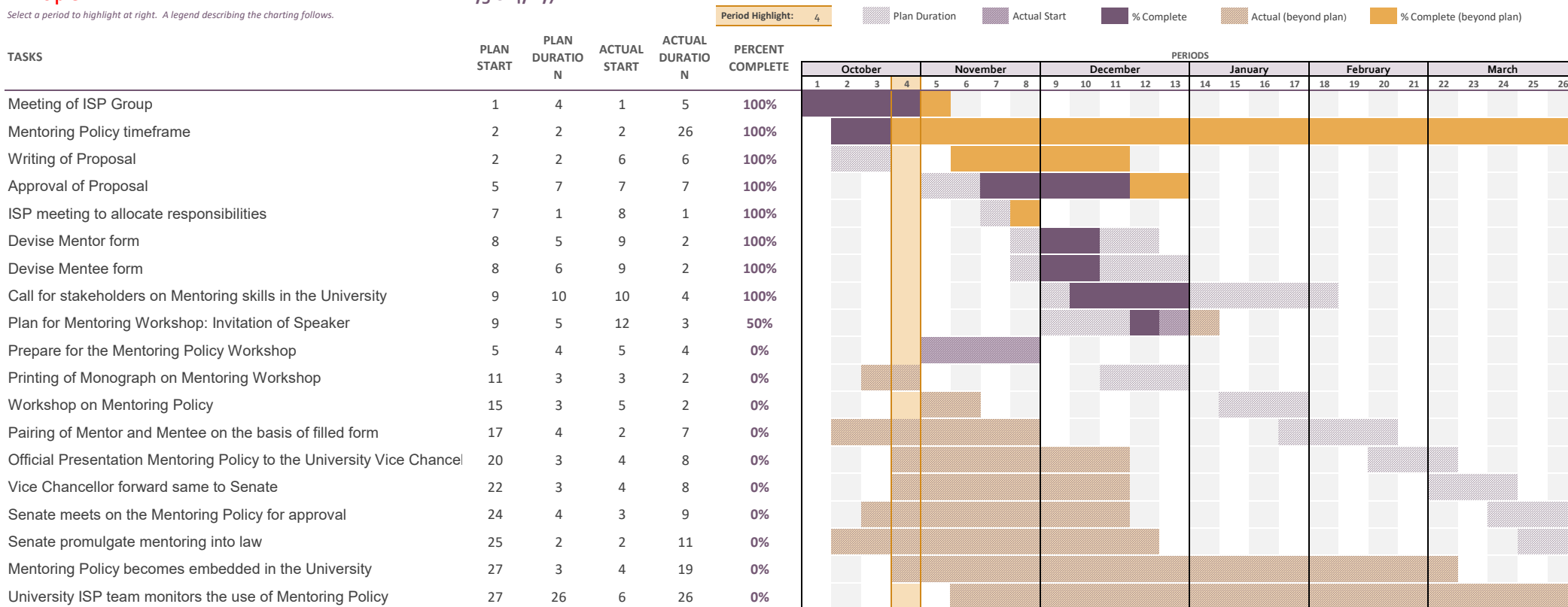
Here is an example of activities within a broad Task Planner for an action that aims to introduce a Mentoring Scheme within an institution.

Institution

Action: Set up mentoring scheme for the University

Principle: 2,3 & 4, 6,7

Select a period to highlight at right. A legend describing the charting follows.

