Business Intelligence Report

Title: **Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2011** – written report

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Core findings

- Improved response rate and overall the majority of results are in line with the sector, and generally similar or improved from the 2009 survey.

- The majority of respondents are aged 26 to 40; they tend to have been in research 3+ years

- Most respondents find the University a supportive, encouraging and rewarding place to work, where over 80% have access to training & conferences, 90% say they are not discriminated against, and three-quarters agree they treated fairly in terms of flexible working and visibility on the web.

- Some differences by Faculty – generally those in Health Sciences are most satisfied.

Areas for improvement

- University Induction –much less likely to be offered a University or Faculty induction, than a local induction. Those who attended a University induction were less likely to say it was useful than the survey and RG averages.

- Probation – of those who had served probation, only half had been actively involved in monitoring progress towards requirements.

- Appraisal – only half have had one in last two years, although most who have, found it useful

- Promotion and progression – mixed views on opportunities for this

- Integration into the University – feel much less integrated than with department, or wider disciplinary community. Proportion feeling integrated has decreased since 2009, as has proportion feeling that the University's research community stimulates their work (notably FE&E – 41%, Humanities – 43%).

- Age and Gender – still some discrimination and unfair treatment issues

- Take up of training / CPD – tend to only spend 1-5 days on CPD per year, but 27% didn't spend any time last year. Also 47% say they don't have a career development plan.

Communication issues

- Provision of information seems patchy both during application and when starting a role e.g. less than half were offered a copy of the institutional research strategy.

- 53% don't know the details of the REF. Growing awareness of Concordat and Vitae, but three-quarters never heard of the 'HR badge of excellence'.

- Around 20% didn't feel their contribution towards the institutional strategy, world class research, knowledge transfer and managing resources, was recognised and valued.

- Good levels of interest around external collaborations, knowledge transfer and public engagement – they are less keen on industrial placements.

2. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Background

The survey was originally developed in 2002 as part of a project funded by HEFCE[1], SHEFC[2], and the DTI/OST (now BIS[3]), and is now also supported by Vitae[4]. CROS is hosted on the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) tool, which provides a secure web environment for the design, delivery and analysis of online surveys.

The survey anonymously gathers data about working conditions, career aspirations and career development opportunities for research staff, and allows us to compare University of Southampton results with the findings from 45 other institutions participating in the survey.

2011 is the second year the University has participated in the CROS, we also participated in 2009.

2.2 Methodology

For the 2011 CROS, the University of Southampton's fieldwork period ran from 3rd – 31st May 2011.

An email was sent to all relevant staff inviting them to participate in the survey, and a number of reminder emails and other methods of promoting the survey e.g. Noticeboard, posters around campus, were used to raise awareness throughout the fieldwork period. No incentives for participation were offered.

Participating institutions were invited to sign up to relevant "b-clubs" e.g. Russell Group (RG) institutions, 1994 group etc. These enable institutions to benchmark their results against not only the average of all responses given to the survey, but against the answers given within the relevant groups of universities.

2.3 Sample

While it is difficult to arrive at a common definition across every institution in the UK, the CROS Steering Group use the definition contained in the Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers:

'Researchers are broadly defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose. It is recognised that this broad category of staffing covers a wide range of staff with different disciplinary backgrounds, levels of training, experience and responsibility, types of contract (fixed or open ended, full or part time), and different career expectations and intentions.'

At the University of Southampton, the sample was derived from two lists, one of all staff with 'Research' in the job title and the second of early career researchers). Any duplicates and inappropriate entries (e.g. 'Research Professor') were removed from these lists, leaving a sample population size of 972.

2.4 Response rates

The University of Southampton achieved a 34.3% response rate overall – up from 27% in 2009. This was significantly higher than the sector average of 27.3%, although response rates varied across Faculties from 23% to 47%.

Faculty	Total sample	Responses	Percentage
Business & Law	16	4	25.0%
Engineering and the Environment	141	32	22.7%
Health Sciences	49	23	46.9%
Humanities	32	14	43.8%
Medicine	234	92	39.3%
Natural and Environmental Sciences	152	45	29.6%
Physical and Applied Science	227	58	25.6%

[1] Higher Education Funding Council for England

[2] Scottish Higher Education Funding Council

[3] Department for Business, Innovations and Skills

[4] Vitae is the UK organisation that champions the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes

Social and Human Science	121	36	29.8%
Other…	*0*	*2*	*0.6%*
No response	*0*	*27*	*8.1%*
Totals	972	333	34%

2.5 Statistical reliability

It should be remembered that the sample of respondents is not the entire population of academic research staff. The figures presented in this report are therefore not exactly what they would be if we were to survey the entire population. However, by using the confidence interval we can predict that if the entire population had answered the survey, the answers would be within a certain percentage of the observed value (this is assuming that the sample is representative).

