

Evaluating the impact of tailoring annual appraisal processes specifically for Early Career Research staff

Dr Lucy Lee

**Researcher Development Manager
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health
University of Sheffield**

Background to TUoS Annual Appraisal

- SRDS (Staff review and development scheme)
- Drivers for change:
 - UoS staff survey
 - Subsequent RSA questionnaire
 - Departmental focus groups
 - Focus groups during Athena Swan applications
 - CROS 2013/2011
- Key concerns:
 - Experience by ECRs not satisfactory and needed improvement
 - Focus often only on research project
 - Previous additional career development page often not seen as compulsory



1. Change to ECR SRDS forms

Aim:

- formally acknowledge the range of contributions and achievements beyond research output
- Improve structure of SRDS conversations to balance research focus with career development

Process:

- 2 years from development to gaining approval for change:
 - Faculties management
 - UoS HR
 - Joint unions committee
- Work with each department to ensure documents were appropriately communicated
- Workshop 'Getting the most from your SRDS'

1. Change to ECR SRDS forms



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Of Sheffield.

Staff
Review and
Development
Scheme.

The purpose of SRDS is to provide an annual opportunity for reflection and feedback on the previous year and forward planning for the following year.

Detailed guidance on how to complete this form can be found in the SRDS guidelines. These can be obtained from the SRDS web page at www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/policies/review

Information about the reviewer:	
Name:	
Job title:	Department:
Date of this review:	Date of previous review:

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWEE

REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR (identification of both highs and lows and progress made)

SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER

FEEDBACK (WITH EVIDENCE)

ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

- 1 Overall contribution has exceeded the job requirements, expectations and objectives
- 2 Overall contribution has achieved the job requirements, expectations and objectives
- 3 Overall contribution has not achieved the job requirements, expectations and objectives

SECTION C: TO BE PROPOSED BY REVIEWEE AND APPROVED BY REVIEWER			
OBJECTIVES (SMART)			
IDENTIFICATION OF SUPPORT REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES			

SECTION D: TO BE PROPOSED BY REVIEWEE AND APPROVED BY REVIEWER			
DEVELOPMENT NEEDS			
WHAT: SKILLS/ KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED	HOW WILL THE NEED BE MET: (e.g. course, e-learning, mentoring, reading)	WHO: Responsibility to take forward	BY WHEN:

Date:
Signature of Reviewer:
Signature of Reviewee:

1. Change to ECR SRDS forms



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Early Career Researcher SRDS Form 2014

The purpose of SRDS is to provide an annual opportunity for reflection and feedback on the previous year and forward planning for the following year. This form has been modified so that it specifically supports conversations for Early Career Researchers.

Along with the general guidelines on the University's SRDS process available via the SRDS webpages (www.shef.ac.uk/hr/guidance/srds) the following documents will also be of use when completing the review process:

- The Departmental objectives/research strategy for department/faculty you work in
- Grade profile document
- MDH vision statement for an ECR
- Questions to support reflection for completion of this ECR SRDS form

Information about the reviewer:

Name: []	
Job title: []	Department: []
Date of this review: []	Date of previous review: []
End of contract date: []	

Information about the reviewer:

Name: []	
Job title: []	Department: []

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWEE

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS YEAR: (Identification of both highs and lows, and progress made towards objectives and requirements of the job)

Please use [Questions to support reflection for completion of an ECR SRDS form](#) circulated with this form to support you in completing this section. Some elements of this section may not be relevant to every researcher and have been included to help aid

your reflection and in the identification of developmental opportunities.

Research :

Include information here on research achievements, techniques and methodology developments, scholarly communication, income generation, research impact and collaboration.

Teaching and Supervision: (where appropriate)

Include both formal and informal activities as well as any Mentoring/ Coaching activities. Also include in here, if you are a line manager, what you have done to aid the development of the careers of those staff/students you manage/supervise?

Administration: (where appropriate)

This relates to committee involvement, seminar organisation, budget management.

