



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



HR Excellence in Research: 8-year Review for Cardiff University

Cardiff University Concordat Implementation Working Group

(September 2018)

1 Introduction

In 2010, Cardiff became one of the first universities in the UK to be awarded the *HR Excellence in Research* (HREIR) award. Over the last 8 years, continuous progress has been made in the ways in which we support and develop our research staff and in improving the research environment in which they work, demonstrating our commitment to the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*.

Research excellence is a key component of Cardiff University's (CU) new strategic plan, *The Way Forward 2018-2023*, which was launched in January 2018. Underpinning this is a commitment to empower and support all researchers to conduct research at the highest level, and to support early career researchers in terms of building and sustaining their careers. Furthermore, a new Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Enterprise (PVCRI) will begin her tenure in September 2018. A former College Dean for Research, the new PVCRI has a long history of working to support and champion early career researchers and is chair of both the 'Early Career Research Oversight' (ECRO) and Concordat Implementation groups, thus ensuring continued support for the early career agenda at the University Executive Board (UEB).

2 How the Internal Evaluation was Undertaken

The evaluation of progress was conducted by a University-wide *Concordat Implementation Working Group*, chaired by the incoming PVCRI. Its membership included the two Chairs of the *Cardiff University Research Staff Association* (CURSA) whose tenures cover the review period, the Head of Leadership and Staff Development, the Organisational & Staff Development (OSD) Officer for Research, the Career Development Manager for Research Staff, a representative from *Research and Innovation Services*, the Dean of Research (or their nominated representative) from each of the three academic colleges, a College Human Resources Business Partner, and a representative from the *Cardiff University Doctoral Academy*.

In addition to input from the monitoring group, the review was also informed by data from the 2017 *Careers in Research Online Survey* (CROS) and the 2017 *Cardiff University Staff Survey*, the latter being segregated for data pertaining to research staff. 2017 saw a record participation rate at Cardiff for CROS, with 37% of research staff (344) submitting a response. Furthermore, the review was also supported by in-house data from the monitoring and assessment of initiatives such as Performance Development Review (PDR) and mentoring. Cross-reference was also made to the CU Strategic Equality plan 2016-2020 and to the Athena SWAN, Race Equality, and Well-being action plans to ensure strategic alignment across the institution.

3 Key achievements and Progress against Concordat Principles

3.1 Principle A: Recruitment and Selection

Respondents to CROS 2017 were generally positive regarding recruitment and selection at Cardiff. They found the process to be open and transparent, with the majority stating that they had learned about their post through advertisement or word of mouth and had received a written job description with information on the skills and qualifications required. As such, the processes around recruitment and selection at Cardiff are now classed as 'business as usual', with only periodic review to help optimise the process as necessary.

With this in mind, focus has been on the retention of the highly skilled and talented research staff employed at Cardiff. Progress in this area is covered more thoroughly in section 3.3. One area of attention, however, involves the clear articulation to researchers of the routes for transition to more sustainable career pathways. A University wide 'Early Career Research Oversight' (ECRO) project group, chaired by the incoming PVCRI, was formed in 2016 and tasked with identification of the challenges faced by early career researchers (ECRs) transitioning to independence. The ECRO paper sets out practical recommendations to help the institution support ECRs more effectively by sharing best practice throughout the Colleges and by developing a more strategic approach to career development and profile-building. The paper was considered by UEB in 2017, which agreed that the proposed support framework be implemented by the three Colleges. A review of existing College-based activity is underway and will be presented to UEB in Sept 2018 for further consideration. Our forward plan reflects our intention to merge the ECRO and Concordat Implementation groups to ensure efficient and co-ordinated implementation of Concordat actions and ECRO recommendations over the course of the next review period.

3.2 Principle B: Recognition and Value

Significant progress has been made with respect to providing more structure to the Research career pathway. Following review, revised procedures for *Academic Promotion*, which now include staff on the Research career pathway, were approved by UEB in May 2018 and implemented with effect from 1st August 2018. The revised scheme allows advancement within the Research career pathway to Senior Research Fellow, Principal Research Fellow and Professorial Research Fellow. Promotion to these roles is available to those able to demonstrate a national reputation, emerging international reputation or established international reputation, respectively, in respect of their contribution to University benchmarks.

