

University of Hertfordshire 8-Year HR Excellence in Research Report

Constituency and Structure

At the University of Hertfordshire, our target audience for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers is our researcher community, which we interpret to mean all staff and students who do research. This includes staff who have research as part of their role responsibility, 161 staff on research contracts (as of September 2018), 1117 academic staff with research and scholarship in their contracts (albeit recognising that only a proportion of these staff are research-active), staff represented on our Research Information System, staff who are research active and staff returned to the REF, as well as what are termed 'hidden researchers', who combine research with other roles within the University, for example as librarians or technicians.

The structure for delivering on the Concordat, in terms of institutional responsibilities and committees at the University, centres upon our [Researcher Development Working Group \(RDWG\)](#). Its Terms of Reference are to promote researcher development issues at the University and to coordinate the University's reviews for the HR Excellence in Research award and for compliance with the Vitae Concordat. RDWG represents and informs researchers across the University through its structure, membership, quarterly meetings and activities. It is chaired by a senior academic at Professorial level working with an HREiR Project Manager. We have an ECR School Representative from each of our 9 (previously 10) academic Schools to provide two-way communication across the University. Additional RDWG members represent central departments: the Research Office; the Careers & Employment Service; the Researcher Development Programme; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; the Learning & Teaching Innovation Centre (LTIC), and the Athena SWAN Project Officer. RDWG agendas and minutes are circulated to the Director of the Doctoral College, the Associate Deans Research (ADRs) in the 9 Schools, the Director of Human Resources and the Head of Leadership, People Development and Change. Hertfordshire has [6 Research Themes](#) addressing global challenges which span the University's research areas and the Theme Champions are part of the RDWG circulation group. The RDWG Chair reports termly to the University's Research Committee, sits on the People Board which delivers the People strand of the University's Strategic Plan and attends University Induction workshops to answer on research and researcher development questions.

Review Process

Our HREiR Action Plan is kept live with continuous review at the RDWG meetings and reporting to the Research Committee (both termly), while RDWG School representatives communicate to and from the Schools on actions and input is provided by the other RDWG members as needed. For this HREiR 8-year review, as previously, we have consulted our RDWG ECR School representatives, and taken into account the feedback they have gathered from researchers in their Schools, audited progress against the current action plan and identified new actions. We have integrated researchers' views from other sources including the CROS, PIRLS, PRES, and the University's staff surveys (2015 and 2017). We have aligned our action planning with those for Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter Mark. The updated six-year action plan, review report and forward eight-year action plan prepared from this material by the RDWG Chair, who is herself a researcher, and the HREiR Project Manager, were presented to the University Research Committee and the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Enterprise's Management Group (PRMG). This 8-year review has thereby involved researchers' views at every stage.

Key Achievements

Our **Skill Up! Researcher-Led Researcher Development scheme** award enables researchers to request needs-based development and therefore informs development delivery in the University, as well as providing a development opportunity for the ECRs who run the scheme. We met our SMART measure of receiving bids from all Schools and awarding of the total amount of funding annually. Skill Up! winners' reports are reviewed each year for continuous improvement. Feedback evidencing the success of the scheme includes this, from a Health and Social Work workshop: *'Sharing these experiences helped me to identify potential problems with my own future grant submissions. Knowledge within the group was used to suggest different strategies and opportunities that may lead to successful grant applications.'* A response from Humanities concerned an archival workshop: *'The workshop also benefited me as a researcher, enhancing my skills in archival research through discussions with archivists and other researchers who have used such resources. It also gave me an invaluable experience in event planning, financial management, and community outreach, which will aid me in the planning of future events, as well as enhancing my CV.'* The 2018/19 round of Skill Up! was launched in summer 2018. For the future, we are increasing Skill Up! to two round per year, which will enable the scheme to be more responsive and timely.