Continued Professional Development:

Identify any CPD activity you have engaged in since your last SRDS review if not covered in previous sections

What is your immediate and long term career aim?

- Secure another Postdoc position
- Apply for fellowships
- Apply for lectureships at the University of Sheffield or elsewhere
- Apply for teaching positions
- Experimental Officer
- Industrial research track

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Research management / administration / professional services <input type="checkbox"/> Patenting / IP / knowledge transfer / commercialisation <input type="checkbox"/> Operational research e.g. Civil Service / market research / consultancy <input type="checkbox"/> Communication/ medical writing / scientific editing / journalism / outreach <input type="checkbox"/> Re-enter study - please give details below <input type="checkbox"/> Considering options <input type="checkbox"/> Other - please give details below
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What training, experience or responsibilities do you now need to achieve your career goal? Please outline a plan, with milestones below including where you can get the skills you require.
(Please see information at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/faculty/medicine-dentistry-health/thinkahead>)

SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWER

FEEDBACK (WITH EVIDENCE)

Some elements of this section may not be relevant to every researcher and have been included to help aid reflection and in the identification of developmental opportunities.

Research :

Include feedback here on research achievements, techniques and methodology developments, scholarly communication, income generation, research impact and collaboration.

Teaching and Supervision: (where appropriate)

Include feedback on both formal and informal activities as well as any Mentoring/ Coaching activities. Also include in here, feedback on the reviewer's line manager role where relevant.

2. Additional support materials

Early Career Researchers:

Questions to support reflection for completion of an EOR SRDS form

Please consider the reach of these activities locally within your lab/research group, departmental, university-wide, national, and international). Please feel free to pick a selection of the possibilities suggested below that are most relevant for you, or that you wish to focus on at this time. These points are for guidance and reflection; you do not have to have answers to all of them at each SRDS review.

If your fixed term contract is due to finish before the next SRDS round it is still vital that you have an SRDS review and the meeting should focus on discussing the past year, providing feedback to you on what you've done and setting objectives for the time during which you will still be with the University in order to maximise your career development.

For all of the following points, please describe your high and low points, what you have found satisfying/challenging and the progress made towards objectives you have previously set.

COMPLETING SECTION A:

1. Research

Research Achievements:

1. Discuss the generation of research data and how you have put research protocols in operation
2. How have you reached the milestones in your research programme?
3. What techniques and methodology have you developed?

Scholarly Communication:

1. How regularly do you write up your research results?
2. What manuscripts do you have in preparation/submitted/accepted?
3. What other writing have you been involved in e.g. review articles or patents?
4. Have you considered asking senior colleagues if you can support them in reviewing papers/ grants? Would you consider being a peer reviewer and writing a review report?
5. What conferences you have attended this year, what and how did you present and what have you gained from them?
6. What conferences can you attend to broaden your research horizon and visibility and what would you present? How will you fund your attendance?

Income Generation and Research Independence:

1. What are the funding opportunities that you have now?
2. How do you write/contribute to writing research bids with your senior colleagues e.g. such as writing a grant as a co-PI? Are you contributing to research ideas and bid development within your research group or with collaborators?
3. How do you develop an understanding of the funding landscape in your discipline, the types of funding available and how are you keeping yourself informed? Do you discuss potential funding streams with your colleagues/mentor/line manager? Have you considered Fellowships?
4. Have you considered applying for a summer undergraduate research project award (e.g. SURE)?
5. Which travel awards would allow you to visit another research group?
6. How are you building your research independence?
7. Are you developing new research ideas, which could build future research proposals and are you keeping track of these ideas? Are you starting to write them into potential proposals?
8. What type of preliminary data would you need in a research proposal to fund your research idea

9. What are the new techniques and methodologies you should be learning to take your current and future research forward? Who can help you with this?
10. Who will be your reference/sponsor when you apply for a job & research fund?
11. Are you building relationships with colleagues to get support with reviewing your research proposal, fellowship applications?