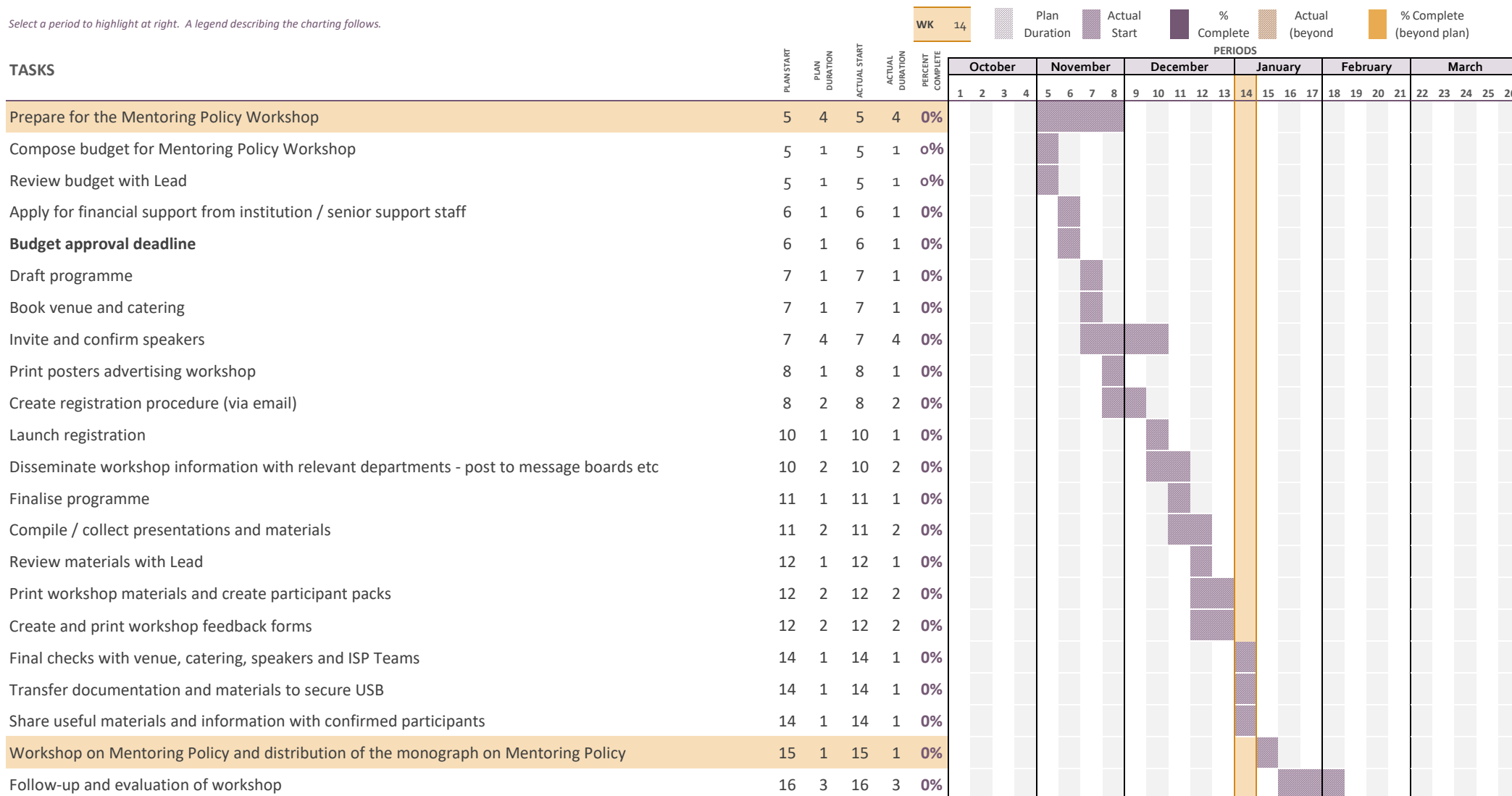


In this example, it is evident that the planning for the mentoring workshop could not take place until other activities, such as the development of the Mentoring forms, had been complete. The template also offers a clear visual for unanticipated delays and changed to planned activities, which can be useful when the Implementation Group meets to Review Progress (this will be covered in the next section).

Individual Task Planner

This plan takes one of the activities from example broader Task Planner, the preparation for the mentoring policy workshop, and breaks it down into smaller tasks for the individual owner. You can see the broader activities highlighted below. This example is not definitive, your Group may include many other tasks that need to take place to successfully deliver a training workshop within your action plan.

Select a period to highlight at right. A legend describing the charting follows.



Experience from CIRCLE

Here are some useful findings from CIRCLE regarding the implementation of ISP Action Plans:

