

University of Hertfordshire two-year Self-Assessment for the European Commission HR Badge of Excellence for Research

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Two-year Internal Evaluation Procedure

In October 2011, following the award of the European Commission HR Badge of Excellence, the University re-constituted the Concordat¹ implementation group to establish a cross-University researcher development working group (RDWG) responsible for championing the personal, professional and career development of researchers, and the implementation of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF). The RDWG, chaired by an Associate Dean (Research), has membership that includes: research staff, the research staff representative on the University Research Committee, Human Resources (HR) Development, Research Grants, the Director of Research Degrees, the Generic Training for Researchers Programme manager and the Careers and Placements Team.

The Chair of the RDWG carried out the two-year self-assessment in an ongoing consultation with members of the RDWG (on 13/12/11, 16/12/11 and 19/9/12), with HR Development and Research Grants staff (on 26/6/12), and research staff from the three Research Institutes. The meeting of the RDWG on 19/9/12 updated the action plan of September 2010 and 2011. External benchmark data has been considered in the evaluation, which includes the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) results from 2010 and 2011, as well as a comparison with researcher development programmes at other HEIs in the region. Feedback has been received from research staff, Principal Investigators (PIs) and research managers.

Achievements since October 2010

Considerable measureable progress has been made structurally and in terms of activity level since October 2010. Researcher development, as reported by research staff, has achieved greater visibility and recognition across the University and in key central University departments such as Human Resources, Careers and Placements and Information Hertfordshire. In part, this can be attributed to the launch of the Concordat but also to a programme of awareness associated with the RDF and greater availability of development opportunities through HR Development and Research Grants. The University received commendable comments in relation to its generic training for researchers provision in the most recent QAA institutional audit. Since then the University has responded to the new Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) quality code, chapter B11 Research Degrees, through a gap analysis of provision against the code requirements.

Structurally, the University has clearly identified researcher development as a key success factor within the University research strategy. The RDWG has been established as the main forum for championing researcher development. A research staff representative has been appointed to the University Research Committee and the Human Resources Department has led the establishment of an integrated annual programme of research staff development involving Research Grants and external facilitators with specialized events. The University has cemented the seriousness with which it takes researcher development by participating in the national CROS in 2010 and 2011, and is committed to participation in 2013. As an indication of the priority given to researcher development, the RDF, Concordat, Athena SWAN, Equality and Diversity, Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS), Vitae and CROS have been agenda items at University Research Committee meetings on 21/10/10, 3/3/11, 26/5/11, 20/10/11, 1/3/12, 31/5/12 and 18/10/12. Having participated in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), the University has provided related case studies for Vitae and been involved in the piloting of the national RDF planner.

The level of activity in researcher development has grown noticeably over the past two years. A series of RDF briefing sessions for professional staff and research leaders (21/6/11), research staff (27/6/11), PIs and

¹ Initially constituted to action implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

supervisors (1/7/11), managers' conference (2/9/11) and an event on the RDF for the Science and Technology Research Institute (20/10/11) have been completed. Feedback from these events and a researcher workshop have been valuable in guiding direction and activity. This has been supplemented with feedback from research staff representatives on the RDWG. A number of initiatives have taken place in recent years alongside increasing opportunity for training:

- New appraisal training sessions have been offered for appraisers of researchers.
- A new leadership development programme 'Making sense of leading for research staff' has been launched and its first cohort is currently in progress.
- A programme of 126 events for research staff run by HR Development and Research Grants has been established.
- Postgraduate researcher and research staff training has been mapped against the RDF.
- Networking events are planned, with the first in December 2012, to encourage research staff dialogue across discipline areas.
- The results from the most recent CROS and PRES have been analysed and action plans implemented.
- Feedback from research staff has led to the reworking of web content and a 'one stop webpage' for researcher development opportunities across the University has been created. This was launched in November 2012.
- A staff handbook for researchers is being produced for launch in early 2013 in addition to the extensive information for researchers available on the University staff intranet (Staffnet).
- The three Research Institutes are increasing their provision for researcher development, for example by running targeted career development events, offering pump priming funding, and offering research broadening funding to support staff new or returning to research, as well as a number of public engagement activities.
- The University intends to submit for the Athena SWAN recognition award in 2013.