Research Impact: Outreach, widening participation and public engagement:

1. How are you contributing to the impact agenda for your research project?
2. Would you consider:
 - a. writing short articles about your research for learned societies magazine or other non-specialist publications
 - b. recording a short video/ podcast describing your research (e.g. to be uploaded on iTunesU)
3. What event could you prepare for the next Science and Engineering week, Festival of the mind or Festival of Medicine, Dentistry and Health? How would you fund it?
4. Are you supporting your department during school visits? What ideas could you develop for workshops and activities for school visits, UCAS days etc.?
5. Would you consider writing a press release when you next publish a significant scientific paper?
6. Do you have a personal webpage/blog describing your research interest and expertise?
7. Are you developing a network to become an invited speaker in departments outside the university?

Research Impact: Engaging with industry

1. Do you attend InKForge or other industry-linked events?
2. Do you attend university-wide workshops/ events on innovation, enterprise and commercialisation?
3. Have you developed your knowledge and understanding about commercialisation, intellectual property, patenting etc?
4. Do you network with industry representatives at internal and external workshops and conferences?
5. Have you considered the commercial potential of your research and explored ways to exploit this?
6. Have you researched potential industry collaborators working in your field or opportunities for research funding with an industry collaborator?

Collaboration:

1. Would you consider setting up a seminar series in your department or across disciplinary boundaries?
 2. Would you consider organising a research network?
 3. Who are the competing research groups related to your research?
 4. Are you pro-active in developing your research network, independently seeking new collaborators?
 5. Are you seeking collaborators from diverse disciplines?
 6. Are your collaborators local, national, international colleagues? Can you consider extending the range of collaborators?
 7. Do you take the opportunity to talk to visitors during external guest departmental seminars?
- #### **2. Teaching & Supervision**
1. How many students have you supervised/ mentored formally and informally? (eg. UG, Master students, summer projects, PhD students) Are you discussing with your PI your approach to the supervision of project/PhD students?
 2. Are you proposing possible projects for students in your research group?

3. Recommendations to change reviewer pairings

- Normally reviewer is the line manager which is often the Principle Investigator
 - Focuses mainly on research project development
 - Conflict of interest
- Recommendation to departments:
 - Ideally reviewer is not the PI
 - Include a second academic reviewer with career development agenda

Aim: Alleviate possible conflicts of interest between PI's needs for research output and ECR's needs for career development activities

Research Methodology

Mixed methods approach:

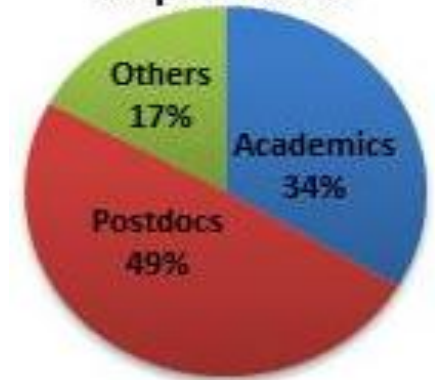
Part 1: Online survey (December 2014 -January 2015)

- Qualitative and quantitative data
- 164 respondents (ECRs and reviewers of ECRs)

Survey respondents:

- 33.5% (n=55) academics (grade 8 upwards)
- 49.4% (n=81) Postdoctoral Research Associates/fellows (grade 7)
- 17% (n=28) of 'other' staff
- From all departments with postdoctoral researchers.

Categories of survey respondents



Ethics approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee.