- The types of activity with the highest reported proportion of successfully completed actions were Large-scale Events, Monitoring and Evaluation actions, Needs Assessment/Reviews and Delivery of Training Sessions. These activities were limited in their scope, with set deadlines which required detailed planning and completion of smaller, individual tasks.
- Actions which aimed to improve support provisions that were already in place were largely mixed in terms of success and the time for completion, although this is to be expected as the scope of such actions varied substantially. Making changes to provision that is already in place can be a difficult and complicated process. You may have to negotiate with individuals or departments that already have responsibility over the provision or spend a large amount of time dealing with internal bureaucracy and discussion before actions can take place.
- Types of actions that were most commonly reported as not completed were Expansion/Establishment of Courses/Departments and Policy Development/Change. Actions on this scale take a significant amount of time to successfully implement and often rely on the success of other actions, support from across the wider institution, additional funding and resources, and of course ultimate approval from very senior members of staff. Within the three years of the CIRCLE ISP, almost a quarter of our Groups were unable to develop, review, and successfully gain approval for institutional policies that were borne from the ISP within this period. Review your timescales and ensure your deadlines and expectations are realistic.
- Alongside the ISP, CIRCLE also ran a Visiting Fellowship Programme, which provided extensive training and support for researchers on topics such as writing for publication, applying for grant funding, engaging with local stakeholders, researcher development and mentoring. You may also find that your institution contains academics and staff that have received fellowships or scholarships, that have received awards for their research, or that have successfully applied for many grants or funding. Ensure that your Group makes the most out of the achievements and experiences of your academics.
- A large proportion of actions that addressed Researcher Development were successfully carried out by CIRCLE Implementation Groups, particularly the delivery of RDF training and support opportunities. This is likely due to the extensive training our Groups and CIRCLE Fellows received on the RDF, and their access to online training materials and Vitae resources. Ensure that you are aware of all the resources available to your group and maximise the expertise and links that your members have across the institution.
- Commonly reported challenges include funding, lack of alternative actions in the event of things going wrong (i.e. lack of contingency plan), gaining stakeholder buy-in and involvement, lack of monitoring and evaluation methods in place to support achievement reporting.



Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to measure the success of your actions, you should revisit your SMART success measures.

Consider the following questions when monitoring and evaluating your progress:

- What data do you need to collect against your success measures?
- When will this data be collected?
- What processes/mechanisms do you need to collect your data?
- What training would your group need, if any, to evaluate success?
- Who will be responsible for these?
- How will you understand the impact of your actions on your researchers?
- What tools can you use to measure this? For example, a staff wide survey, focus groups etc.
- What other institutional activities have taken place that align with your objectives?
- In the event of unsuccessful actions, what can be changed to get back on-track?
- Do other actions need to be completed before unsuccessful actions can take place?
- Does the owner need more support or resources? Is more data needed?

You may go through the same reviewing process multiple times in the delivery of your Action Plan.

You could produce progress reports for each of your actions and discuss these when meeting with your Implementation Group. Where an action has not been successful, your Group should review the action and consider alternative activities to ensure that the action is achievable.

Review

The Implementation Group should meet on a regular basis in order to keep on track with the actions and deadlines, as well as to reflect on progress made in achieving your Vision for Change.

- How often will your Implementation Group meet?
- What institutional or external committees/groups will feed into your Implementation Group?
- Have you considered reviewing progress in line with the wider institutional strategy?
- How will the findings of the review be communicated with the institution?
- Will you produce a report, or will it be more informal?

After your agreed period of implementation has passed, you will then need to carry out a wider review of success in order to determine whether a new gap analysis or a new action plan is required.

At this stage, you may ask the following questions:

- Who will undertake the wider review?
- Are you still on course to achieve your Vision for Change?
- Does your Vision for Change itself need to be adapted?

- Does the action plan need to be revised or adapted given your progress to date?
- Where actions have been successful, are there any further activities that can build on the Groups achievements?
- In the event of unsuccessful actions, do these actions need to be replaced or adapted?
- Are there any follow-up activities or monitoring and evaluation processes that can take place?
- What can you learn from your progress?
- Have there been any common challenges or achievements that can inform future actions and activities?

CIRCLE institutions were required to formally review their Action Plans each year, but many institutions found it useful to revisit their Action Plans more often than this. It really depends on the size and scale of your planned actions, as well as any reporting requirements from your stakeholders.

Ensure your whole Group is clear on the review process, how often it will take place and the information they will need to prepare to inform it.

Further support in the CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guide Series

You may find the following guides useful for the next stage of your ISP:

Guide 1: Designing an Effective Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development

This Guide shows you how to set up your own Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development by introducing each of the design and delivery stages. This includes how to establish your ISP Implementation Group, carrying out your Gap Analysis, preparing and implementing your Action Plan, and how to monitor success.

Guide 2: Engaging People with your Institutional Strengthening Programme

This Guide provides information on how to engage stakeholders with your ISP, how to create a communications plan, and various tips on keeping your institution updated on your progress and achievements and embedding activities into “normal business”.