Future planned activities include a research staff mentoring scheme and the introduction of a researcher development fund for researcher led activities. This latter initiative is designed to encourage researchers to take responsibility for their own development. In general, this presents a healthy and active programme of researcher development, supported at the highest level through the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the University Research Committee, and delivered through HR Development and Research Grants. The most noticeable change over the past two years has been a move from an ad hoc approach to development to one of a deliberate, planned and structured approach that targets gaps in the RDF and responds to the needs of researchers as expressed by their representatives.

Future plans and revised action plan 2012 - 2014

Whilst considerable progress has been made over recent years, much of this has been through a strong central programme supported by gradual growth in local Research Institute and School provision. The extent to which there is widespread participation in researcher development remains unclear and consideration may need to be given to reporting on participation levels. The introduction of a transparent mechanism for monitoring and recording local and central engagement with research staff development would help target future events and identify areas where take-up was weak.

CROS 2010 and 2011 results provide many positive indicators on research staff development. The University performs better than the national and Bench-marking club averages in, for example: researcher awareness of national initiatives such as the Concordat, the RDF and the Research Excellence Framework; integration into the departmental research community; and finding appraisals useful, amongst several other areas. The CROS suggests attention is required around access to development and training, as well as for opportunities to attend conferences and external meetings. However, the University has moved swiftly to put in place development opportunities in: career management; leadership; management skills development; personal effectiveness; research supervision; grant funding; research information; and data management and the introduction of a new fund for research led development initiatives will provide further such opportunities. The establishment of new Research Institute Management Groups also affords an opportunity for research staff development to be considered on a regular basis as part of these meetings and for research staff fora to inform Directors of

Research in the Research Institutes of development needs. The Groups will also assist with dissemination of development opportunities to the community.

Research staff and research staff representatives have expressed a desire for a greater sense of engagement and networking in an effort to build a stronger sense of community amongst research staff across the University. This fits with regional and national encouragement to establish more research staff associations within Higher Education Institutions to help researchers to take greater control of their own development through researcher led initiatives. There was also support from researchers for the concept of a research staff conference. The University has now responded to this with inclusion of researcher networking events as part of the expanded researcher development programme and the new Doctoral College will offer opportunities for the entire research community, Postgraduate Researchers, Research Staff, PIs and Research Managers, to come together and build a stronger research community. Clearer information and support for research staff to participate in the Continuing Professional Academic Development (CPAD) programme, as a mechanism for equipping them with a recognized teaching qualification, in preparation for future careers in academia, has also been requested.

Feedback from research staff representatives has indicated that they would appreciate access to advice and support on career paths outside academia. This is especially so for research staff whose contracts are coming to an end and who might be preparing to leave academia. Alongside this, researchers have asked that the profile of the Careers and Placement Team and the provision available for research staff is more clearly set out. Changes to the research staff handbook are in progress to address this. Proposals from the PVC Research have led to the agreement to run an annual research staff workshop on career development for fixed-term research staff.

The focus of the next two years will be on consolidating some of the newly introduced training and development opportunities launched in 2011 and 2012. Ensuring that these are high quality, well received events is critical for long-term credibility amongst the research community. In addition, emphasis will be placed on securing widespread buy-in to researcher development across the University. This will mean achieving a good level of take-up of development opportunities and investing in this activity. The University will consider how to monitor progress towards greater participation in researcher development. Over the coming two years, greater recognition will be placed on local development for research staff, encouraging them to participate in Research Institute and School activities, thereby enhancing the integration of research staff within Research Institutes and Schools. A revised 2012 – 2014 action plan is presented in Figure 2.