Research Methodology

Mixed methods approach:

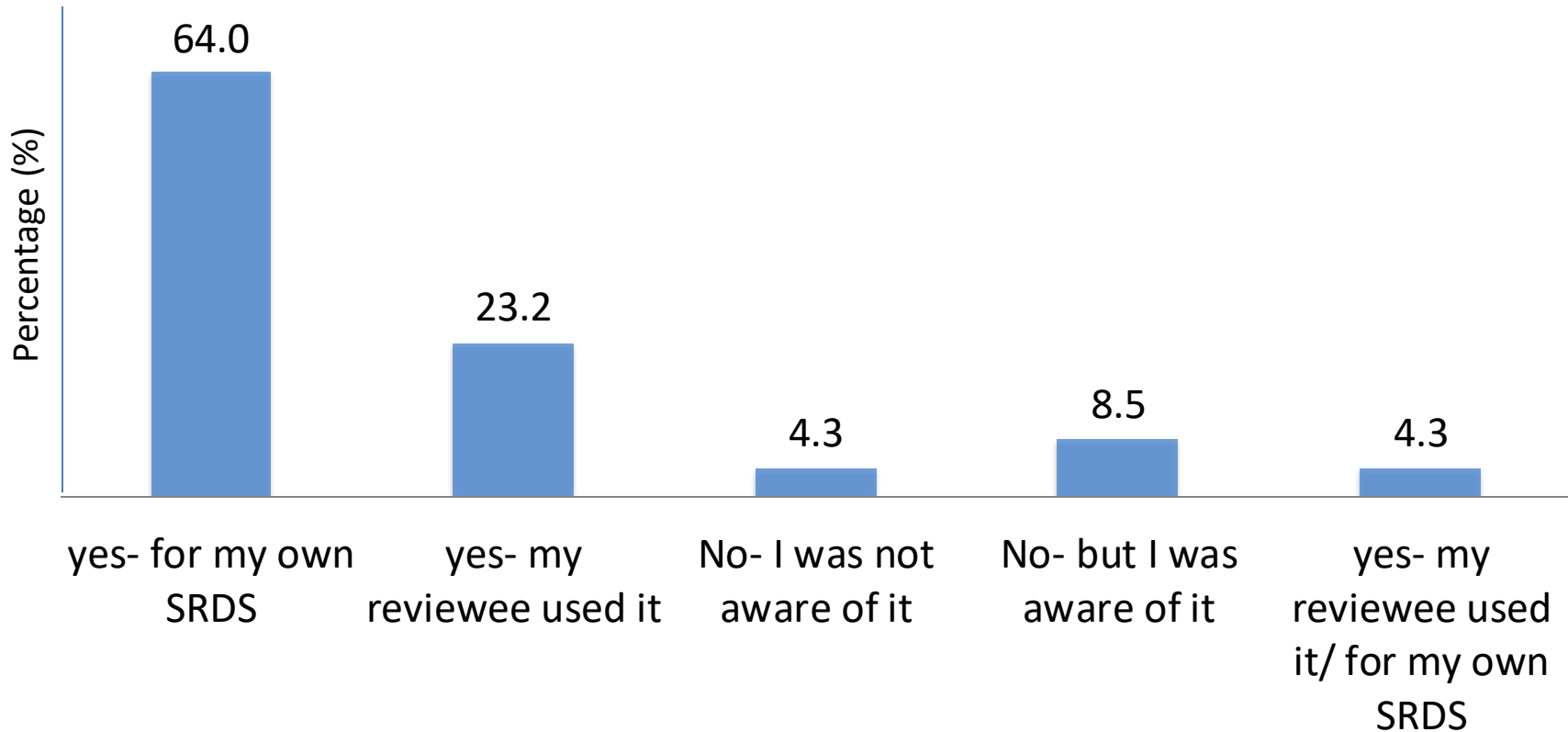
Part 2: Thematic focus groups

- 2 x academics focus groups (n=7)
- 2 x ECR focus groups (n=10)
- participants from both faculties