Work continues in order to ensure researchers feel valued as members of academic staff and are fully integrated into the academic community. Some initiatives have already been piloted for potential implementation during the next review period. For example, the College of Physical Sciences and Engineering (CPSE) developed a number of focused support activities to help raise the status of research staff as key members of the academic community, many of which are aimed at enhancing ECR grant submissions. The College of Biomedical and Life Sciences (CBLS) and the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) have now adopted this example of good practice; CBLS will soon roll out a College fellowship support programme, while opportunities in CAHSS include support programmes for applicants to the ESRC New Investigator initiative and the AHRC's ECR scheme and 'Leadership Fellows' programme.

3.3 Principle C: Support and Career Development

Support offered to research staff, both at the start of their employment and during the course of their career at Cardiff, continues to move forward. All new staff are invited to a bespoke institutional induction programme to familiarise them with the University and to inform them about available support. Local inductions are also offered, but CROS respondents have previously reported variability in their usefulness. To ensure more consistency, a standardised induction pack which covers the first 90 days of employment was launched in June 2016. In addition to acting as a guide for new staff, these structured induction documents also help clarify the responsibilities of line managers. A new section on the staff intranet has also been developed as a source of information specifically for new staff and their line managers.

Appraisal was replaced by a new 'Performance Development Review' during the 2015/16 academic year. PDR refers directly to role expectations and focuses on both performance and career development. The PDR form is tailored to each career pathway to facilitate more relevant discussions. Monitoring has shown that participation in PDR increased from 63% of research staff deemed eligible for PDR by their school in its introductory year, to 90% in 2017/18. As in previous years, perceived usefulness of PDR was variable among CROS 2017 respondents. As such, guidance on how to get the most from PDR will be added to the 'Cardiff Researcher' programme for 2018. Further development of 'The Cardiff Academic' to clarify role expectations for and its application to research staff may also help in this area.

CROS 2017 respondents were very positive about access to training and development opportunities at Cardiff, along with the level of encouragement they receive to engage with them. Cardiff provides a fully-funded researcher development programme, '*The Cardiff Researcher*', which is free at the point of delivery. In the 2017/18 academic year, 256 researchers attended at least one session on the programme. The *Cardiff Researcher* is reviewed each year and revised as appropriate, influenced by factors such as researcher need (as informed by CROS and PDR) and attendance on existing courses. The programme is currently under review for 2018/19, where it is anticipated that provision will be extended in the areas of research leadership, wellbeing and resilience, and PDR. Researchers are also able to take advantage of shared development opportunities both in-house, provided by the Doctoral Academy, and externally, via the reciprocal *Shared Research Staff Development* scheme established with the GW4 Alliance in 2015.

In June 2017, CPSE piloted a new mentoring scheme which was then extended across the three colleges. This utilised a new software system (SUMAC[®]) for seeking/matching mentors and mentees. The call for expressions of interest was open for one month and attracted 180 members of staff, 46 of whom were on the Research career pathway. The mentoring scheme will run again in the 2018/19 academic year, where there will be three calls for expressions of interest in order to maximise uptake. Mentoring is embedded in the recommendations outlined in the ECRO project which will be presented to UEB in Sept 2018.

Cardiff University Research Staff Association (CURSA) was launched in 2012 and officially recognised as one of the University's formal staff networks in 2014. All research staff are members of CURSA by default, and its activities are managed by a committee. The committee, including the chair, was refreshed in 2015, with a new chair being appointed again in January 2017. Training was provided for committee members and School representatives in 2016 and this remains available on an as-needed basis. Research staff were represented by CURSA on several University groups during the review period and CURSA has hosted a number of meetings for researchers which were also attended by senior University staff.

Towards the close of the review period there were issues with maintaining a consistent body of school representatives due to staff turnover and changes in leadership. As such, progress in embedding CURSA in the decision-making processes at the University has been slow and a clear channel of communication for researchers to feed through to relevant University committees has not yet been fully realised. Recommendations from the ECRO project include strengthening the voice of researchers at the University by increasing their representation on University-wide committees with decision making responsibilities. Moving forward, attention will be given to reviewing the current organisational structure of CURSA and to identifying methods to increase engagement with research staff.

Further clarity has been provided around the role and responsibilities of academic line managers in new University guidelines, including workload models and expectations. This guidance can be found on the staff intranet, which also provides links to training available to help managers fulfil their role more effectively. The three colleges also offer face-to-face line manager training, which is complemented by an institutional programme for research team leaders delivered, in part, by Advance HE. Plans are in place to develop 'Leadership & Management' training for entry-level researchers who are aspiring research team leaders.