The table below illustrate the predicted ranges of variation from the observed percentage based on different proportions of the population answering a single response.

Confidence intervals for each proportion answering a single response

	C.I at 95%	C.I at 99%
10% or 90%	±2.6%	±3.4%
30% or 70%	±4.0%	±5.2%
50%	±4.4%	±5.7%

NB: The tables above show confidence intervals for each of the four populations. Confidence intervals are defined by the sample size and the proportion of a specific answer. Therefore the confidence interval for a given sample will vary depending on the range of answers given. The tables above show confidence intervals for 10%, 30%, 50%, 70% and 90% of respondents giving a specific answer, at both 95% and 99% probability levels. For example, if we'd asked the Accept sample "do you like chocolate?" and 70% had replied "yes", the confidence interval would be ±4.0 % at the 95% level.

2.4 This report

This report highlights the key findings for the survey. Separate analyses have been circulated for each Faculty. Where relevant, the data has been analysed by core demographics such as gender, and compared to the findings from the last CROS survey, undertaken in 2009.

Note that the results for each question are provided in Appendix 1, and Appendix 2 lists all of the free text responses. A list of all participating institutions and b-club membership can be found in Appendix 3.

3. RESPONDENT PROFILE

- 29% of respondents have been a researcher less than 3 years, but 42% have been more than 6 years.
- 45% have been at Southampton less than 3 years, 25% more than 6 years
- 47% have only had one contract of employment as a researcher
- 86% work full-time
- 80% are on fixed term contracts, and of those 63% are on contracts which last 1-3 years

- 70% are aged 26-40
- 52% are female
- 87% have a doctorate or equivalent qualification
- 66% are British nationals, and of those 7% are not from a white ethnic background
- Of those who are not British nationals, 59% are from another EU country
- Overall, 67% said English is their first language
- And 89% said they do not have a disability

4. KEY FINDINGS

This section details the key findings from CROS 2011, discussed under the following questionnaire headings:

4.1 Recruitment and selection

4.2 Recognition and value

4.3 Support and career development

4.4 Equality and diversity

4.1 Recruitment and selection

- Most respondents found out about their current post through jobs.ac.uk or another external website, through word of mouth, or through the University's own website.

- Only 69% said they received a written description of what the job entailed (e.g. job description) during the application process, and even less said they received information about qualifications or skills required.

- This may be explained by the fact 20% did not have an interview as they were named on the grant, redeployed or their contract was extended. This is slightly higher than the survey and RG group averages.

- Provision of information on starting at the University seems patchy, e.g. less than half were offered a copy of the institutional research strategy when they started at the University of Southampton, and this is lower than the survey and RG group averages.

4.1.1 Induction

- Although the vast majority of respondents were offered a local induction to their immediate role when they started, 40% weren't offered a Faculty induction and 53% a University induction.
  - o Although the proportion who were offered a University induction is higher than in the 2009 survey, it is significantly lower than the survey and RG averages.

	Southampton 2011	Survey average	RG group average	Southampton 2009
Local induction to your immediate role…				
…was useful	53%	55%	54%	51%
…was not useful	15%	14%	14%	17%
…was not offered	27%	28%	29%	30%
…was offered but not taken	6%	4%	4%	2%
Departmental / Faculty induction…				
…was useful	35%	35%	34%	32%
…was not useful	17%	19%	19%	25%
…was not offered	40%	41%	41%	40%
…was offered but not taken	9%	6%	6%	3%
University induction				
…was useful	15%	31%	27%	14%
…was not useful	19%	23%	22%	15%
…was not offered	53%	32%	36%	67%
…was offered but not taken	13%	14%	15%	4%

- In terms of the usefulness of the induction the same hierarchy exists with the local induction found useful by the vast majority of those who had one, the faculty induction found useful by the next largest proportion, and the University induction found useful by less than half of those who attended.
  - o In comparison with the survey and RG averages, those who attended a University of Southampton induction were slightly less likely to find it useful than at other universities.

Recruitment and Selection Summary:

- University Induction – respondents said they were much less likely to be offered a University or Faculty induction, than a local induction to their immediate role. Also those who attended a University induction were less likely to say it was useful than the survey and RG averages.