Guide 3: Enhancing Institutional Researcher Development Programmes

This Guide introduces the concept of Researcher Development Programmes (RDP) and explores how to design an effective training programme using an experiential learning approach. The Guide also covers how you can scale up your workshop to a full-scale institutional programme of training support.

Guide 4: Approaches to Mentoring and Setting up an Institutional Mentoring Programme

This Guide explains the different approaches to mentoring, how they differ from academic supervision, and how to set up institutional mentoring programmes for researchers using tools such as the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

Guide 5: Institutions: using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to enhance researcher development provision and develop researcher competencies

This Guide explains how institutions can use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as a framework for supporting the professional development of researchers within their institution.

Guide 6: Researchers: using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework for professional development planning

This Guide explains how individual researchers can use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as a framework for supporting their own professional development.

Appendix

Appendix 1: The Concordat Principles*

Recruitment and Selection – PRINCIPLE 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.

1. All members of the UK research community should understand that researchers are chosen primarily for their ability to advance research at an institution.
2. Employers should strive to attract excellence and respect diversity (see Principle 6). Recruitment and selection procedures should be informative, transparent and open to all qualified applicants regardless of background. Person and vacancy specifications must clearly identify the skills required for the post and these requirements should be relevant to the role.
3. Research posts should only be advertised as a fixed-term post where there is a recorded and justifiable reason.
4. To assure fairness, consistency and the best assessment of the candidates' potential, recruitment and progression panels should reflect diversity as well as a range of experience and expertise. In order to promote these values, individuals who are members of recruitment and promotion panels should have received relevant recent training. Unsuccessful applicants should be given appropriate feedback if requested as this may be of assistance to the researcher in considering their further career development.
5. The level of pay or grade for researchers should be determined according to the requirements of the post, consistent with the pay and grading arrangements of the research organisation.

Recognition and Value – PRINCIPLE 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.

1. Employers are encouraged to value and afford equal treatment to all researchers, regardless of whether they are employed on a fixed term or similar contract. In particular, employers should ensure that the development of researchers is not undermined by instability of employment contracts. This approach should be embedded throughout all departmental structures and systems.
2. Commitment by everyone involved to improving the stability of employment conditions for researchers and implementing and abiding by the principles and terms laid down in the Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations (2002) and Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) guidance on the use of fixed-term contracts will provide benefits for researchers, research managers, and their organisations.
3. Research managers should be required to participate in active performance management, including career development guidance, and supervision of those who work in their teams. Employers should ensure that research managers are made aware of and understand their responsibilities for the management of researchers and should provide training opportunities, including equality and diversity training, to support research managers in doing this. Institutions will wish to consider how research managers' performance in these areas is developed, assessed and rewarded, and how effectively this supports good research management.
4. Organisational systems must be capable of supporting continuity of employment for researchers, such as funding between grants, other schemes for supporting time between grant funding, or systems for redeploying researchers within organisations where resources allow. Funders are expected to make it a priority to consider how their policies, guidance and funding can be enhanced to help employers to achieve this objective.
5. Pay progression for researchers should be transparent and in accordance with procedures agreed between the relevant trade unions and the employers nationally and locally. In HEIs, pay progression will be in accordance with the Framework Agreement, though recognising the flexibility that institutions have in implementing the Framework.
6. Researchers need to be offered opportunities to develop their own careers as well as having access to additional pay progression. Promotion opportunities should be transparent, effectively communicated and open to all staff. It is helpful if clear career frameworks for early stage researchers are outlined in organisational HR strategies.

*Please visit <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers> for more information

Support and Career Development – PRINCIPLE 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