Research-Informed and Research-Rich Teaching: The University has developed guidance and support for all staff, including researchers, to consider how research informs teaching and how to engage students in research activity (both discipline specific and pedagogic research). We are promoting the Research Informed Teaching strand of the Curriculum Design Toolkit published on our intranet, and we have developed two case studies of Research Informed Teaching. Dr Adam Crymble (History) has explained how students in the level 6 module Migrants & Minorities c. 1688-1850 use his monograph, *'at the cutting edge of research in migration and community history. They work with 300-year-old records from the Archbishop of Canterbury's collection (Lambeth Palace Archives), which include the 'Returns of Papists', documents from 1767 that show house-by-house Catholic occupation in a West-London parish. Working with these tables of numbers, students are taught how to map the entries and conduct exploratory data analysis, seeking spatial patterns that are not otherwise visible. They then learn how to take their initial findings and formulate a research question that they can interrogate with the help of their map and additional*

research. They present their results as part of a 2,000-word essay and accompanying map.' The best essays provide 'genuinely new knowledge about street politics and patterns of minority community building in urban centres. Their findings are not only situated within the existing scholarly literature, but demonstrably extend it. Not only is the assignment research-led, but the students have in turn informed my thinking of the records, resulting in what might be described as teaching-led-research.'

Dr Angela Madden has worked 'with students on our BSc (Hons) Nutrition and BSc (Hons) Dietetics programmes to help them progress from being consumers of research published by others to co-producers of robust research evidence that makes a contribution to their discipline. This starts at level 4 with students being orientated towards reliable information, where to find it and why they need to search it.' At level 5 students 'also think about the methods used to generate data and the pros and cons associated.' Planning for level 6 research projects involves selecting 'research topics and methods that might suit their learning preferences: quantitative vs qualitative; obtaining ethical permission and recruiting participants vs analysing existing nutrient-related data that can be completed off site. A list of diverse project ideas is offered from which they request up to five choices. We recognise the project management skills they gain from running their own investigation – an employability asset for all even if they don't plan a research career. [...] The assessment is based on a 4,000-word manuscript that is prepared for journal submission. At the end of the module, we focus on research dissemination and the opportunity to submit abstracts to external meetings. [...] Most years, between 3-10 abstracts are accepted by national conferences and one or two manuscripts are accepted as full peer reviewed papers from about 45 students.'

Our broader success measures in bringing research and teaching together include the attendance of research contract staff (17) at the University's Learning and Teaching conference on Research-Informed Teaching in May 2017 alongside academics and our attainment in the Teaching Excellence Framework of Silver (2017) and Gold (2018).

Progress by Concordat Principle

Our 6-year review carried forward 10 actions from our 4-year action plan. Progress against these is shown on the 8-year updated action plan alongside new actions added at that time, and in summary below.

1: Recruitment, Selection, Retention - In 2016 we reported on work to harmonise role titles, to share good practice in local induction, to monitor barriers to participating in development activities and to provide end-of-contract mentoring. We identified further actions including the need to increase awareness of national researcher development initiatives (see Principle 3, below) and to introduce a Research Induction, to use the HREiR logo on all recruitment communications and to appoint an HR member to the RDWG. Our Research Induction launched in spring 2017, supported by an information pack. 4 sessions were held in 2017-18 for 33 participants. Research is also addressed in the General Induction, with participation from the RDWG Chair. The University's website now features the HREiR logo on all pages including the jobs and research pages. The Director of Human Resources joined RDWG in January 2017; he receives the papers and attends meetings as needed including the October 2018 8-year review meeting.

2: Recognition and Value - Our work updating policy concerning transparent and equitable appointment to roles in Schools was reported as complete in our 2016 review, as was the definition of staff as research active and REF-eligible. Our action on academic promotion was partly met through the Career Pathways programme. It recruited 8 staff into the first cohort in 2017, and 12 in 2018. Participants were interested in how to progress from lecturer to reader. The Career Pathways programme helps expand staff awareness of their options via the following: our Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre (LTIC) presenting academic career pathway options, including the new Associate Professor (Research) role; Planning, Development and Change (PDC) reviewing the RDF; and colleagues from the coaching pool helping participants to embed their learning and plan ahead. Our SMART target was met: CROS results show an increase in staff being 'encouraged to engage in personal career development' from 64% in 2015 up to 83% in 2017. See the Key Achievements section for reports on our Researcher-Led Researcher Development scheme, Skill Up!, and Research-Informed Teaching. The latter is also supported by the appointment of an LTIC representative on the RDWG, who is on the planning team for our 2019 Researcher Development conference. Our LTIC conference on Research-Informed Teaching was attended by 17 staff on research contracts and c.250 academic staff whose contracts include research. The University launched its People Board to deliver on the People strand of the strategic plan in 2016. The Chair of the RDWG is a member, providing another opportunity for researchers' voices to be part of decision-making, and to assist in the delivery of the HREiR action plan.