- Provision of information seems patchy both during application and when starting a role e.g. less than half were offered a copy of the institutional research strategy.
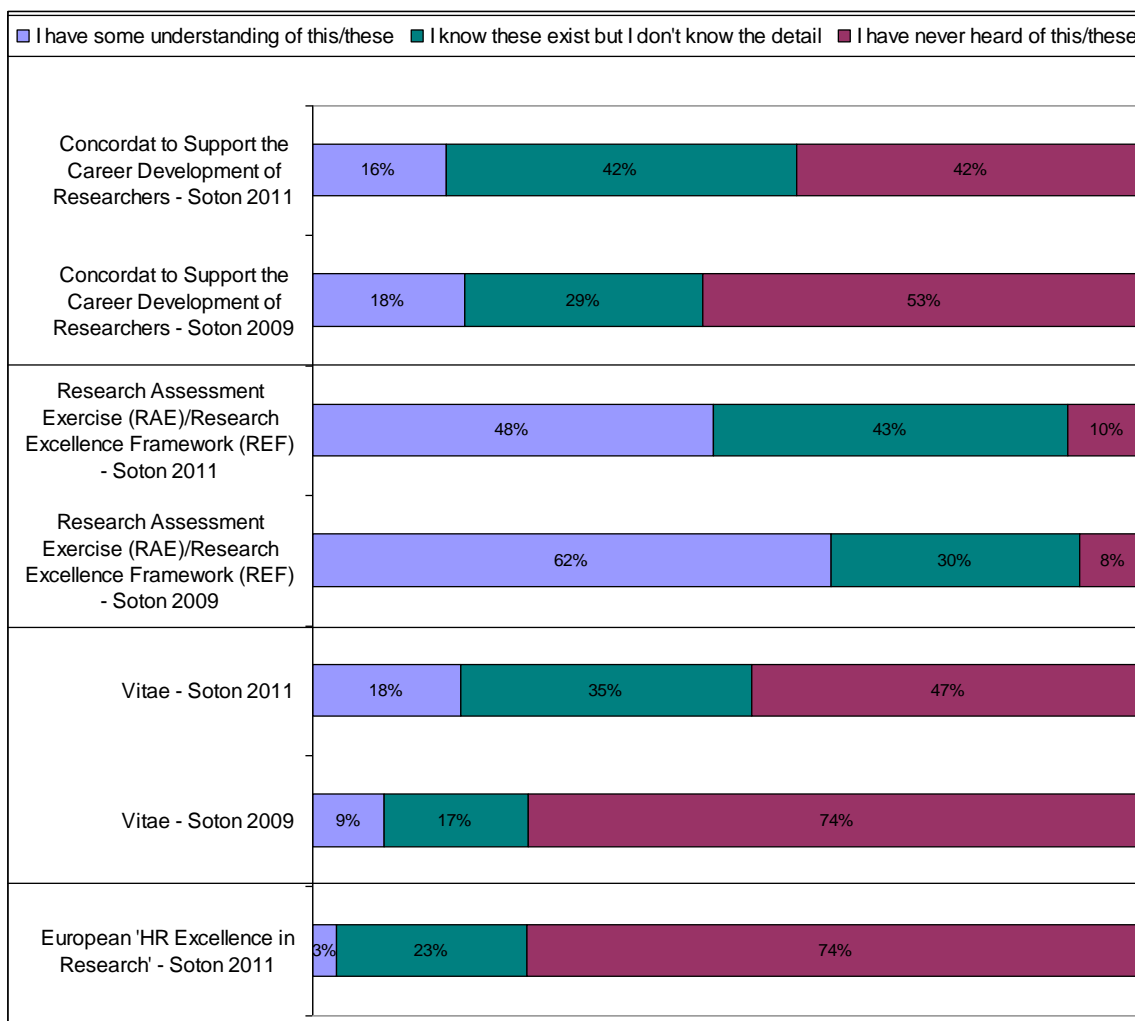
4.2 Recognition and value

4.2.1 Knowledge and understanding of institutional policies, processes and initiatives

- Concerningly, 14% said they had never heard of the institutional research strategy, and 10% said they had never heard of the institutional research codes of practice.

- The greatest awareness and understanding relates to terms and conditions of employment and fixed term contracts – presumably as these are of personal relevance to most respondents.

4.2.2 Knowledge and understanding of national policies and initiatives

- Some growth in awareness of Concordat, although not in the understanding of it which has remained stable at 16% saying they have "some understanding".

- 53% don't know the details of the REF, and this has increased from 38% in 2009, and is higher than the survey and RG averages.

- Growing awareness and understanding of Vitae, but three-quarters have not heard of the "HR excellence in research" initiative.