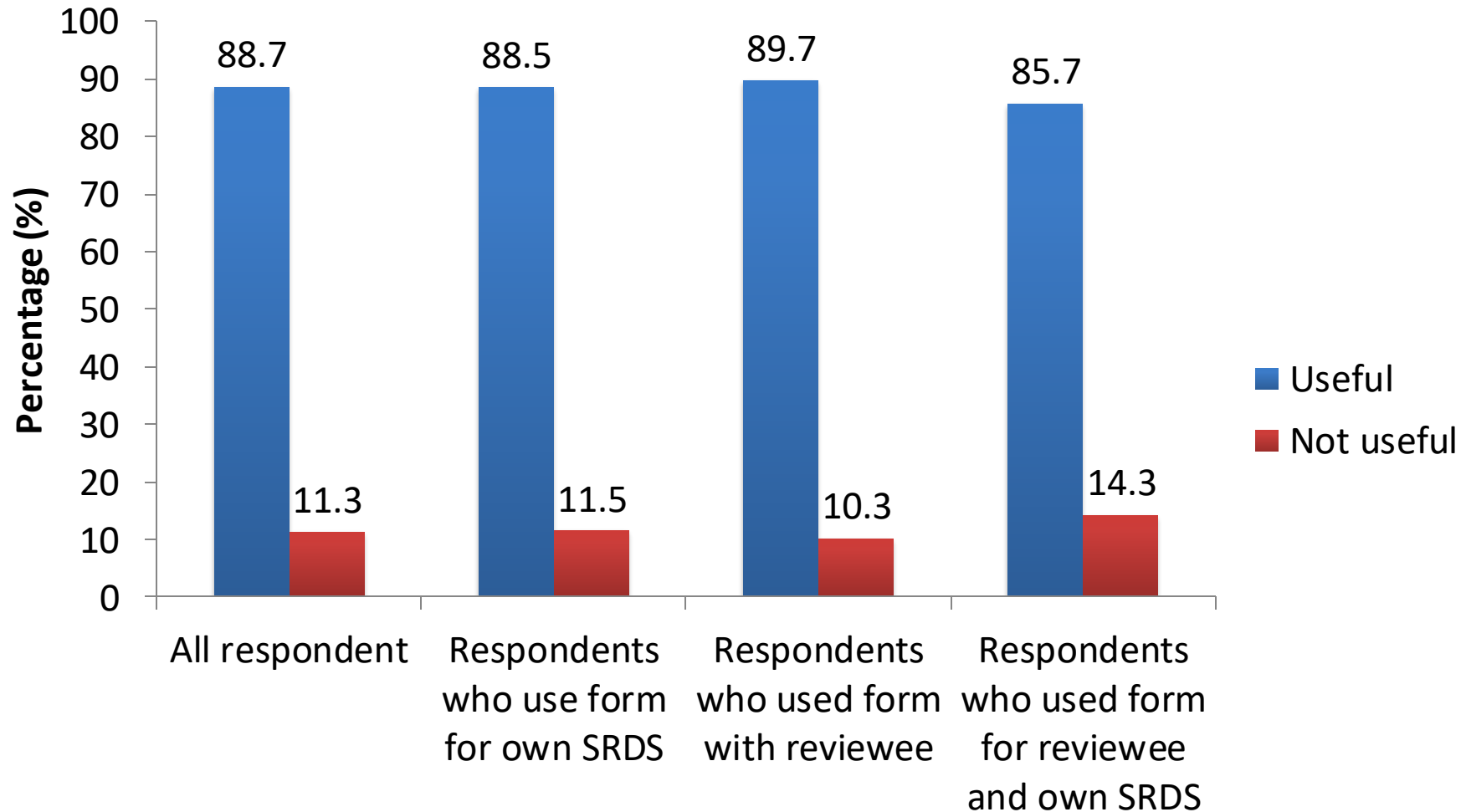
Ethics approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee.

Results from the survey: Use of new form



- **100% of postdoctoral respondents used the new SRDS form**

How useful did the users find the new form?