1. It is recognised that positions of permanent employment are limited in the UK research and academic communities and that not all researchers will be able to obtain such a position. It is, therefore, imperative that researcher positions in the UK are attractive in themselves (and not, for example, solely as potential stepping stones to permanent academic positions). This requires that they provide career development which is comparable to, and competitive with, other employment sectors.
2. A wide variety of career paths is open to researchers, and the ability to move between different paths is key to a successful career. It is recognised that this mobility brings great benefit to the UK economy and organisations will, therefore, wish to be confident that their culture supports a broad-minded approach to researcher careers and that all career paths are valued equally.
3. Employers, funders and researchers recognise that researchers need to develop transferable skills, delivered through embedded training, in order to stay competitive in both internal and external job markets. Therefore, as well as the necessary training and appropriate skills, competencies and understanding to carry out a funded project, researchers also need support to develop the communication and other professional skills that they will need to be both effective researchers and highly-skilled professionals in whatever field they choose to enter.
4. All employers will wish to review how their staff can access professional, independent advice on career management in general, particularly the prospect of employment beyond their immediate discipline base, or offering training and placements to broaden awareness of other fields and sectors.
5. Researchers benefit from clear systems that help them to plan their career development. Employers and funding bodies should assist researchers to make informed choices about their career progression by ensuring that their own policies and processes for promotion and reward are transparent and clearly stated and that all researchers are aware of local and national career development strategies.
6. Employers should provide a planned induction programme for researchers, on appointment to a research post, to ensure early effectiveness through the understanding of the organisation and its policies and procedures. They should also ensure that research managers provide effective research environments for the training and development of researchers and encourage them to maintain or start their continuous professional development.
7. Employers and funders will wish to consider articulating the skills that should be developed at each stage of their staff development frameworks and should encourage researchers to acquire and practise those skills. For example, researchers may be given the opportunity to manage part of the budget for a project, or to act as a mentor or advisor to other researchers and students.
8. Employers also should provide a specific career development strategy for researchers at all stages of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, which should include the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers. All researchers should be familiar with such provisions and arrangements.
9. Research managers should actively encourage researchers to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity, so far as is possible within the project. It should be stressed that developmental activity can often have a direct impact on the success of the project, by distributing work, taking advantage of individual strengths and talents, and increasing the skill and effectiveness of researchers in key areas such as writing for publication or communicating with a wider audience. Funding bodies acknowledge that the training of researchers is a significant contribution to research output and they encourage employers and mentors to adopt these practices.

Support & Career Development – PRINCIPLE 4: The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

1. Researchers should be empowered by having a realistic understanding of, and information about, their own career development and career direction options as well as taking personal responsibility for their choices at the appropriate times. Employers should introduce appraisal systems for all researchers for assessing their professional performance on a regular basis and in a transparent manner. It is important that researchers have access to honest and transparent advice on their prospects for success in their preferred career.
2. Employers will wish to ensure that developmental activities open to researchers include preparation for academic practice. Employers should take measures to ensure broad recognition of CPD schemes from other employing organisations as far as possible, so that researchers are not unduly disadvantaged when moving from one employer to another.
3. Employers will ensure that where researchers are provided with teaching and demonstrating opportunities as part of their career development, suitable training and support is provided.
4. Employers and researchers can often benefit if researchers have an input into policy and practice through appropriate representation at staff meetings and on organisation or management committees.
5. Mentoring arrangements should be supported by employers as a key mechanism for career development and enhancement.

Researchers' Responsibilities – PRINCIPLE 5 : Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

1. Researchers are employed to advance knowledge and should exercise and develop increased capacity for independent, honest and critical thought throughout their careers.
2. Researchers should develop their ability to transfer and exploit knowledge where appropriate and facilitate its use in policy making and the commercialisation of research for the benefit of their employing organisation, as well as the wider society and economy as a whole.
3. Researchers should recognise their responsibility to conduct and disseminate research results in an honest and ethical manner and to contribute to the wider body of knowledge.
4. Researchers should also be aware that the skills and achievements required to move on from a research position may not be the same as the skills and achievements which they displayed to reach that position.
5. Researchers should recognise that the primary responsibility for managing and pursuing their career is theirs. Accordingly, they should identify training needs and actively seek out opportunities for learning and development in order to further that career and take personal responsibility for their choices. Research managers and employers also have a responsibility to provide honest advice and appropriate structures, and to equip researchers with the tools to manage their own careers. Research managers should encourage research staff under their supervision to attend appropriate training and career development courses and events.
6. Researchers should ensure that their career development requirements and activities are regularly discussed, monitored and evaluated throughout the year in discussion with their research manager and mentor, and that they commit themselves fully to all such activities. Researchers are encouraged to record their Personal Development Planning (PDP) and CPD activities, a log of which may be presented to current and future employers as appropriate.