	I have some understanding of this/these	I know these exist but I don't know the detail	I have never heard of this/these
Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers - Soton 2011	16%	42%	42%
Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers - Soton 2009	18%	29%	53%
Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)/Research Excellence Framework (REF) - Soton 2011	48%	43%	10%
Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)/Research Excellence Framework (REF) - Soton 2009	62%	30%	8%
Vitae - Soton 2011	18%	35%	47%
Vitae - Soton 2009	9%	17%	74%
European 'HR Excellence in Research' - Soton 2011	3%	23%	74%

NB: Slight changes to question wording means that those who said either "I have a good understanding of this" or "I have a partial understanding of this" have been grouped as "I have some understanding of this".

4.2.3 Fair treatment of research staff in comparison with other types of staff

- There has been a slight change to the wording of this question – 2009 "…in comparison to lecturing staff", 2011 "…in comparison to all other types of staff". This has lead to an increase in the proportion agreeing they are fairly treated, across a range of areas.
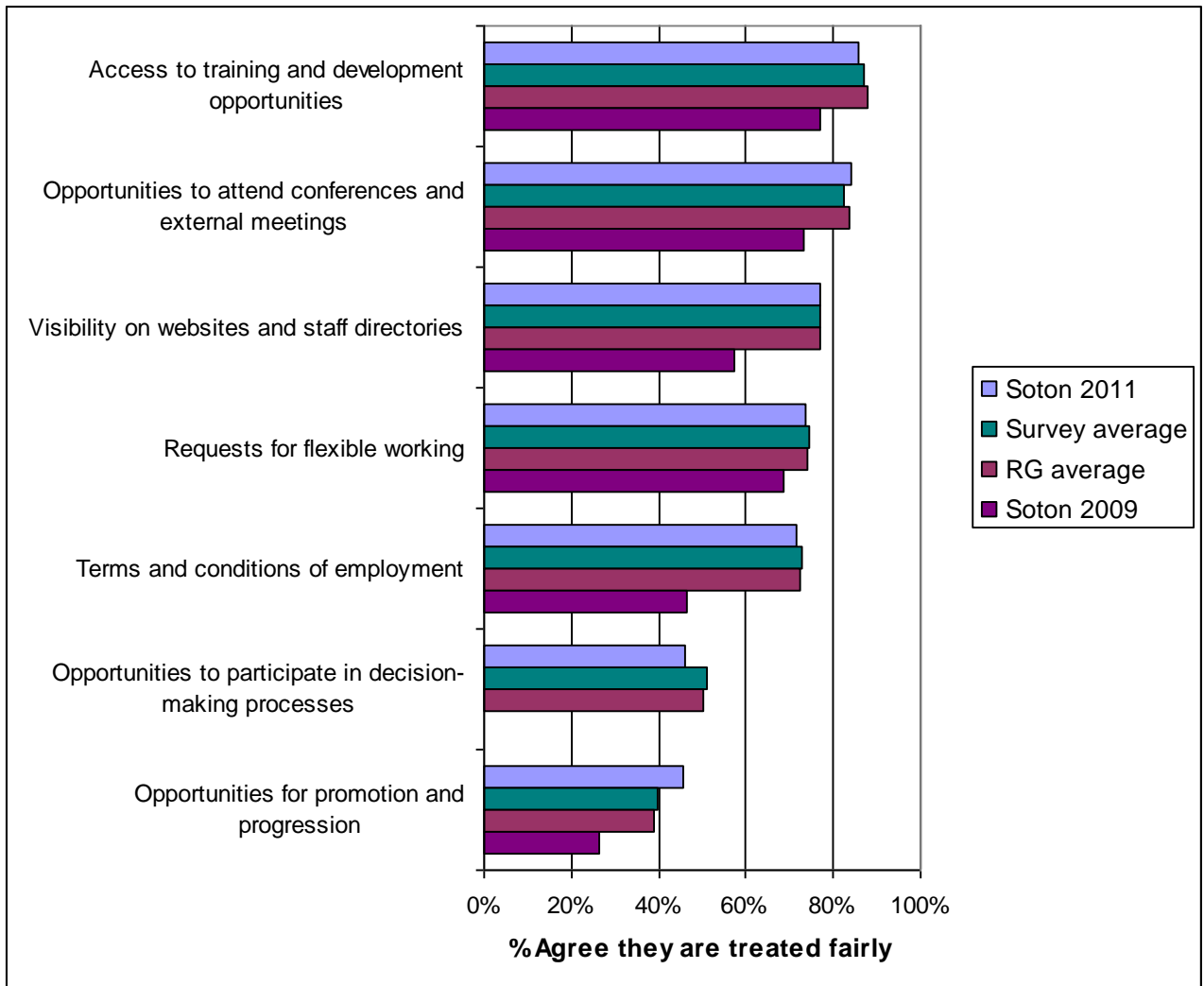
- Most commonly, respondents feel they are treated fairly in terms of access to training & development, and opportunities to attend conferences and external meetings. Three-quarters agree they have flexible working and visibility on the web.