3: Adaptability and Flexibility - We aimed to extend awareness of internal initiatives, such as the Research Induction, and external initiatives available to support research staff development. RDWG is part of the mechanism for this, enabling two-way communication with the Schools through its quarterly meetings, annual Skill Up! funding and biennial conference. The Chair of the RDWG reports to the University Research Committee 3 times a year and meets with ADRs for two-way conversations to raise awareness of researcher development. CROS showed awareness of the RDF increased from 59% in 2015 to 64% in 2017. Although reported awareness of the HREiR declined slightly from 54% in 2015 to 50% 2017, our analysis suggests that this relates to the name only, and not the process or researcher development issues more broadly. Our biennial University-wide researcher development conference, next scheduled for 14th January 2019, will assist in raising awareness of HREiR. To further increase awareness, the Research Office now circulates a Research Themes and Research Office Newsletter to all University staff; the RDWG chair regularly takes part in Central Induction for new staff and Research Themes form part of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor induction presentation. In addition, awareness of Athena SWAN, which assists researchers through tackling gender inequality, increased 25% from 51% in 2015 to 76% in 2017. Our ambitious SMART measure that all new staff on research contracts (c.161), must attend GDPR training within their probation period, and all existing staff should have attended by 2019, has been partly met, as 50% of new staff attended in 2017/18. We now offer GDPR

training online and campus-based sessions so this percentage should increase in the next period. Finally, we addressed intersectoral mobility by assisting in the effort to enable all staff to reach standards required for the Teaching Excellence Framework LE2, 'The learning environment is enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and/or professional practice.' The success measure of achieving Silver TEF in partnership with LTIC colleagues by July 2017 was achieved: the University was awarded Silver in 2017 and Gold in 2018, as noted above.

4: Personal and Career Development, and Lifelong Learning - To develop research impact we delivered social media training for researchers with the second iteration taking place in December 2016. Social media sessions are now integrated into the Researcher Development Programme as 'Social Media Bootcamp' and 'Sharing, Connecting and Building an Audience' with success measures including social media outputs and positive evaluations. In addition, ongoing School-based workshops and open generic impact training sessions are delivered annually for researchers and a full-day workshop with an external facilitator for ADRs took place in June 2017. To support ECRs' development, and share the knowledge and skills of experienced research staff, our SMART targets were: by December 2018, 5 Schools would have mentoring programmes and CROS would show an increase of staff being mentored from 17% to 30%. We have run mentoring schemes in 4 Schools so this action continues. To help staff feel part of a community, our SMART target was 3 pilot Action Learning Sets meeting by September 2017, and positive evaluation by group members. There were 12 participants in the first and second cohorts, but the third was cancelled due to lack of demand and 3 interested researchers were supported by the Head of Leadership. To support staff undergoing transitions at work we planned to trial coaching partnerships. In 2015-18, of 42 coachees, 39 were academics and 3 were on research contracts. Coaching is provided as part of the Career Pathways programme with the option of continuation on request and we will continue to focus marketing of coaching towards research staff. To raise staff's roles and responsibilities in risk management, resulting in a more pro-active, early intervention approach, training was introduced in 'Responsible Research' with 23 participants in 2017/18 and 4 participants attended 'Risk Management'. Health, Safety & Wellbeing delivered an overview workshop at RDWG for School ECRs to cascade. Maintaining a safe and sustainable environment is a pillar of the UH Wellbeing Framework.