Updated action plan from October 2010

The action plan of October 2010 has been updated and is presented in figure 1. Of the 26 action points identified, 24 have been completed, one has become obsolete and one is outstanding. The one outstanding item has been consolidated into the revised action plan for 2012 – 2014, Figure 2.

Indicators of the Health of Researcher Development

The University is considering which indicators of success would be the most appropriate, which would be reported on annually to gauge the vitality of research staff development across the University. Making use of the Concordat principles, selected University-specific measures and CROS question results is under consideration as one way forward. Figure 3 outlines the possible set of success indicators that might allow the University Research Committee to take an overview of research staff development across the institution. A similar exercise for PGR training will also be considered.

This two-year self-assessment report was presented to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Management Group on 13 November 2012.

Figure 1 - Updated Action Plan 2010 - 2012

✓=done, O = Ongoing

	Specific actions arising to meet outcomes	Owner	May '09	Feb '10	Sept '10	Sept '11	Sept '12
Student recruitment & selection	1. Review recruitment processes in light of research needs.	Human Resources	O	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2. Work with research managers with aim of understanding the barriers that prevent researchers taking up training opportunity. Identify actions to remove barriers.	Human Resources	O	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3. Investigate how well Equate works for research roles. Identify next steps from outcome of investigation.	Human Resources	O	✓	✓	✓	✓
	4. Research Committee to review Universities Policies and Regulations for approved titles HR01 (formerly PER/B/1)	Business & Research Office	O	O	O	no longer applicable	
	5. Research Grants Team to ensure that Principal Investigators are aware of salary scales at costing stage and publicised in Business and Research Office StudyNET pages.	Business & Research Office	O	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition & value	1. Develop & implement a programme of policy review.	Human Resources	O	O	✓	✓	✓
	2. Review the Fixed Term contract policy against requirements contained within Concordat (n.b: policy change, if required, will need RTU consultation).	Human Resources	O	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3. Gather information to better understand application of that policy. Develop recommendations for moving forward.	Human Resources	O	✓	✓	✓	✓

	4. Work with nominated researcher/s to map line management responsibilities. Identify development intervention/s to enable researchers to deliver against responsibilities.	Human Resources	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support and career development	1. Ensure researcher needs are included in fundamental review of how training needs are identified and prioritised across UH. Consideration should be given to including Generic Training Programme for Researchers programme in the review.	Human Resources	0	0	✓	✓	✓
	2. Incorporate researcher requirements into existing projects relating to induction and appraisal. Brief current project owners.	Human Resources	0	0	✓	✓	✓
	3. Clarify who has responsibility to identify development needs of research staff. Ensure management are aware of processes available to them (see also above points re development of Research managers).	Human Resources	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
	4. Where possible, create a direct link for researchers, and 'sign post' relevant training and development provision. Work with Line managers to clarify their responsibilities and ensure they are skilled to deliver these (see earlier points).	Human Resources	0	0	✓	✓	✓
	5. Incorporate in MIS (StaffNET) system requirements and ensure new staff intranet has sufficient researcher content.	Human Resources	0	0	0	✓	✓
	6. Review existing digital and paper resources for research students and improve signposting where they might also benefit research staff.	Graduate Futures	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
	7. HR and Graduate Futures to discuss opportunities and identify options.	Human Resources & Graduate Futures	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Researcher responsibilities	1. Work with nominated researcher/s to identify the responsibilities of research community.	Human Resources	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2. Review researcher contracts in light of above.	Human Resources	0	✓	✓	✓	✓