- They are least likely to feel they are treated fairly in terms of opportunities for promotion & progression (although more likely than the survey average), and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

4.2.4 Recognition and value of the contributions you make

- The most common area for respondents to feel their contribution was recognised and valued was in publications. They were least likely to say the same applied for their contribution to teaching and learning – although this is mainly due to a significant proportion saying this was not applicable to them.

- Around 20% didn't feel their contribution towards the institutional research strategy, world class research, knowledge transfer and managing resources, was recognised and valued.

- Since the 2009 survey, there have decreases in the proportions saying their contributions are valued in achieving the institution's research strategy, supervising research students and supporting others. Conversely, there has been an increase in the proportion saying their contribution to supervising & managing staff, and public engagement with research, has been recognised and valued.
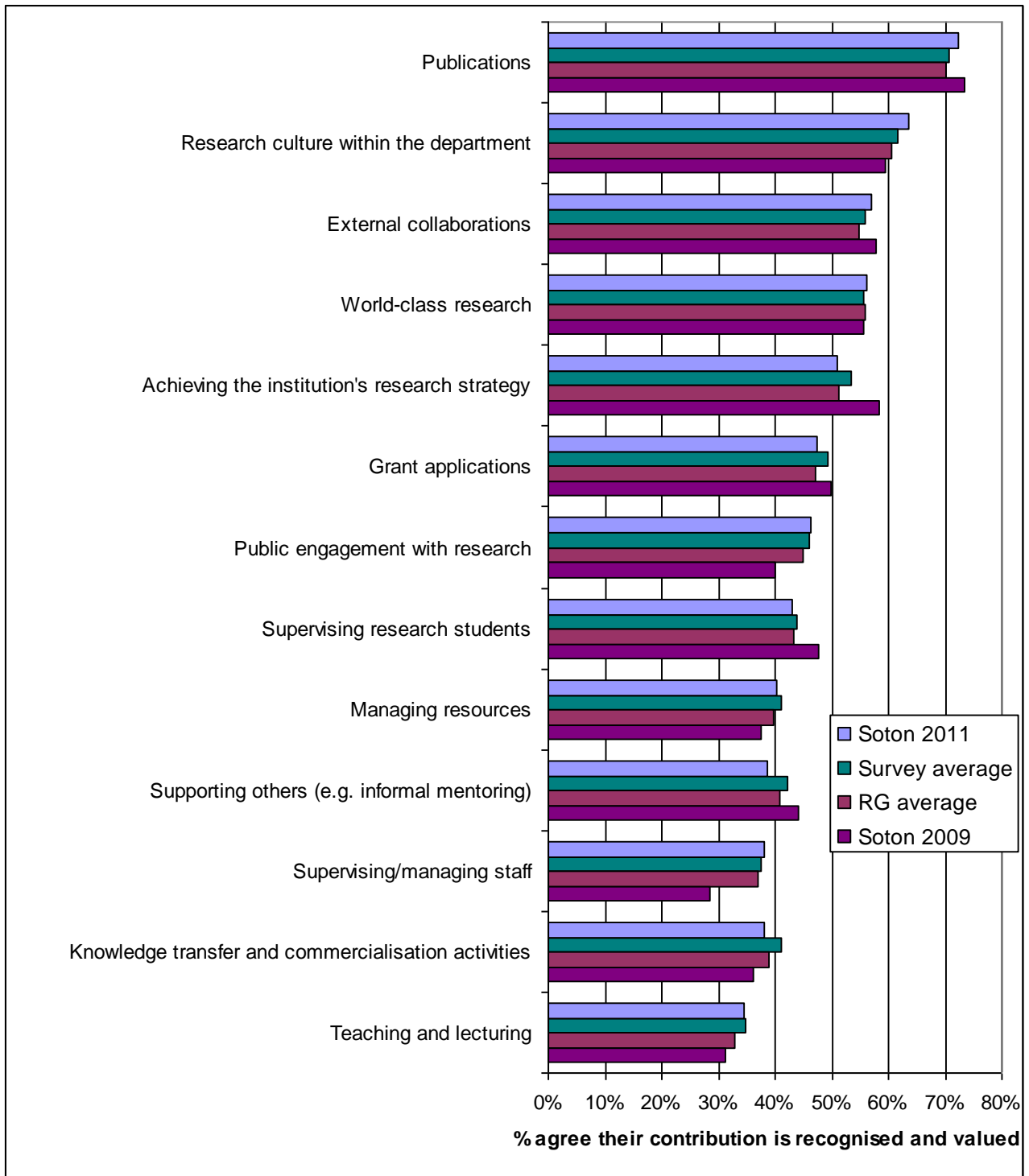
4.2.5 Integration

- Three-quarters of respondents feel integrated into their department's research community, however only half feel the same about the University's research community (and this is lower than the survey and RG group averages, and 2009 survey result). In fact, more feel integrated into their wider disciplinary community, than into the University community.

