

## University of Hertfordshire HR Excellence in Research Four Year External Review Report

### I. INTERNAL EVALUATION OF PROGRESS SINCE TWO-YEAR REVIEW OF 2012

The University of Hertfordshire's [Pro-Vice Chancellor Research](#), as representative of the [Vice-Chancellor](#), appointed a new Chair of the [Researcher Development Working Group](#) (RDWG) in 2013. The group agreed new roles and terms of reference with the aim of promoting researcher development issues, analysing researcher development needs and designing our provision for researchers accordingly. A renewed membership included research-active academics and early career researchers from each of the University's Schools, to take account of researchers' views at every stage, and representatives from the University's central departments (HR Development; Research Grants Office; Research Policy and Assessment; Careers, Employment and Enterprise; Equality Office; Health and Safety). In addition, to foster awareness of researcher development, RDWG papers are circulated to the Director of Research Degrees and the University Doctoral College, the Research Institute Directors and the Associate Deans Research, and the RDWG Chair reports on researcher development issues to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) Management Group (PRMG) and the University Research Committee.

In 2013-14 the RDWG conducted a comprehensive internal evaluation, beginning with a series of meetings between the RDWG Chair and individuals variously involved in researcher development and its representation at the University, including the PVC Research, the [outgoing Chair](#), the Head of the Research Grants Team, the Director of [Research Degrees and the University Doctoral College](#), colleagues from Human Resources including Assistant HR Director (Strategy and Change), the Director of the Social Sciences Arts and Humanities Research Institute (SSAHRI), and Research Policy and Assessment colleagues. Informed by [The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) (2008), the RDWG reviewed the entire [process](#) that the University had undertaken since 2009 including our [gap analysis](#) and [action plan](#) from that time, our 2010 [Valuing Research Staff: Implementing the Concordat](#) (which preceded our receipt of the HR Excellence in Research Badge in December that year) and, in particular, our two-year review of 2012 (see [self-assessment report](#)), presented to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research Management Group (PRMG, 13/11 2012).<sup>1</sup> Members of the RDWG met with colleagues from each area responsible for updating actions (HR for mentoring; the Research Grants Team for the Research Staff Skills Development Initiative Fund; the Equality Office for Athena SWAN; the Director of the Doctoral College) in [updating the 2012-14 Action Plan](#) and confirming that all of the actions had been completed.

Our comprehensive review of 2014 took researchers' views into account throughout the process, in two main ways: via a gap analysis of the University's 2013 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS), including the preparation of an action plan responding to the results which was approved by the University Research Committee (27/2/2014); and through discussions with the University's research community as represented by the members of the RDWG and particularly the early career researchers, research contract members and academics with research roles. In addition, the RDWG Chair met with the Associate Deans Research (ADRs) in April 2014 to examine some of the issues raised in the gap analysis of the two-year action plan and the CROS survey results. The CROS survey results evidence the RDWGs success in raising the profile of researcher development in the University (Research Committee 27/2/ 2014), while discussions with researchers helped to flesh out responses from the CROS survey. This combined intelligence directly informed our work in 2014, our future strategy, next steps and success measures (see below) and our [2014-18 action plan](#), agreed by the RDWG, the PRMG (6/10/2014) and the University Research Committee (16/10/ 2014).

### II. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS Arranged by Concordat Principle, to be read in tandem with the updated 2012-14 Action Plan

**Principle 1, Recruitment and Selection:** Progress includes work on **Research Role Descriptions** and **Research Staff Induction** which will be evaluated in 2014/15 (see Future Strategy, Next Steps and Success Measures, below).

**Principle 2, Recognition and Value:** In addition to our achievements on **Research Representation in Strategic Planning** (see 2012 Action Plan) and **Promotion** (see Future Strategy, Next Steps and Success Measures, below), successes in relation to this principle includes **enhanced use of the RDF in appraisal**. The

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<sup>1</sup> The latter identified that of the 26 actions, mapped on to the Concordat principles, specified in the original action plan, 24 actions had been completed, one was obsolete, and one outstanding item—HR, Equality Unit and Research Office to brief Research Committee and agree guidance for Athena SWAN and Project Juno—was incorporated into the revised 2012-14 action plan. In 2012, the then-Chair of the Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG) judged that researcher development had achieved greater visibility as the University of Hertfordshire had adopted a 'structured approach that targets gaps identified in the RDF (Researcher Development Framework) and responds to the needs of researchers as expressed by the representatives'.