5: Researchers' Shared Responsibility and Engagement - Our ambitious aim here was to enable all University staff to use technology relevant to their roles, including the new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), through the Digital Capabilities programme. JISCs profiling tool was tested by 17 UH staff from 2016-18. This programme is ongoing with Academic strands encompassing research staff and students and the project manager is working with LTIC, the Research Office and the Doctoral College. Lynda.com has been rolled out and JISC's profiling tool supports Office 365 skills development. An innovative Guided Learner Journey VLE has been fully implemented for first year programmes in 2017/18 and all programmes in 2018/19 and 64 staff have taken up training. A University-wide conference took place on 21st November 2018.

6: Diversity and Equality - We aimed to increase the proportion of BAME staff at grades UH9 and above by 5% by 2020. In 2015, 12.8% of staff were BAME, which rose to 16.4% and is now 15.9%. UH is one of only 10 UK institutions with the Race Equality Charter Mark. Declared staff ethnic diversity is 15.9% compared with the Advance HE sector figure of 9.4%. We aimed to increase in the proportion of female academic staff at grades UH9 and above by 5% by 2020. While the proportion of women at UH9 has dropped from 19.1% in 2017 to 17.2% in 2018, the proportion of women at AM level remains static: 10.3% in 2018, 10.4% in 2017. However, there are more women in senior leadership roles. The proportion of women on the Chief Executives Group (CEG) rose from 32% in 2014/15 to 43% in 2016/17; a new Associate Professor (Research) grade was introduced in 2017/18 and of 17 successful applicants, 9 were female. In addition, the University has successfully reapplied for its Institutional Bronze Athena Swan status, and of the Schools, 6 hold Bronze, 2 hold Silver and the remainder will submit for Bronze in 2019. Staff declaring a disability rose from 4.3% in 2017 to 5.5% in 2018, compared with the Advance HE sector figure of 4.7%. We have reviewed and update the University's Dignity and Respect policy (UPR EQ10); trained advisors are in place; online Equality & Diversity training is mandatory during probation; Unconscious Bias training is mandatory within an employee's first year and must be refreshed every three years; and face-to-face Equality Essentials sessions run monthly.

7. Progress Review - We met our aim for CROS & PIRLS survey actions to be disseminated and related actions to appear on action plans: our analysis was presented at the Research Committee in March 2018 to inform 2018-20 action planning. We increased the frequency of progress reviews against the HREiR action plan, which is now reviewed at our termly meetings, and we will complete the actions by June 2020. We aimed for increased staff satisfaction: the 2017 survey was less granular than the 2013 survey so direct comparisons were not possible. However, academic retention figures are good, comparatively, as are academic and research staff sickness rates, and these are both tangible indicators of satisfaction. Finally, we met our aim of greater involvement in regional and national initiatives: our HREiR Project manager attended the Vitae conference in 2017; the RDWG Chair attended in 2018 with two RDWG ECR representatives and cascaded the learning to the RDWG and the Research Committee. Colleagues also attended the Staff Development Forum conference in October 2016.

Strategy and Success Measures for the Next 4 Years

1: Recruitment, Selection, Retention - To provide a more secure employment experience for research staff and higher retention of ECRs we will undertake a feasibility study on bridging funding, monitor fixed-term contract researchers figures, review our policies on employment experience and security (probation, parental and adoption leave) and develop new University Policies and Regulations (UPRs) to clarify the University's commitment to staff by June 2019. To ensure that the appraisal process is used effectively by more researchers and line managers we will

include appraisee training in research staff induction, encourage sharable outcomes from appraisals and ensure that research line managers attend Appraiser and Successful People Management training. We aim to increase opportunity and diversity in career progression to Reader, Associate Professor (Research) and Professor by publishing case studies of researchers' promotions, enhancing transparency and broadening review panels. Our success measure will be the appointment of at least one Associate Professors (Research) each year in addition to promotions to Reader and Professor (Research) and HR figures on gender and BAME diversity in these staff. Finally, we aim to increase mentoring for researchers. From our current mentoring programmes, formal and informal, we will produce best practice guidance and establish a network of mentoring champions to share this and encourage cross-school mentoring. Our success measure will see mentoring schemes extended to 8 Schools by January 2020.