- There has been a decrease from 75% to 64% of Southampton respondents who agreed that the research culture at the University stimulates their work.
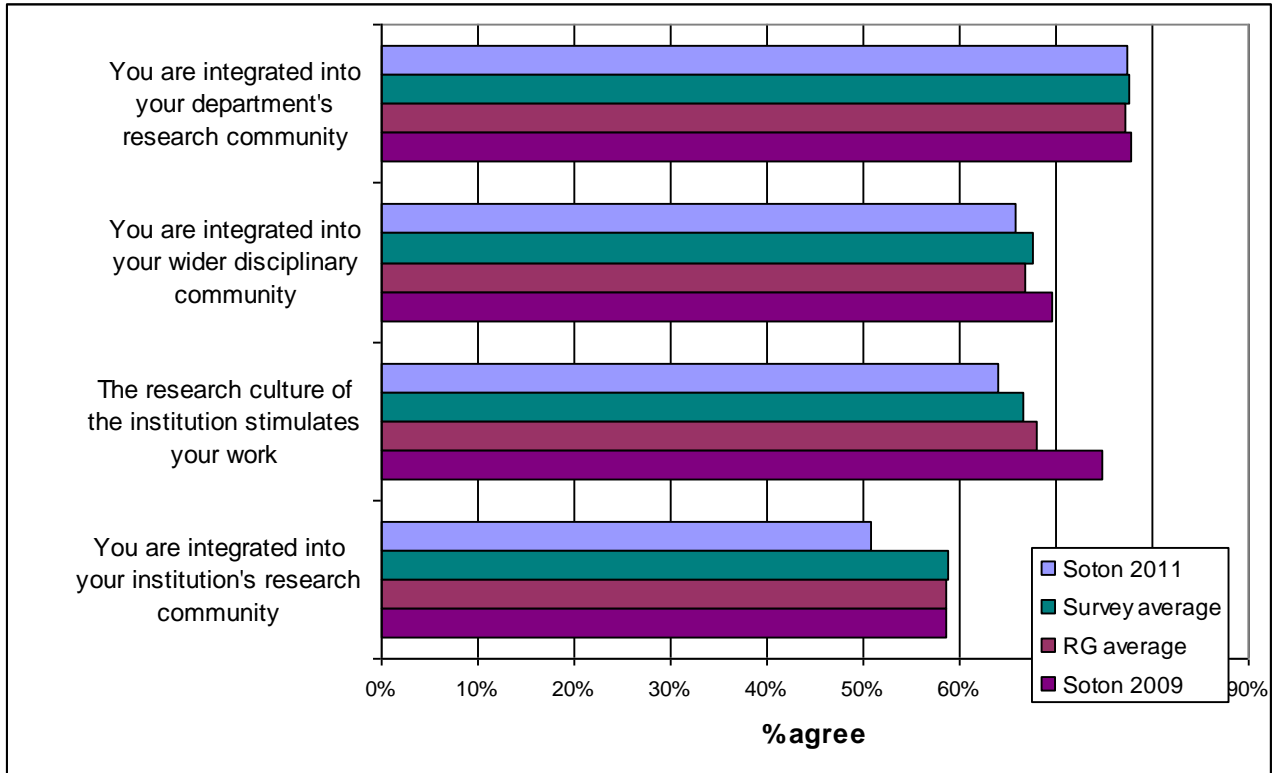
Recognition and Value Summary:

- 53% don't know the details of the REF. Growing awareness of Concordat and Vitae, but three-quarters never heard of the 'HR badge of excellence'.

- Three-quarters agree they treated equally in terms of flexible working and visibility on the web, but there are mixed views on the opportunities for promotion and progression

- Around 20% didn't feel their contribution towards the institutional research strategy, world class research, knowledge transfer and managing resources, was recognised and valued.

- Integration into the University – feel much less integrated than with department, or wider disciplinary community. Decline since 2009, in the proportion feeling integrated into the University community, and there's also been a decline in the proportion agreeing that the research culture of the University stimulates their work

4.3 Support and career development

- More than three-quarters of respondents said they were encouraged to engage in career & personal development activities, and a similar proportion said they had reflected on their development needs.