	3. Communicate to HR that researchers are to be included when depts are approached for their views on changing HR policy & procedure	Human Resources	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
	4. Business and Research Office to add a section to the research handbook and URO web pages for early career researchers to communicate these expectations and responsibilities once identified.	Business & Research Office	0	0	0	0	✓
	5. Research Committee to consider a category of membership for a representative of research staff, in a similar manner to the research student representative.	Business & Research Office	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diversity & equality	1. Undertake an equality impact assessment event to ensure research policies and RAE2008 issues are fully considered	Equality Office	0	0	✓	✓	✓
	2. Paper for Research Committee from Equality Unit	Equality Office	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3. HR, Equality Unit & Research Office to brief Research Committee and agree guidance (Athena SWAN and Project Juno)	Equality Office	0	0	0	0	0
Implementation & review	1. Contact CROS steering group to see if we can participate in CROS later in 2009. If not, consider using BOS with identical questions to CROS and running our own survey	Rodney Day / Business & Research Office	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2. Agree with Research Committee who should act as Concordat champion and the mechanism for reviewing progress on Concordat implementation and frequency of reporting.	Business & Research Office	0	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 2 - Revised Action Plan 2012 - 2014

Action	Owner	Target date for completion	Sept '13	Sept '14
Consider suitable indicators of widespread engagement with research staff development and periodic reporting by Schools.	PVC (Research)	July 2013		
Introduce a mechanism for research staff to propose researcher development ideas and for Research Institute (RI) Management Groups to address researcher development.	Directors of RIs	July 2013		
Consider establishing a research staff association or other suitable mechanism for research staff community engagement, e.g. research staff fora, within Research Institutes and/or the Doctoral College.	Human Resources, Directors of RIs, Director of Research Degrees	July 2013		
Establish an annual update from HR Development on participation by research staff in centrally provided personal, professional and career development.	HR Development	April 2013		
Participate in CROS 2013.	Research Committee	Next running of CROS		
Run a research staff career development workshop or conference in 2013/14.	HR Development	June 2014		
Establish a Research staff mentoring scheme.	PVC Research Management Group	January 2013		
Establish an annual Research Staff Skills Development Initiative / Fund for researcher led development	PVC Research Management Group	January 2013		
Human Resources, Equality Office and Athena SWAN Working Group to brief Research Committee and agree guidance (Athena SWAN and Project Juno) [<i>Note briefing has taken place but plan is to submit for Athena SWAN recognition before the end of 2013</i>]	Human Resources, Equality Office & Athena SWAN Working Group	June 2013		

Figure 3. Possible Indicators of Success for Research Staff Development. (CROS question numbers from 2013 consultation document)

Concordat Principles	Indicators
1. Recruiting, selection & retaining researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All researchers recruited and inducted according to University policies and procedures • Response to CROS Q13 on application process • High proportion reporting positive views on corporate and local induction in CROS Q8, Q9, Q14
2. Valuing researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall satisfaction of research staff in CROS and University staff survey • Satisfaction with appraisal process as indicated in CROS Q8/9 • Responses CROS Q5, 6 and 7 and relevant University staff survey questions • Feedback from research staff conference
3. Equipping and supporting researchers for a global research environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cadre of research leaders equipped to develop research at University emerging from the research leadership programme • Numbers of research staff attending supervisor training and CPAD • Numbers of research staff engaging in international networking and conference attendance
4. Personal professional and career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of research staff engaging with career management training • Encouraged to engage in personal and career management CROS Q18 • Results from CROS question 16 & 17 • Numbers of individual research staff attending HRD and RG events
5. Researchers sharing in the responsibility for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective research staff engagement at RI level • Number and value of bids supported to the Researcher Led Initiative Fund • Knowledge and understanding of Concordat, Vitae and other national initiatives, CROS Q10 • Response to CROS Q17
6. Diversity and equality promoted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution wide recognition by Athena SWAN at Bronze level • Number of Schools receiving Athena SWAN recognition • Diversity and equality training by all research staff at induction • Response to Q26-29 in CROS and University staff survey questions
7. Regular and collective review of progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining EC HR badge of excellence recognition • Annual reporting at Research Committee on Researcher Development