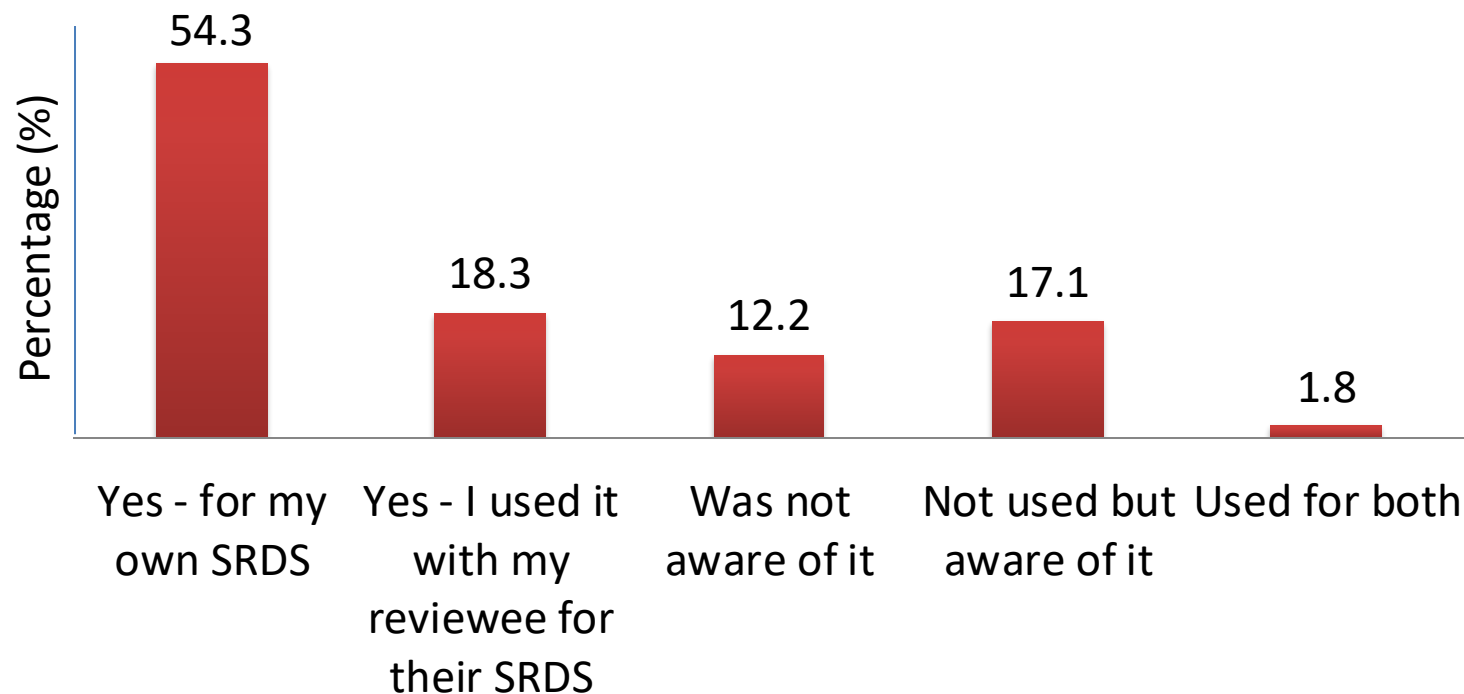
Academic opinion on reviewing ECRs with the new form

- “the categorisation of activities actually meant that the reviewees **considered achievements over the previous year more broadly** and that they highlighted these as a result.”
- “the reviewees were **better prepared** for the meetings since they had been prompted to consider their wider contributions more”
- “The integration of the questions into the main form on career pathway meant that this was **considered by the reviewees beforehand as opposed to an afterthought** and add-on as it had been in the past.”
- “the new form was a helpful tool that allowed the SRDS process and the discussion during the meeting to be **more meaningful** for the reviewee”

ECR opinions of the new form

- *“**more relevant** sections for Postdocs and really **help to facilitate** the discussion with PI around my career development rather than simply on my project”.*
- *“**it focused the mind**”*
- *“**more friendly and more supportive** to the ECR”*
- *“**better tailored for the needs of researchers**”*
- *“found the **clearly defined headings really helpful** to identify all the different aspects of my job and points to discuss”*
- *“The big improvement with the new form was to **make my role far more proactive** in the SRDS and to approach it with a clear idea of my achievements thus far and objectives”*