- However on 53% said they had a career plan, and 66% kept a record of their professional development.

- Their PI/ line manager and other colleagues are the most likely source of careers advice (both short and long term).

- Most (63%) want to still be in higher education in five years time, either in research, or in teaching and research, however 19% say they would like a research career outside higher education.
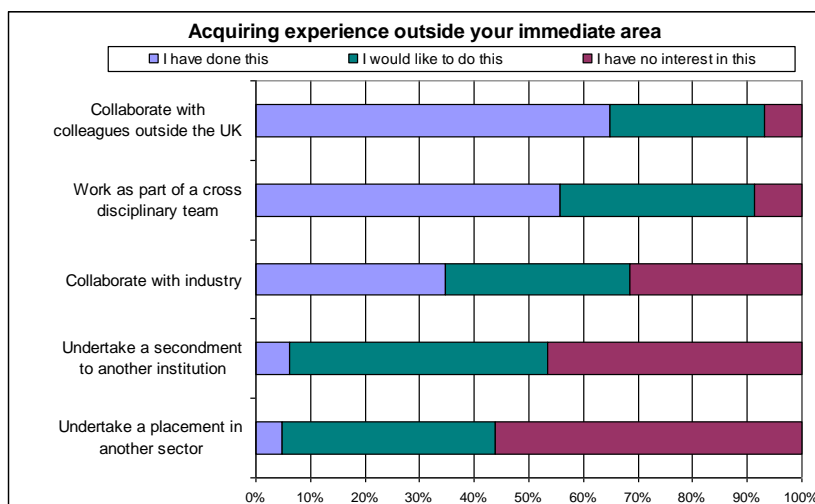
4.3.1 Appraisal / staff review

- Of those who have served a probationary period since starting at the University, only half said they actively participated in activities to monitor their progress towards probationary requirements.

- Only 52% have participated in an appraisal or review in the last two years, although this has increased from 41% in 2009. Of those who haven't, more than half say this is because they haven't been invited to (rather than are on probation etc.).

- Of those who have had an appraisal, half said they found it useful overall – although this is a higher proportion than the survey average or RG group average for this question, or Southampton's 2009 result.
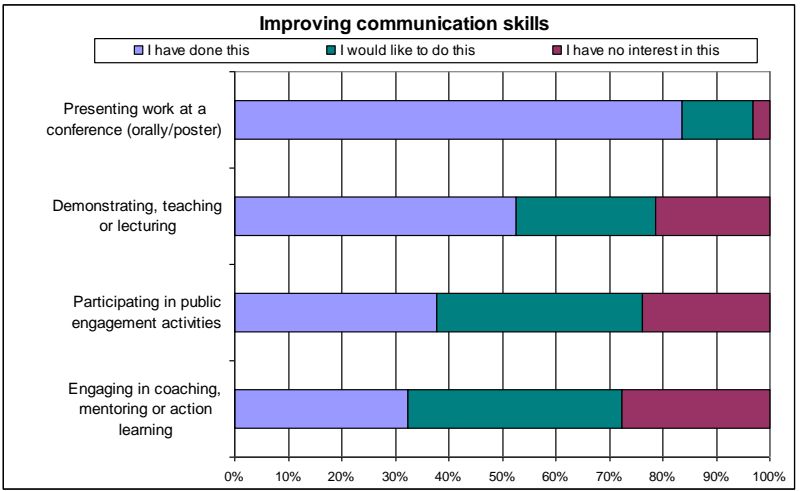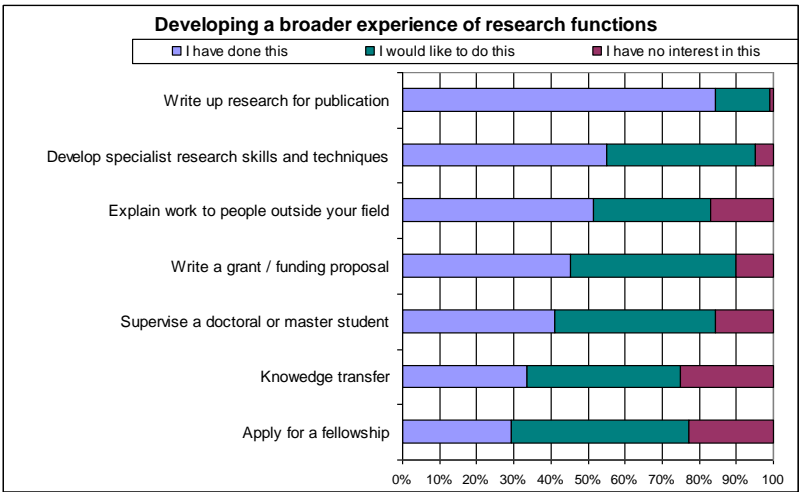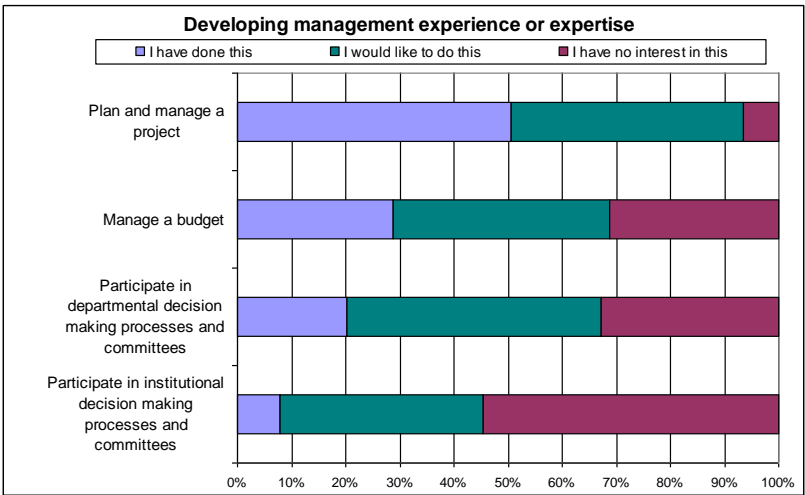
4.3.2 Continuing Professional Development