Diversity and Equality – PRINCIPLE 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

1. The UK legislative framework outlaws discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, race or religion. It also requires public bodies to take positive steps to promote equality, based on evidence and priorities, and to develop specific schemes and action plans related to gender, race and disability to address specific issues of under-representation or lack of progression.
2. As is the case for society as a whole, UK research will benefit from increasing equality and diversity in the recruitment and retention of researchers. The Concordat encourages the recruitment and retention of researchers from the widest pool of available talent, including those from diverse backgrounds.
3. It should be emphasised that the demanding nature of research careers has a disproportionate effect on certain groups. We strongly recommend that all members of the UK research community actively address the disincentives and indirect obstacles to retention and progression in research careers which may disproportionately impact on some groups more than others.
4. Employers should ensure that the working conditions for researchers provide the flexibility necessary for successful research performance in line with legal requirements. Employers should recognise that for parents and others who have taken career breaks, including parental leave, have worked part-time, or have taken atypical routes into research, the “early career” period may be prolonged, and this may be a time where the risk of attrition from the research path is most acute. Working conditions should allow both female and male researchers to combine family and work, children and career.
5. It is important for employers to respond flexibly to requests for changed work patterns and to resist instant refusals on the assumption that, because research has always been carried out in a particular way, it cannot be done differently.
6. Funders should continue to ensure that their funding mechanisms and policies are adapted to changing diversity and equality legislation and guidance, for example in their provision of additional funding and duration of grant to cover paternity and adoptive leave as well as maternity leave.
7. Employers should aim for a representative balance of gender, disability, ethnicity and age at all levels of staff, including at supervisory and managerial level. This should be achieved on the basis of a transparent equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at all subsequent career stages. Diversity should be reflected on selection and evaluation committees. What is ‘representative’ will vary according to the nature of the institution and the academic research subject, but institutions should aim to ensure that the percentage of applicants, and ultimately appointments, from a particular group to any given level should reflect the percentage in the available pool at the level immediately below.
8. Account should also be taken of the personal circumstances of groups of researchers. Examples would include researchers who have responsibility for young children or adult dependants, researchers for whom English is not a first language, older or younger researchers, or researchers with disabilities and long-term health issues. Employers and funders should change policies or practices that directly or indirectly disadvantage such groups.
9. All managers of research should ensure that measures exist at every institution through which discrimination, bullying or harassment can be reported and addressed without adversely affecting the careers of innocent parties.
10. Employers should also consider participation in schemes such as the Athena SWAN Charter, the Juno Project and other initiatives aimed at promoting diversity in research careers.

Implementation and Review – PRINCIPLE 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

1. The implementation of the Concordat's Principles will lead to greater integration of researchers into the mainstream management and career development structures of their employing organisations. The aim of this section is to promote implementation through a collective commitment to reviewing its progress.
2. The signatories agree:
 - a. to constitute a steering group under an independent chair to oversee the implementation and review of the Concordat with appropriate representation of the funders and sector bodies including the Professional Institutions. This group will inform the UK Research Base Funders' Forum of progress.
 - b. to procure an independent benchmarking study to assess the state of the sector at the launch of this Concordat.
 - c. to contribute an appropriate share of the costs of supporting implementation and review, including the benchmarking report.
 - d. to draw up an implementation plan for the Concordat, to ensure a coherent and sustained approach by organisations operating in the sector and the appropriate use of survey and monitoring tools such as the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS).
 - e. to undertake and publish a major review of the implementation of the Concordat after three years reporting to the signatories and taking account of progress against the benchmark report and the views of researchers and employers (both outside and within the HE sector).
3. The signatory funders will ensure that their terms and conditions of, for example, project grants include the expectation that the Research Organisations that they fund will adopt the principles of the revised Concordat.
4. The signatories recognise the value of innovation in practices and of sharing practice between institutions and aim to promote these throughout the implementation and review process. The funding signatories will consider aligning their support for transferable and career development skills. It is expected that Vitae, the national programme dedicated to realising the potential of researchers, funded by the Research Councils, will play a major role in innovating, sharing practice and enhancing the capability of the sector to implement aspects of the Concordat, as well as establishing strategic partnerships between funders.
5. Under public sector equality schemes, employers are required to monitor equality and diversity indicators for their researchers. This section focuses on the co-ordination and enhancement of existing information collection and not on the creation of additional data. There is a strong presumption that in implementing the Concordat, significant emphasis will be placed on the use of existing data and information sources and on the sharing of good practice between institutions and to provide evidence of its impact.