3.4 Principle D: Researchers Responsibilities

Researchers share the responsibility for their personal and career development. This includes proactively seeking out development opportunities and keeping comprehensive records of such activity. Cardiff has introduced a new people management system, namely Core HR, which facilitates this. All central training provision is booked via Core HR and, once completed, is automatically added to the staff member's Core HR profile. Furthermore, the system allows individuals to add any broader development undertaken to their profile, which could include any locally administered courses, conferences, etc.

A significant majority of respondents to CROS 2017 agreed that they take ownership of their career development, yet under half had a clear career development plan and even fewer were aware of UK initiatives in place to help deliver on this, such as Vitae and the Researcher Development Framework. As such, during the next review period there will be some benefit in refreshing researcher knowledge in these areas and guiding them to the appropriate sources of information for self-directed learning and reflection.

3.5 Principle E: Equality and Diversity

A large majority of respondents to CROS 2017 (85%) agreed that Cardiff is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I); however, a small number of concerns were voiced about whether these policies are always adhered to at 'ground level'. To address this, the University's "Equality, Diversity and Inclusion" online training module has been redeveloped and was relaunched in March 2018. This module is now mandatory for all staff and uptake will be monitored. An online "Unconscious Bias" training module is also available which, while currently not mandatory across the whole University, is 'highly recommended' for all staff involved in recruitment or decision-making processes. Consideration will be given to making this module mandatory for all University staff.

Cardiff University has held an Athena SWAN Bronze award since 2009 in recognition of its commitment to supporting and advancing women's careers in higher education and research. The institution retained its Bronze award in 2014 and will be reapplying for Bronze in November 2018, led by the *Gender Equality Steering Committee* which has research staff representation. Of the 25 schools, 15 have been recognised by Athena SWAN (2 Silver awards and 13 Bronze awards). This represents an increase from 8 in 2014. Three additional schools (Geography & Planning, Music, and Journalism, Media & Culture) submitted their first application for Bronze in April 2018 and are currently awaiting the results.

The University submitted an application for a bronze award for the Race Equality Charter Mark (RECM) in July 2017 but was unsuccessful. Work against the objectives of the RECM action plan continues and resubmission for the award will be considered following re-evaluation of the application. The University was recognised for its work on LGBT+ equality, being placed 14th in the Stonewall Top 100 employers list for 2018. This marks its third year as the highest placed UK University in the index.

Looking forward, our aim is to align with the strategies in place for Athena SWAN, RECM and Staff Wellbeing to further strengthen the strong ED&I culture which the University has built.

3.6 Principle F: Implementation and Review

Cardiff participated in CROS 2017 with a response rate of 37%, which was significantly higher than the UK response rate of 24%. The CROS 2017 report was submitted to UEB for endorsement, with agreement obtained for the data to be used to inform University policy where appropriate. The report is available on the University website as part of our commitment to transparency. Cardiff will participate in CROS 2019, in addition to running its own in-house Staff Survey.

Cardiff retained the HREIR award in 2016 following a 6-year review. The 'Concordat Implementation Working Group', which is chaired by the incoming PVCr and comprises representation from CURSA, OSD, RIS, college Deans of Research, college HRBPs, and the Doctoral Academy, has now reconvened to evaluate progress against the Concordat action plan and to coordinate the HREIR 8-year review submission. The 8-year review, and the actions contained within, will be endorsed by UEB prior to submission. The Concordat Implementation Working Group will continue to meet on a biannual basis following submission in order to monitor progress against the action plan and to highlight any concerns and priorities in a timely manner.

4 Strategy and Plans for the next four years (2018-2022)

A. Recruitment & Selection

- Establish a working group for the implementation of DORA (San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment) - Sept 2019

B. Recognition and Value

- Increase consistency of ECR support throughout the three colleges - Sept 2020
- Raise awareness of inclusion of research staff in Academic Promotions process - Aug 2020

C. Support & Career Development

- Review induction for research staff and increase attendance by 10% - Sept 2019
- Review 'The Cardiff Researcher' programme and extend provision in Research Leadership, Wellbeing and Resilience, and PDR - Sept 2019
- Increase consistency of line manager training provision between the colleges - Sept 2019
- Review and evaluate CURSA organisational structure and increase visibility and engagement of research staff - Sept 2019
- Strengthen researcher voice by embedding research staff into school and college level research committees - Sept 2020

D. Researchers Responsibilities

- Increase awareness of UK and European initiatives which exist to help researchers with career planning and development - commence Jan 2019

E. Equality and Diversity

- Submit applications for institutional Athena SWAN, departmental Athena SWAN, and RECM awards during the review period.

F. Implementation and Review

- Run CROS in 2019 and 2021.
- Submit 10-year HREIR review - Sept 2020