DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED MATHEMATICS AND THEORETICAL PHYSICS (DAMTP)

Career Support Scheme for Research Staff (CSS)

Guidance for Research Staff and Advisors

September 2023

The University, as part of its commitment to facilitating career development of all staff, expects each Department to run a Staff Review and Development (SRD) scheme. Details of the University's guidance on SRD is published [here](). Please be aware that the scheme offered to Research staff in DAMTP differs in some respects from that guidance, specifically in the following areas:

- The focus of the scheme offered in DAMTP is on career support and development, rather than staff review.
- Research staff are not normally reviewed by their line manager or PI in DAMTP. Research staff are assigned to other PIs within the department for their CSS meetings. This PI will be in a similar discipline to the researcher *where possible*.
- Meeting outcomes are recorded using two department-specific forms. The first includes information to be shared between the Researcher and the Advisor only. The second form confirms a CSS meeting has taken place and details any issues that need to be shared with or escalated to the Researcher's PI/line manager, the Deputy Head of Department (People and Projects) or the Head of Department.

1. **Eligibility**

    The Career Support Scheme for Research Staff is open to staff in the following categories:

    i. Research Fellows, Research Associates and Senior Research Associates with a contract of employment with DAMTP.
    ii. Research Fellows employed by a College who are registered as either a Visitor or Collaborator with DAMTP.

2. **Timing of meetings**

    All research staff will be offered the opportunity to have a CSS review meeting on an annual basis. These meetings will usually take place during the first half of the Easter Term (late April/early May).

3. **Pairing Advisors and Researchers**

    Each member of academic staff will be expected to participate in the CSS process as an Advisor. Those members of academic staff who have postdocs they line manage will be allocated approximately the same number of Researchers to support as research staff they have PI/line management responsibility for. Where possible, Advisors and Researchers will come from similar academic disciplines.

    Each year during the Lent Term (February/March) the HR Office will produce:

    1. A list of research staff who will be in post on 30th May of the current year.
    2. A list of academic staff with line management/PI responsibility for research staff.

    With support from the Deputy Head of Department (People and Projects) if needed, each member of research staff (Researcher) will be allocated to a member of academic staff

(Advisor). Researchers will be contacted by the HR Team confirming who their Advisor is. Researchers will then have an opportunity to request an alternative Advisor.

Once the pairings have been confirmed, the HR Office will send the Advisors names and contact details of their Researchers, asking them to set up a meeting during the first half of the Easter Term.

4.   The review meeting and paperwork

The review meeting should be held at an agreed date and time within the first four weeks of Easter Term with sufficient notice for both parties to prepare. The meeting should last between 30 minutes and an hour and sufficient time should be allowed to cover past and current work achievements, career development and communication.

Before the meeting, and with sufficient time for Advisor to read and digest, the Researcher will send the Advisor:

i.   An up-to-date copy of their CV and publications list
ii.   A copy of the Personal CSS Record Form with sections 1, 2 and 3 completed. A copy of the form can be downloaded here (link to be added…).

Section 4 of the CSS Record Form should be completed during the meeting and the form should signed by both parties. This form should be kept by the Researcher. The Researcher may share this information with other parties if they so wish, but there is no requirement to do so.

The Notification of CSS Meeting Form should also be completed and signed by both parties during the meeting. This form is to be used to confirm that the CSS meeting has taken place and to identify any issues that need to be escalated to the PI/line manager, Deputy HoD, HoD, etc. This form should be returned to the Maths HR Office.

5.   Potential topics for discussion at the CSS meeting

The following informal checklist includes suggestions for topics to cover during the meeting. Important information arising from these suggestions should be recorded on the CSS Record Form. The list is neither exhaustive nor mandatory, but covers many topics that might usefully be discussed, in no particular order.

Working environment

- Publications
- Lab/equipment usage
- Administrative staff support
- Interdisciplinary research
- Safety issues
- Computing resources (network, hardware, software)
- Intellectual property and patent issues
- Industrial partners/working with companies
- Conference attendance
- Access to journals, books and conferences
- Office conditions (temperature, light, space)
- Salary
- Expenses

Career transition, appointment and promotion

- Career advancement
- Career plans – research/academic posts, other possibilities
- Advice on job applications
- Fellowship advice and information

Career breaks and flexible working

- Flexible working, hybrid working, working from home
- Maternity/paternity/shared parental leave
- Work-life balance

Career advice, support and development

- Possibilities for teaching and student supervision
- Adequate help from line manager when needed
- Dignity at work issues
- Grant proposal writing advice
- Training opportunities
- Career advice, discussions, tailored career workshops and careers events
- Research freedom
- Induction
- Disability support
- Mentoring
- Transferable skills

Culture, communications, department organisation

- Communication within the department
- Equality, diversity and inclusion issues
- College affiliation
- Teamwork
- Departmental atmosphere
- Group atmosphere
- Meetings – personal, group, frequency
- Holidays
- Networking/socialising opportunities
- Difficult interactions with supervisor/colleagues?
- Overzealous colleagues?
- Opportunities to collaborate, both within the group and with other groups

The Department seeks to work within the principles of the Athena SWAN scheme. These are given below and might also form the basis for discussion in the Review Meeting.

Athena SWAN Principles (http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/)

The six principles which Charter members are asked to accept and to incorporate into their action plans are:

1.   To address gender inequalities requires commitment and action from everyone, at all levels of the organization.

2. To tackle the unequal representation of women in science requires changing cultures and attitudes across the organization.

3. The absence of diversity at management and policy-making levels has broad implications which the organisation will examine.

4. The high loss rate of women in science is an urgent concern which the organisation will address.

5. The system of short-term contracts has particularly negative consequences for the retention and progression of women in science, which the organisation recognizes.

6. There are both personal and structural obstacles to women making the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career in science, which require the active consideration of the organisation.

6. Disagreements

In the unlikely situation that the Advisor and the Researcher disagree on a particular issue and require a third party to assist with resolution, the Advisor will contact the Deputy Head of Department (People and Projects) and ask for a senior colleague, acting as Referee to review the forms and, if necessary, discuss with the Advisor and the Researcher. The Referee will add comments to the CSS Record Form and return to both parties. Where necessary, the Referee will refer the matter either the PI/line manager, the Deputy HOD or the HOD.

7. Monitoring

The Maths HR Office will provide a report to the DAMTP Directors Committee at the end of the Easter Term confirming the level of uptake for the CSS meetings and numbers of completed meetings.