CROS 2013 survey results showed that 87.9% of respondents had participated in staff appraisal in the past two years, which is over 28% higher than the national average and over 42% higher than our 2011 response. We have built on this success by revising appraisal guidance to explicitly foreground the RDF and this has been distributed throughout the University, including at our inaugural Excellence in Research conference (see Principle 7: Implementation and Review, below). Mandatory appraisal training now incorporates the RDF as a hand-out and via our intranet which maps our entire training provision against the RDF. Since 2013-2014, our 'Events for Researchers' programme has included training sessions on 'Developing Your Career Using the RDF'.

**Principles 3 and 4, Support and Career Development:** Please refer to the updated 2012 Action Plan for our successes in **Mentoring** and the **Doctoral College**. The University of Hertfordshire's commitment to support and career development is further demonstrated through the various courses we deliver. RDWG Researchers inform the planning of our training provision. Following a 2011 **Leadership** Foundation Grant for research into the development needs of research leaders, the course 'Making Sense of Leading for Research Leaders' was piloted in 2013 with 8 participants meeting for 10 days over the year. They felt that the course valued researchers and provided networking opportunities, but that it should more closely align with research leaders' roles. The programme has been revised for 2014/15 as 'Developing a Research Community' (23 participants are currently booked) to better support new research leaders in establishing research activity within their group/discipline, including techniques of coaching and action learning and 'Lessons from Social Entrepreneurs'. The 'Successful People Management: Responsibilities, Guidance and Development' [honeycomb model](#) was published in 2013 to ensure all managers were clear on University of Hertfordshire expectations.

Another highlight is the development of our **Events for Researchers Training Programme for Academic and Research Staff**. At the time of the 2012 two-year review, our Generic Training Programme for Researchers (GTR) for students and staff was long established and highly regarded. It was accompanied by HR Development's training programme and Research Grants Office events for staff. Improvements since 2012 include the union of various departments which deliver training through membership of RDWG and the University Development Providers group. Following a process whereby the entire University of Hertfordshire training provision was mapped against the RDF to fill gaps, a new integrated programme for research staff development was launched in September 2012. That academic year, internal and external facilitators delivered 126 events (lunchtime, ½ day, full day) for more than 380 attendees. The 2013-14 programme responded to researcher feedback with sessions such as 'Creating and Maximising Your Research Impact' and visits from the Leverhulme Trust and the UK Research Integrity Office while external facilitators delivered writing development and 'Creating Your First Research Proposal'. Attendance figures increased to 584 participants from across the University staff, with 45% (97 individuals) of research-only staff participating (our research-only staff comprises approximately 8% of our total staff of 2650). Researchers regard the courses as relevant and beneficial (most courses scored 4/5 in evaluations). For 2014-5, the GTR is renamed the 'Researcher Development Programme', and encompasses research development opportunities for staff and students. To support teaching development 25 staff on Research contracts have enrolled or completed our Continuing Professional Academic Development (CPAD) programme provided by our Learning and Teaching Institute.

Finally, we have continued our **collaboration with Vitae**. We co-hosted the Vitae Researcher Futures pilot workshop [Establishing Yourself](#), co-facilitated by the HR Manager for Development (18/7/2014). Excluding facilitators and organisers, 21 participants attended: 11 from the University of Hertfordshire and 10 from 7 other HEIs. Participants highlighted networking with researchers from different institutions as beneficial. They described the course as stimulating, motivating, enlightening, insightful and very well organised. This event illustrates the commitment of the University in the wider context, showing a potential impact on our researchers and those from the East of England and Midlands regions. While Vitae's East of England Hub funded the cost of the trainer and some administration, the University provided the venue and staff time, and thereby assisted Vitae in developing and delivering high quality training resources and opportunities to researchers at all UK HEIs. Hertfordshire has also co-hosted Vitae's Effective Researcher course for PhD students.

**Principle 5, Researchers Responsibilities:** Our activity here has featured a **Researcher-Led Research Staff Skills Development Fund** and increased **Researcher Voice**; refer to the updated 2012 Action Plan for an outline of our successes in widespread engagement with research staff development, periodic reporting by Schools and scope for research staff to propose researcher development ideas and for Research Institute Management Groups to address researcher development. In addition, working with the Careers, Employment and Enterprise (CEE) representative on the RDWG, we have promoted **researchers' access to careers information** (including Going Global, Interview Stream, Profiling for Success, Kenexa) on a dedicated intranet page. A researcher newsletter and information sheets are circulated to support ECRs with their career options and applications for academic and non-academic opportunities. CEE was represented at the Science and Technology Research Institute conference and at the Excellence in Research conference and it contributes 'Life after PhD' career development workshops for the Researcher Development Programme, also to be available as webinars in the coming year.

