

Introduction

The University of the West of England, Bristol achieved the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award on 27th January 2012 which was retained in January 2014 in recognition of the progress made in implementing the principles of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*. To support further development, a Concordat Implementation Working Group was formed comprising the Researchers' Forum Convenor, research staff representatives, Human Resources, the Graduate School and Research Administration. The working group reports to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of Academic Board. The working group meets twice a year and maintains and updates an Action Plan.

Evaluation

In September 2015 the working group met to review our action plan and to renew our commitments for 2016 – 2018. To undertake the assessment, the working group reviewed progress across relevant areas of work but put the perspectives of researchers at the forefront, for example:-

- The working group has **research staff representation** from each of the four faculties at UWE
- The **Researchers' Forum** that took place in November 2015 provided attendees with an overview of progress, and importantly their perspectives of it, against the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* [<http://wp.me/p2GsxT-NP1>]
- We also drew on data collected in CROS 2013 and 2015, and the UWE staff survey conducted in 2014
- Members of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee were invited to comment and contribute to the action plan

The UWE Researchers' Forum, which is central to this plan, was established in 2005 and is a key mechanism for the University to engage with its researchers. The Researchers' Forum comprises research staff, early career academics and staff supporting researchers. Themes for the Researchers' Forum events are suggested by the research staff representatives, many of which focus on the career development of researchers.

Key achievements and progress

The HR Excellence in Research award provides UWE with the necessary focus to bring together a number of related initiatives that benefit and support staff at the university. It also provides the opportunity to renew our efforts toward consolidating support for the development of researchers, who are considered to be a highly important component of the institutions' research community and significant contributors to the recently revised institutional research strategy. This identifies four key enablers, one of which is "people: building on talent and opportunity". This includes a range of measures such as further investment in early career researchers and an "increased focus on staff training, mentoring and development opportunities" for research staff.

In academic year 2014/15 UWE began an ambitious programme of changes with a revised institutional strategy to take us to 2020 and beyond. A number of senior appointments were made including two Deputy Vice-Chancellors, one to focus on academic programmes and research and one to focus on the operation of the institution. The institutional strategy has been translated into a number of strategic programmes that will review and reform how the university operates well in the future.

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

Recruitment and selection

- UWE is committed to reducing the use of fixed term contracts, currently 70% of research staff at UWE are employed on fixed term contracts with the remainder on open ended contracts
- All staff who chair recruitment of researchers attend mandatory training on recruitment and selection which is checked when panels are proposed
- Human Resources have augmented this recruitment and selection training with skills booster videos on topics such as unconscious bias and our commitment to the 'two ticks' principles for the recruitment of disabled staff

Recognition and value

- The UWE [Researchers' Forum held on 23rd May 2014](#) focussed on the development of a research career with insights from a range of experienced colleagues
- Engagement with the annual Performance and Development Review process has continued to improve with 84% of researchers having a PDR at UWE (up from 74% in 2013) compared to 67% across the sector (CROS 2015)
- UWE researchers felt they were valued for their research outputs (79%), public engagement activity (75%) and contribution to teaching & learning (68%) (CROS 2015)
- The UWE Researcher's Forum planned for February 2016 will focus on 'Me, My career, and the Research Excellence Framework'

Support and career development

- In 2015, a new Vice Chancellor's Early Career Researcher Development Awards Scheme awarded funding of £250k to 16 early career researchers, in excellent and emerging areas of research at UWE, . A further round of VCECR awards is to be made in 2016.
- In collaboration with the universities of Bath and Bristol, the South West Crucible ran for a second year providing early to mid-career researchers with an opportunity to engage in this professional and personal leadership development programme
- In August 2015 UWE increased its 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 appointment of a research governance team has enhanced support for researchers in ensuring research is conducted to appropriate professional standards, including the publication of a substantially revised 'Code of Good Research Conduct' which is aligned closely with the Universities UK *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.
- The topic of the Researchers' Forum held on the 5th December 2014 was "work-life balance" and was designed to help researchers understand how to reframe competing priorities in the contemporary academic and working environment

Diversity and equality

- UWE first entered the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index in 2010 and has made significant progress on ensuring the university is an inclusive place to study and work. The 2015 Stonewall index places UWE, Bristol 11th in the top 100 employers, the highest ranking 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. Since then, the Department of Engineering, Design and Mathematics achieved a bronze award in November 2013, the departments of Nursing & Midwifery and Allied Health Professions jointly achieved the Bronze Award in 2014
- Gender representation in research/academic roles is broadly equal and shows an increase in the proportion of females in more senior roles (41% in 2014, up from 38% in 2013).
- The Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme is now in its 5th 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, 2013 and 2015.

