

Introduction

The University of the West of England, Bristol achieved the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award on 27th January 2012 in recognition of the progress made in implementing the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. A diverse group of staff came together to form a Concordat implementation working group comprising of the Researchers' Forum Convenor, research staff representatives, Human Resources, the Graduate School and Research Support. The working group reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. The working group meets twice a year and maintains and updates an Action Plan.

Internal evaluation

In November 2013 the working group conducted a two-yearly internal review to assess progress against the implementation and action plan as well as plan our commitments for 2013 – 2015. To undertake the internal assessment, the working group reported on progress in their areas of work, we engaged with the Researchers' Forum in May 2013 to gain feedback on researcher initiatives linked to the concordat. We also drew on data collected in CROS 2013, the staff survey conducted in 2012 and the mini- survey follow up in 2013.

The Researchers' Forum at UWE was established in 2005 and has since become a key mechanism for the University to engage with its researchers. The Researchers' Forum comprises of research staff, early career academics and staff supporting researchers.

Key achievements and progress

The preparation of the gap analysis and implementation plan for the HR Excellence in Research award provided UWE with the necessary focus to bring together a number of related initiatives that benefit and support staff at the university. It also provided the opportunity to renew our efforts toward consolidating support for the development of researchers, who are of high importance to the institutional research strategy.

In the academic year 2011/12 UWE underwent a substantial change in its organisation, both with the re-structuring of academic faculties and departments but also the realignment of the professional services that support the academic activity. An institutional Graduate School was created in January 2012 within which support the skills development programme for early career researchers resides. Additional support for researchers is provided by Research, Business & Innovation (RBI), Staff Development and UWE Careers.

UWE welcomes the opportunity to review progress against our initial implementation plan and the following key achievements are highlighted below:-

Recruitment and selection

- A new e-recruitment system is now in use which has improved the consistency and quality of information about vacancies at the university
- Human Resources have overhauled their web pages with a comprehensive suite of support for the recruitment and selection of staff contained within the new intranet site. This includes comprehensive guidance, policies for recruitment and selection and development resources for staff.
- The external UWE research webpages have been overhauled in response to user experience focus groups and provides clear information about our research activity and support for researchers

Recognition and value

- The UWE Researchers' Forum held on 22nd May 2013 focussed on the development of the new UWE Strategy 2020 with a particular emphasis the progress made with respect to researcher development initiatives at UWE
- Engagement with the Performance and Development Review process has improved dramatically in the past two years with 74.1% of researchers having a PDR compared to 59.4% across the sector (CROS 2013)
- UWE researchers felt they were treated fairly (79.6%) with respect to access to training and development activities (CROS 2013)
- The UWE Researcher's Forum meeting held on the 10th May 2012 featured a comprehensive discussion around the role and contribution of researchers to the Research Excellence Framework

Support and career development

- The Early Career Starter Grant Scheme (now renamed SPUR) is in its 6th year of operation and is designed to award funding to early career researchers, in excellent and emerging areas of research at UWE, to undertake some preliminary work with a view to making a substantial bid for external funding to take this work forward
- In collaboration with the universities of Bath and Bristol, the South West Crucible is in its second year providing early to mid-career researchers with an opportunity to engage in this professional and personal leadership development programme
- In August 2013 UWE committed to a three year subscription to the Vitae RDF Planner to enhance the provision of professional development planning tools

Researchers' Responsibilities

- The research ethics pages of the UWE research website have been improved and provide comprehensive guidance on research governance processes and policies.
- The topic of the Researchers' Forum held on 5th December 2013 was "writing internationally excellent papers and extending your reach as a researcher" – it provided the researchers with realistic information and advice about how to succeed in an academic research career
- The topic of the Researchers' Forum held on the 28th November 2012 was "Towards a research active lecturing post" and was designed to help researchers understand how to increase their teaching experience alongside their research activity

Diversity and equality

- UWE first entered the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index in 2010 and have made significant progress on ensuring the university is an inclusive place to study and work. The 2014 Stonewall index places UWE, Bristol 35th in the top 100 employers, the 2nd highest placing for a university
- Much progress has also been made in terms of gender equality with UWE joining the Athena Swan Charter in 2012 and earning an institutional and departmental (Applied Sciences) bronze award in 2013. The Department of Engineering, Design and Mathematics submitted an application for a bronze award in November 2013
- Gender representation in research/academic roles (see table 1) is broadly equal yet still shows a decline in the proportion of females in more senior roles.
- The Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme is now in its 3rd year and is an important element of UWE's support for female researchers

Implementation and review

- The Concordat implementation working group meets twice a year and enables progress against the implementation plan to be monitored with appropriate rigour
- UWE is committed to engaging with CROS, with participation in 2009, 2011 and 2013.

Next steps and focus going forward

- The Researchers' Forum is pivotal in engaging UWE researchers with the principles of the Concordat. The priority is to ensure that the events and work of the Researchers' Forum is adequately resourced
- Feedback from researchers highlights the importance of collaborative space, both in the physical sense and online. Attempts at creating an informal online discussion group have yet to gain critical mass. The focus will be to work with the new intranet team to ensure that collaborative space for researchers is catered for
- The new [webpages for research staff](#) will be developed further to provide the necessary information and guidance to facilitate researchers undertaking research with impact
- CROS 2013 noted a low awareness of the HR Excellence in Research Award among UWE researchers. The focus of future Researchers' Forum events must take this into account
- CROS 2013 also suggested that the majority of researchers do not use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to underpin their continual professional development – a renewed effort will be required to raise awareness among research staff and to promote the availability of the Planner tool to engage with the RDF
- UWE will continue to work collaboratively with other universities to provide high quality events aiming at supporting the career development of researchers such as the South West Crucible and supporting the Vitae SW & Wales hub ReSEARCH careers regional event
- Respondents to CROS 2013 showed that the majority of UWE researchers (86.3%) do not use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to support their continual professional development activity. We will work with Vitae to increase awareness of this framework and make available tools to facilitate development activities.

Table 1. Gender representation in research and academic roles

University - Academic and Research Staff	2009/10				2010/11				2011/12			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
		%		%		%		%		%		%
Research Associate/fellow (Grade F/G)	71	52	66	48	67	52	61	48	54	49	57	51
Senior Research Fellow (Grade H)	14	35	26	65	14	39	22	61	15	45	18	55
Lecturer (Grade G)	21	55	17	45	13	59	9	41	17	55	14	45
Senior Lecturer (Grade H)	420	54	365	46	403	54	348	46	379	52	352	48
Reader/Associate Professor (Grade I)	95	46	111	54	75	46	88	54	81	48	89	52
Professor (Grade J)	40	37	67	63	31	36	54	64	37	39	59	61

Data from the [UWE Staffing compendium 2012](#)