



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



HR Excellence in Research Award: Four year review for Cardiff University

Cardiff University Concordat Review Group

(September 2014)

1 Internal evaluation

This internal evaluation was conducted by a University Working Group and was chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC). Its membership included, among others, the Chair of the Cardiff University Research Staff Association (CURSA), the Interim HR Director, the Interim Director of Staff and Organisational Development, the Head of Research Development, the Head of Careers and Employability, one of the University College Business Partners and a Director of Research from one of our academic Schools. The review was informed by the results of the 2013 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS), and the 2012 and 2013 Research Staff Policy Forums, and will be presented to the University Executive Board at the start of the 2014/15 academic year. Discussions between the DVC and the PVC Research were also fed into the review of the Concordat Action Plan.

It is important to note that since September 2012, with the appointment of the new Vice Chancellor, the University has been undergoing major change; implementing a three College structure which incorporates the existing twenty seven Schools. The changes will improve accountability, enable more effective provision of services to Academic Schools and support the University's strategy ([The Way Forward, 2012-2017](#)). The new structure enables easier and more direct monitoring across the institution to entrench consistent good practice, effective communication and improved co-ordination towards common principles. As a result of the structural change a new University Executive Board was formed. Despite the far reaching consequences of the University restructure, the majority of the actions in our four-year Concordat Action Plan (2010-2014) have been achieved, many of which have led to ongoing 'business as usual' activity. However, the restructuring has impacted upon and interrupted a small number of the actions included in our 2012 interim review. There are plans in place to advance and progress any outstanding actions within the next review period. (See Action Plan).

2 Key achievements and progress

2.1 Recruitment and Selection

The Concordat recommendations in this area were already fully implemented at the time of our initial benchmarking review and have become 'business as usual' activities. Monitoring of these areas continues to take place however, as does our commitment to ensuring that researchers at all levels are aware of their rights and responsibilities with respect to employment law and best practice. In 2012 the University introduced a mandatory online equality and diversity (E&D) module for all members of University staff. This module provides an up-to-date overview of rights and responsibilities with respect to E&D legislation. It is complemented with classroom-based training for managers (in addition to mandatory E&D training for chairs of recruitment panels).

2.2 Recognition and Value

Progress in this area during the review period has included a University-wide drive to improve participation in and effectiveness of annual appraisal and continued work on supporting the managers of research staff.

The effects of the University's efforts to improve the participation rates for appraisal are clear: in 2010 57% of Professors had undergone appraisal in the previous 24 months. By 2012 this figure had increased to 82%. There was also a 20% increase in the number of Professors who had undergone appraisal in the previous 15 months from 45 to 65%. By 2014 this figure had increased slightly to 68%.

There was also an increase in the participation in appraisal for researchers (or probation if in the first year of employment) in the previous 15 months: from 60% in 2010 to 68% in 2012. This figure decreased slightly to 63% in 2014. Efforts will continue to improve the participation rates, and the appointment of HR Business Partners at College level will enable more effective promotion of appraisal within Schools. Attention will also be paid to continuing to improve the effectiveness of appraisal.

Supporting the managers of researchers is an ongoing activity and further work has been conducted to improve the training for PIs on leadership and other management skills. The University's Leadership and Management Framework stipulates what is expected of all members of staff with a leadership and management role, and during the review period this was formally linked to the appraisal process. A session on the responsibilities of the PI has been incorporated into our award-winning programme for Research Team Leaders and work is also underway to introduce a general guide for PIs on the skills required for general management, including guidance on visas/immigration and the right to work in the UK. The DVC will seek formal approval of these guidelines and the training of PIs at a University Executive Board during the 2014/15 academic year. The University will be introducing a staff intranet in 2014/15 and consideration will be given to how best to provide integrated information to PIs and others with management responsibility for researchers .

It is also worth noting that a new Master's course for Research Managers and Administrators, to be developed at Cardiff during 2014/15 in conjunction with the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA), will consider the role played by this key group of staff in supporting University researchers.

For the University to implement fully the Concordat's principles in this area we will need to work with Colleges in the next review period to ensure that they are embedded in College and School practices. Some of the revised actions outlined in our 2012 review, pertaining to working with the Colleges, were delayed to allow the new structure time to establish itself, such as providing a formal Concordat briefing for senior College staff.

The Cardiff University Research Staff Association (CURSA) was established in March 2012. A new Chair was appointed in April 2014. Since taking up her position, the Chair has worked with the research staff community to take the number of Schools with research staff representatives from nine to twenty of the twenty seven Schools. A CURSA training representative has been appointed and will suggest input into the content of the PI leadership and management programme referred to above. CURSA is one of the University's formal staff networks which gives it a direct line of reporting into the University's Equality and Diversity Committee, and during the review period it has started to establish a stronger relationship with the Cardiff branch of the Universities and Colleges Union. The Chair of CURSA will work with the Pro Vice Chancellor Research and College Deans of Research to explore how best to ensure research staff representation at College Board level.

