

## **FIXED TERM CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION: BUSINESS PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

### **The project**

The University has recognised that in delivering its commitment to maximising the stability of employment conditions for researchers employed on fixed-term contracts (FTCs), our business processes underpinning contract renewal and review arrangements are crucial in influencing the experience of many researchers and their line managers. The systems and processes surrounding fixed term contracts, and their extension or ending, have been the focus of a substantial amount of work to ensure best practice in this area. This has been one of a small number of processes in the University selected for a structured business review using the “Strathclyde Way” business process review methodology, facilitated by the University’s Business Improvement Team.

### **The context**

Human Resources regularly provide Heads of Department/School with data reminding them of pending contracts ends, with briefing information on steps to be taken. Where necessary the HR team contact departments regarding employees with fixed term contracts about to end to clarify status and action required. The communications that HR send to both line management and individual researchers remind all parties that Strathclyde is committed to supporting employees coming to the end of their fixed term employment or facing a redundancy situation, and that individuals have access to the Redeployment Register to allow for priority consideration for job vacancies. The business improvement review aimed to enhance effectiveness and efficiency across this area of activity, to in turn improve the experience of research staff on fixed term contracts, in-keeping with the University’s People-Oriented value.

### **Goals**

It was recognised that improvement in the flow of the business processes would not only benefit individual cases, but would also result in improved capacity within the HR team to pro-actively support line managers and researchers. It was also recognised the project would identify ways in which implementation of University’s longstanding Policy on the Use of Fixed-Term and Open-Ended Contracts could be enhanced.

Accordingly, the goals of the project were:

- To test the robustness of the FTC decision making process using the current policy
- To improve the flow of contract information between all departments that contribute to FTC renewals or extensions
- To improve the awareness of FTC deadlines between all departments involved
- Improve transparency of the FTC process and clarify responsibilities for key information that feeds into process from departments, Finance, Research & Knowledge Exchange Services and HR
- To reduce the time spent by HR staff clarifying contract information and responding to ad hoc queries

### **Review process**

The University's Business Improvement Team and HR staff have worked together to conduct this review, which has included gathering views directly from research staff, their line managers and Heads of Department across the University, through surveys and direct consultation. This has informed a process of mapping the current business process and identifying enhancements that will be implemented over the coming months. The review phase was conducted through intensive working by the review team over the 4 month period February to June 2015, with implementation phase running from July to December 2015.

## Benefits

The following benefits are anticipated:

Long Term / Strategic Benefits	Behavioural / Observable Benefits	Measurable Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved staff satisfaction</li> <li>• Increased use of redeployment support mechanisms</li> <li>• Improved career planning support for researchers</li> <li>• Improved employment security and clarity for research staff</li> <li>• Aligning work practices with University Values</li> <li>• The policy and process will be made more transparent through improved access to process, policy and FAQ information on the HR website</li> <li>• Increased operational efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure researchers have regular dialogue with the line managers particularly at times of pending contract extension or expiry</li> <li>• Improve researcher awareness of redeployment support</li> <li>• Greater clarity and ownership of process for HR, Professional Services, Finance and line managers</li> <li>• Maximise adherence to the indicative process timelines mentioned in policy</li> <li>• Ensure that the fixed-term status of contracts is reviewed in good time before the current contract end date, particularly in cases of longer service where move to open-ended contract may be applicable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing information sent out to researchers, Heads of Department/Schools and line managers has been redrafted to be more concise and user-friendly Contract statuses updated in a timely manner</li> <li>• Staff capacity savings through reduction in cycle times and rework</li> <li>• Improved quality of service through reduction in ad hoc queries</li> <li>• Improved quality of service through consistent and timely approach to processing FTCs</li> <li>• Line managers will receive enhanced guidance on how to hold contract review discussions with researchers, including clear reference to the support mechanisms that are available.</li> <li>• The process for processing redundancy payments where applicable will be enhanced so that this happens more efficiently.</li> </ul>

## Implementation and review

The outcomes from the project are currently being implemented and are being communicated to line managers, Heads of Departments and across HR through a series of presentations. There will also be a post-implementation review in due course.

September 2015