Visit www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/vitae-concordat-vitae-2011.pdf for further information.

Appendix 2: Gap Analysis Template

<<Institution Name>> ISP Gap Analysis Framework Template						
Area / Concordat principle	Current provision (Example)	Current Provision	Gap	Proposed action	Owner	Timescale / Deadline
RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research						
1.1. All members of the research community should understand that researchers are chosen primarily for their ability to advance research at an institution	Our corporate plan contains research objectives and it is made available to researchers on our website and disseminated via a number of different channels					
1.2. Employers should strive to attract excellence and respect diversity (see principle 6). Recruitment and selection procedures should be informative, transparent and open to all qualified applicants regardless of background. Person and vacancy specifications must clearly identify the skills required for the post and these requirements should be relevant to the role.	Our job descriptions are open and transparent and include both the essential person and research requirements for the role. We use job sites to advertise research roles to maximise opportunities for researchers globally					

Appendix 3: SWOC Analysis Template

Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Challenges

Solutions:

Appendix 4: Simplified ISP Action Plan

Institution Name

Principle					
No.	Action	Success measure	Responsible	Deadline	Progress update
Info	This should be clear and specific	Ensure this is SMART	Who is leading?	This should be realistic	Only to be completed after deadline
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Useful links and materials

THE CIRCLE PROGRAMME

www.acu.ac.uk/circle

THE CONCORDAT ON THE VITAE WEBSITE

www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers

THE VITAE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

www.vitae.ac.uk/rdf

Acknowledgements

Africa is particularly vulnerable to the environmental, social and economic impact of changes in climate, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggesting that Africa is likely to emerge as the most vulnerable region to climate change by 2100 (IPCC, 2007).

Despite consensus on the current and future impacts of climate change on Africa, there are significant uncertainties on the exact nature of future climatic changes. A better understanding is critical to developing sustainable and cost-effective responses. However, sufficient support and resources to build a solid research-base are lacking. Between 1981 and 2009, African scientists contributed less than 2% of global climate change publications. There are a number of initiatives in Africa helping to address Africa's climate change problems, but the research community remains in need of a boost.

The Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa (CIRCLE) programme is an initiative of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), and aims to address the above issues. The project adopted the dual approach of supporting individual academics to undertake research while also working with their institutions to develop better professional development systems for their researchers.

CIRCLE was allocated GBP 4.85 million over 5 years (2014-2019) and facilitated capacity strengthening of African researchers to develop relevant local solutions and improve uptake and use in local, national and regional policy and implementation. It also enhanced the output of African researchers through delivery of focused training and support on grant funding and writing for publications.

The programme does not work in isolation, and seeks to contribute to local, national and regional policy agendas and the initiatives of institutions already working in climate change in Africa, as well as those yet to come. It is important that the individual researchers and academic institutions benefiting from this programme work in conjunction with existing frameworks to maximise their impact. The aim of the programme is not simply to produce a body of research, but to strengthen the mechanisms of research uptake and support institutions to develop and realise a clearly defined strategic approach to climate change research.

The information about CIRCLE ISP in this Guide has been generated by a wide range of programme participants including Senior Champions, professional and academic staff and early career research Fellows during our programme of workshops and in follow-up evaluations and with the support of the AAS and ACU teams.

We would like to thank all who collaborated in the CIRCLE ISP, undertook steps for institutional change and embraced the journey to strengthen institutional provision for the career development of researchers, and especially CIRCLE Fellows who have developed into research leaders for the future.

Alison Mitchell, Director of Development, Vitae

Jen Reynolds, Professional Development Manager, Vitae

Vitae (www.vitae.ac.uk) is the global leader in supporting the professional development of researchers, experienced in working with higher education institutions as they strive for excellence, innovation and impact. Vitae is a non-profit programme, part of The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Ltd with over 45 years' experience in enhancing the skills and careers.

Verity Buckley, CIRCLE Programme Manager, The ACU

George Lakey, CIRCLE Programme Officer, The ACU

Ben Prasadam-Halls, Director of Programmes, The ACU

The ACU is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through higher education. International collaboration is central to this ambition: by bringing universities together from around the world – and crucially the people who study and work within them – the ACU helps to advance knowledge, promote understanding, broaden minds, and improve lives. The ACU champions higher education as a cornerstone of stronger societies, supporting its members, partners, and stakeholders as they adapt to a changing world.



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