Next steps and strategy from 2016

A new action plan has been developed that looks ahead and takes into account the parallel projects under the University's two main strategic programmes, Performance 2020 and Learning 2020, and to ensure that researcher development is considered as part of the implementation. A range of projects have been launched in the last 12 months covering a wide range of activities including recruitment, leadership behaviours, talent management, reward and recognition, learning and development and managing performance. The main areas for action with respect to continuing progress on the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* are as follows:-

- Faculties to revise their research implementation plans to align with the new research strategy [**Concordat principle 1-7**]
- To review and improve how and where we advertise to ensure we are attracting the best people as part of the Performance 2020 programme which will ensure that information supplied about the university, the role and environment in which the work takes place is clear and transparent [**Concordat principle 1**]
- To continue to improve the online tools available to make the experience of filling vacancies more efficient for applicants and for recruiting managers [**Concordat principle 1**]
- Roll out the "Two Ticks – positive about disabled people" information on all job adverts and recruitment documentation from January 26th 2016 [**Concordat principle 1, 6**]
- To ensure that once new staff start we support them with their induction so that they are performing effectively as swiftly as possible by rolling out the online induction programme (launched in September 2015) and reviewing and improving the welcome fairs [**Concordat principle 1, 2, 3**]

- Complete the 360° review of Associate Heads of Department, Associate Professor and Professors with respect to the agreed UWE Leadership Behaviours and create a personal development plan based on the outcomes of the review [**Concordat principle 2**]
- Review the career pathways across the university taking into account the feedback from research staff via the Researchers' Forum and the Careers in Research Online Survey as part of the Talent Management Project [**Concordat principle 2, 3**]
- Make recommendations to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee in February 2016 for a revised researcher development core programme following an extensive review of current provision and gap analysis. The proposed programme to be launched in September 2016 [**Concordat principle 2, 3, 4, 5**]
- Review and scope a mentoring framework under the auspices of Performance 2020 to identify where the gaps in provision in relation to the range of existing mentoring schemes, e.g. the Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme. [**Concordat principle 3, 4, 5**]
- Review the terms of reference of the Researchers' Forum to ensure that it remains relevant to the target demographic. The UWE Researchers' Forum was specifically constituted to focus on issues relating to staff employed on research grades. It has highlighted the Concordat since its launch and regularly covers themes relating to research staff development. [**Concordat principle 3, 4, 5**]
- Continue the work of spreading good practice by encouraging more departments to submit for recognition to Athena Swan to add to the four departmental bronze awards already achieved since 2013. In November 2016 UWE will submit its updated action plan for the institutional Athena Swan Award and the department of Applied Sciences will be submitting simultaneously for a Silver Award [**Concordat principle 6**]
- UWE will also be submitting an application to the first round of the Race Equality Charter Mark in July 2016 [**Concordat principle 6**]
- Continue to publish the statistics to demonstrate the progress made across the institution for all equality groups as part of the UWE Single Equality Scheme. [**Concordat principle 6**]
- Commit to undertaking the Careers in Research Online Survey in 2017 and 2019. The outcomes including an analysis of what UWE researchers say about their experience will be channelled back to senior management through the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee [**Concordat principle 7**]

Success Measures

- Feedback collected from the Careers in Research Online Survey showing improvement in comparison to previous years
- Attendance data collected by Human Resources at welcome fairs and engagement with online induction analysed by staff demographic
- Comprehensive staff statistics published in the annual staff compendium to include staff on research grades as a specific group
- Analysis of the institution-wide staff survey (taking place in December 2016)
- Proportion of staff on research grades engaging with the course provision in the Learning and Development Centre
- Engagement and evaluation data from the UWE Core Researcher Development Programme
- The numbers and level of Athena Swan Awards retained and/or achieved
- The numbers of research grade staff acting as independent researchers and potentially eligible for inclusion in the REF as Early Career Researchers