Results from the survey: Use of the supporting document



- 74.4% used the associated document
 - 84% found it **useful to review the previous year**
 - 81.6% found it **useful to set objectives**

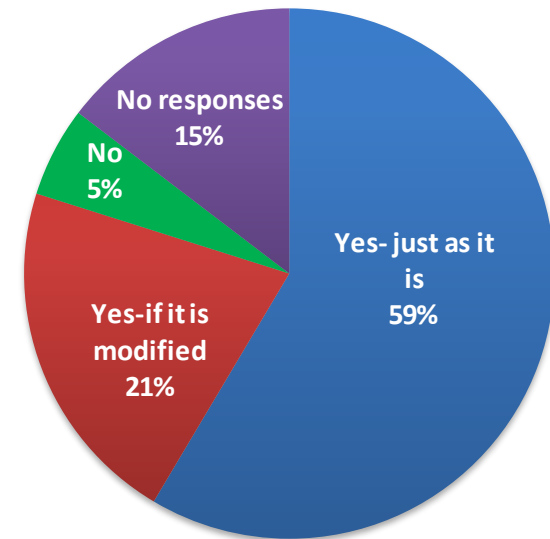
Additional concerns raised:

- **Improved perception** of documents after attending workshop
- Negative feelings when reviewers had **not read documents** prior to meetings or do not provide written feedback
- **Mixed feelings from non PDRA staff** who were asked to use the form in some departments
- Extremely positive comments in departments where **reviewer is not the PI/line manager, or having a 2nd reviewer** in addition to PI/line manager
- **timings of SRDS reviews** to align with contract start/end date instead of the generic summer deadlines
- Large number of participants recommended changes in the **scoring system**

Future recommendations

- 131 respondents (80%) would like to continue using the tailored ECR- SRDS document
- 9 respondents said they would not like to use the form
- Clearer guidelines about using the supporting documents
 - ensure ECR are clear that this is not a list of requirements

Would you like to continue using the ECR tailored SRDS?



Further development to SRDS

Making the most of your SRDS

A guide for

EARLY
CAREER
RESEARCHERS



Questions to support reflection
in preparing for an SRDS conversation

This guide offers you a series of coaching questions to support your reflection in preparing for your SRDS. These questions cover a diverse range of activities and possible professional development, some of which will be appropriate for some researchers and not for others. The questions in this guide are intended to broaden your thinking about types of activities and professional development that you are currently engaging with or may want to consider in the year ahead. Our intention is not that you respond to every single question: use them selectively as “prompts for reflection” by picking the questions that seem the most relevant to your current situation.

If your fixed term contract is due to finish before the next SRDS round, it is vital that you have an SRDS review and the meeting should focus on discussing the past year, providing feedback to you on what you’ve done and setting objectives for the time during which you will still be with the University, in order to maximise your career development.

We have grouped the questions using the SRDS format: Research, Teaching and Supervision, and Administration. For each subsection, consider what you have found rewarding/challenging and any progress made towards objectives you have previously set.

COMPLETING SECTION A

Research

Research Achievements

1. Discuss the generation of research data and how you have put research protocols in operation
2. How have you reached the milestones in your research programme?
3. What techniques and methodology have you developed?

Scholarly Communication

1. How regularly do you write up your research results?
2. What manuscripts do you have in preparation/submitted/accepted?
3. What other writing have you been involved in e.g. review articles or patents?

2

3

- Form name changed to ‘Researcher’ SRDS form
- Change to reviewer pairing communication
- Removal to the 1-3 scoring system

Summary of key findings

- Evidence of widespread use of the new SRDS documents across the 2 faculties
- Majority of users identified both document as useful
- Majority of survey respondents and all focus groups participants recommend that the tailored ECR-SRDS documents continue to be used