2.3 Support and Career Development

Having put in place interim funding to ensure the sustainability of activity previously funded by Roberts monies, the University formally committed in 2013 to provide ring-fenced funding to enable research staff to participate in formal training and career development activity that is free at the point of delivery. The Cardiff Researcher programme sets out the University's expectations about the broader development of researchers and is formally linked with the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF). It contains workshops, online modules and one-to-one coaching on over 100 topics and over a third of the research staff population attends at least one formal transferable skills or career development session in any given year. We have had in post a full time Careers Consultant for research staff since 2007, and this became a core-funded, ongoing role in September 2013.

In order to raise awareness of career planning the RDF tool was piloted during 2012/13. Interest in the personal development plan element of the tool was limited. As a result of this the University is examining how staff can record personal development activity in its new staff database (Cardiff People) and its new Research Information System.

Some progress has been made with respect to giving more structure to the 'research only' career pathway. During the review period the University piloted a workload allocation scheme for all academic staff. The workload model for research staff makes explicit that research staff are expected to have time to engage in broader scholarship and CPD, as well as teaching and activities related to innovation and engagement. Research staff use the regrading process to change grades. A review of this process was completed during the period and a session about regrading is now offered through the Cardiff Researcher Programme, and a researchers' guide to regarding will be published in our Autumn edition of the University's 'Research Staff Update', which is published three times a year. A formal process has been introduced to enable research staff with an appropriate profile to move from 'research only' to a 'teaching and research' career pathway.

However, work on exploring the feasibility of introducing a formal 'promotions' scheme for research staff will be carried forward into the next review period. Desk-based research to identify good practice in this area in other universities will be undertaken during Autumn 2014 and an 'options' paper will be presented to the University Executive Board during the 2014/15 academic year. This activity will feed into the University's forthcoming review of how it supports excellence across the institution.

The University will continue to improve the ways that it monitors the progress and mobility of its researchers. The DVC is exploring the possibility of introducing exit interviews for all research staff who leave the institution, enabling us to keep more detailed records of the first destination of our leavers. This proposal is supported by CURSA.

3 Equality and Diversity

The University's [Strategic Equality Plan 2012-2016](#) pledges to 'embed a culture where respect, communication and understanding are fostered and diversity positively valued'. The values are

mirrored in the University's strategic direction, 'The Way Forward', where respect for people and diversity is a guiding principle. The University applied for renewal of its Athena SWAN Bronze award in June 2014 (first awarded in 2009). Eight schools already hold Bronze or Silver awards and a further five plan to submit applications during 2014/15. Two of our non-STEM schools have recently received the Gender Equality Charter Mark. The University is currently participating in a pilot scheme for introducing a Race Equality Charter Mark for the HE sector.

4 Implementation and Review

The Deputy Vice Chancellor has oversight of the implementation of the Concordat. Progress will be reviewed at the annual Research Staff Policy Forum in November 2014. This forum is run by CURSA, with administrative support provided by the University. Further evaluation will be conducted by the Pro Vice Chancellor Research who will bring the findings to his Deans of Research meetings.

The introduction of the new University website/intranet has been delayed to 2014/15. As an interim measure the latest benchmarking report, the action plan, the 2012 report and the 2014 report have been published on the existing website, but we will explore more user-friendly ways of presenting the information contained within these documents as part of our move towards a new staff intranet.

Cardiff participated in CROS 2011 and 2013, achieving a response rate slightly above the UK average on both occasions. The results of these are publically available, as part of our commitment to transparency. Cardiff will participate in CROS 2015 and the results of this will be used to inform future policy and practice in this area.

5 The next four years (2014-2018)

Looking ahead, there are several activities the University needs to consider in order to improve the service offered to research staff. These include:

- Review of the research career pathway with 'promotions' option paper for UEB - by end 2015
- Enhancements to existing training courses including improved training for PIs, and the introduction of a Masters Course for Research Administrators– by end 2015
- Working with Colleges to develop local action plans (2014-2018) – during the 2014/15 academic year. The aim is to raise the status of research staff as key members of academic staff and to share existing good practice in order to shape more generic guidelines for supporting researchers
- Introduction of exit interviews for all research staff – by end 2015
- Introduction of a University mentoring scheme, including the identification of any barriers to a 'right to a mentor' scheme for researchers – by end 2016
- Review of methods for incorporating improved career development planning tools into University systems – by end 2015
- An updated (intranet) site addressing the specific needs of researchers – by end 2016
- A review of action plan in September 2016, with revised/new actions where appropriate.