- 48% said they have spent 1-5 days on CPD activities in the last twelve month, however 27% said they didn't spend any time.

- The most common activity to have participated in is training activities within the University.

- The most common area to have undertaken training in is research skills and techniques. The most common areas to want to undertake training in are career management, leadership & management, personal effectiveness and knowledge transfer & outreach activities, with around half of respondents requesting these.

4.3.3 Development Activities

- Respondents were asked which activities (divided into four categories) they had participated in, and which they would like to participate in. Most commonly they had written up research for publication and presented work at a conference.

- There was most interest in applying for a fellowship, undertaking a secondment at other institution, and participating in departmental decision making processes.

- There was least interest in participating in institutional decision making processes and undertaking a placement in another sector.

Acquiring experience outside your immediate area
I have done this | I would like to do this | I have no interest in this

Developing management experience or expertise

Legend: ☐ I have done this ▪ I would like to do this ▪ I have no interest in this

- Plan and manage a project
- Manage a budget
- Participate in departmental decision making processes and committees
- Participate in institutional decision making processes and committees

(x-axis: 0% to 100%)

Developing a broader experience of research functions

Legend: ☐ I have done this ▪ I would like to do this ▪ I have no interest in this

- Write up research for publication
- Develop specialist research skills and techniques
- Explain work to people outside your field
- Write a grant / funding proposal
- Supervise a doctoral or master student
- Knowedge transfer
- Apply for a fellowship

(x-axis: 0% to 100%)

Improving communication skills

Legend: ☐ I have done this ▪ I would like to do this ▪ I have no interest in this

- Presenting work at a conference (orally/poster)
- Demonstrating, teaching or lecturing
- Participating in public engagement activities
- Engaging in coaching, mentoring or action learning

(x-axis: 0% to 100%)

Support and Career Development Summary:

- Take up of training / CPD – tend to only spend 1-5 days on CPD per year, but 27% didn't spend any time last year.
  - Also 47% say they don't have a career development plan, and a third don't keep a record of any development activity undertaken.
- Good levels of interest around external collaborations, knowledge transfer and public engagement – they are less keen on industrial placements.

4.4 Equality and diversity

- 81% of respondents agree the University of Southampton is committed to equality and diversity, which is slightly lower than the survey and RG averages and the 2009 result.

- 68% are satisfied with their work-life balance, which again is slightly lower than the survey average and 2009 result.

- 10% of respondents said they had been personally discriminated against, which is the same as the survey and RG averages, and the 2009 result.

- Over 80% agree staff are treated fairly in terms of day to day treatment at work, recruitment & selection, and access to training and development. However 15% disagreed that this fair treatment also applies to participation in decision-making processes, career progression & promotion, and reward.

- Again over 80% agree staff are treated fairly irrespective of ethnicity and nationality. However around 11% disagreed that the same applies to pregnancy and maternity and gender, and 13% disagreed about age.

Equality and Diversity Summary:

- Age and gender – still some discrimination and unfair treatment issues, especially around pregnancy and maternity.

- Some perception of unfair treatment with regards to participation in decision-making processes, career progression & promotion, and reward.

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