2: Recognition and Value - To increase staff's sense of being valued we will promote the Vice-Chancellor's Awards (VCA) among the research community and establish regular reporting from RDWG via the Research Themes and Research Office Newsletter. Success measures will include VCA nominations for research in each round, and researchers from each school will feature in the newsletter by January 2020. We will invest in researchers' development and encourage their pro-active engagement with their development by increasing the number of rounds of Skill Up! to 2 per year. Our success measure will be a 10% increase in the number of applications, and the quality of the post-award reports which RDWG will use for publicity. To increase awareness of the importance of researchers' wellbeing we will appoint a wellbeing representative, wellbeing will be a focus of our 2020/21 Researcher Development Conference, we will promote the Employee Assistance Programme which offers advice, counselling, and legal assistance and promote development on wellbeing and mental health for researchers and line managers.

3: Adaptability and Flexibility - To respond to, and equip our researchers for intersectoral mobility, we will address this in our biennial researcher development conference in January 2019 for which our success measure will be the number of delegates (target = 60). We will include case studies and information about a variety of career options within the Career Pathways programme by September 2019. Our success measure will be increased participation in the Academic Career Pathways workshops from 12 in 2018 to 20 in 2019. To increase the capability of researchers in developing research bids we will increase support for Schools, encourage best practice via researcher networks and include funding as a strand of the 2019 researcher development conference. Our success measure will be an increased number of research funding applications.

4: Personal and Career Development, and Lifelong Learning - To assist research staff in using their 10 days / 80 hours of agreed CPD effectively we will add this allowance to the Appraisal Action Plan forms, prepare and publish a Researcher Development Handbook for staff, and further promote the RDF. Success measures will include evidence from shared appraisal action plans, increased awareness of RDF shown via CROS from 63% in 2017 to 80% in 2019, and an increase in positive feedback about the usefulness of appraisal from 32% to 50%. We also want to increase researchers' confidence as leaders and managers through participation in our Leadership Development programmes. We will promote the relevant training (Line Managers' Essentials, Transition to Leadership, Making Sense of Leading and Leading through Coaching) via ADRs and RDWG School representatives. Our success measure will be increased numbers of researchers participating in Leadership Development programmes and increased reported awareness and attendance via PIRLS (currently 21% for Making Sense of Leading).

5: Shared Responsibility and Engagement - To grow an active, cross-disciplinary researcher community to share best practice and increase collaboration we will implement a questionnaire to gauge interest in a Research Staff Association and if so mandated we will proceed to establish an RSA. We will also introduce regular researcher development news communications. Our success measure will be an increase of 10% in CROS respondents who report that they feel part of an institutional research community on the 2017 level and the existence of a regular programme of research community events with positive participation.

6: Diversity and Equality - Two Schools will submit for Bronze Athena Swan status and we aim for an institutional Silver by 2022. We will demonstrate our commitment to BAME equality by retaining our Race Equality Charter Mark in July 2019. Our self-assessment submission will include data for research staff. Our commitment to diversity will be further demonstrated through the launch of minority groups Staff Networks (BAME, disability) as critical friends to the institution on EDI issues. Our success measure will be researcher engagement with and representation on these Staff Networks and an RDWG member on the University's Equality committee for two-way communication.

7. Progress Review - To increase the effectiveness and sustainability of a focus for researcher development in the University we will regularly review and evaluate RDWG dialogue with RDWG School representatives. The success measure will be regular attendance of School representatives at RDWG. We will monitor our effective response to researcher feedback from the Staff Survey, CROS and PIRLS and the Doctoral College (PRES) via audits and reviews of our actions and meeting notes. We will prepare and publish a RDWG handbook to include terms of reference, membership, role descriptors, workflows, institutional, local, national and international resources, contacts). We will respond to the turnover of RDWG members - expected in an ECR and contract researcher constituency - by developing defined and streamlined role descriptors, and onboarding, offboarding and succession planning procedures. Our success measure will be for road-tested materials to be in use by the end of 2020. Finally, we want to increase our engagement with Vitae and other sector initiatives through annual attendance at the Vitae International Conference including the presentation of papers, case studies, posters; effective promotion of CROS and PIRLS and feedback results; and publish researcher development case studies on our website. Our success measure will be an increase in positive CROS and PIRLS responses on awareness of Vitae/Concordat and RDF.