**Principle 6, Diversity and Equality:** See our updated 2012 Action Plan for an outline of progress by our Human Resources department, Equality Office and Athena SWAN Working Group in relation to Athena SWAN. The University's Head of Equality is a member of the RDWG. Since the 2012 Two-Year Review, the University has worked to [further advance diversity and equality](#) by integrating our strategic equality objectives into the Strategic Business Units planning process. Ten University of Hertfordshire staff attended the Aurora programme in 2013-14 and 12 have been approved to do so this year, including 3 research staff. The University works with: [The Equality Challenge Unit](#) promoting equality and diversity in higher education; Hertfordshire Colleges Carer Champions Group, ensuring learning opportunities support the needs and ambitions of carers; Hertfordshire LGBT Partnership of public authorities working to meet the needs of LGBT people in Hertfordshire; [Herts Diversity Network](#), a practitioners' network promoting best in equality and diversity in Herts public services; and the Higher Education Equal Opportunities Network promoting in equality and diversity in higher education. The University is a proud [Stonewall Diversity Champion](#) (the Diversity Champions' Programme is a good practice employers' forum on sexual orientation) and we are dedicated to providing a supportive, positive environment for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people.

**Principle 7, Implementation and Review:** Our 2012-14 Action Plan identifies the need for a [University-Wide Conference for Researchers](#). The **conference** took place in September 2014 (see the updated 2012-14 Action Plan for details). The conference formed part of our response to the CROS 2013 survey results which show room for increased awareness of the HR Excellence in Research award and its European and UK contexts, including the Concordat to Support Career Development of Researchers. In addition, we are aware of the importance of the University intranet, StaffNet, in providing clear and comprehensive information for researchers. In July 2014, the RDWG prepared and published a '**New to Research**' **intranet page** (also available as pdf information sheet to download) which collects a comprehensive range of quick links to information from many different areas of the University, to guide our researchers. This webpage content informed the [introductory talk at the September 2014 Excellence in Research conference](#). Increasing awareness is also addressed through the communicating role of the School researcher representatives on the RDWG.

### **III. FUTURE STRATEGY, NEXT STEPS AND SUCCESS MEASURES by Concordat Principle, to be read in tandem with the 2014-18 Action Plan.**

The RDWG will continue as a strategic mechanism for interacting with the entire University on consolidating and building our work on researcher development issues, providing a two-way researcher voice between researchers in the Schools, and the University's central professional departments, and responding and contributing to external researcher development initiatives. Our comprehensive review of 2013-14 (see above) has guided the RDWG in the preparation of a number of actions to take forward in our 2014-18 Action Plan. The Plan will be reviewed in December 2015 and further actions for the period 2016-17 will be identified, to take us up to January 2018.

**Principle 1, Recruitment and Selection:** We have **Research Role Descriptions** in progress, to be assessed by our job evaluation system by the end of January 2015 and then embedded into funding applications and recruitment materials. Our '**Management of Fixed-Term Contracts**' policy (2007) specifies that fixed-term contracts will convert to indefinite contracts after four years unless a justified objection exists, and employees are usually consulted three months before the end of their contracts. We will continue to monitor staff numbers on fixed-term contracts and provide mentoring when staff approach the end of their contract. One of our success measures will be all researchers being recruited and inducted according to University policies and positive CROS responses on induction. All new research staff are expected to attend central induction which features research representation in two of the sessions and in a Q and A panel. We have developed a dedicated [Research Staff Induction checklist](#), to be used alongside the generic induction checklist. As part of an audit of the effectiveness of local induction in 2014/15, we will analyse the data collected to highlight and disseminate evidence of good local induction practices and flag areas where local induction processes could be enhanced for new Research staff. Finally, we will work with research line managers to better understand the **barriers to accessing training**. CROS shows that our researchers want to attend development events but our attendance data does not reflect optimal attendance. RDWG researcher representatives cite lack of time as the main barrier, and related issues such as PIs not always appreciating the value of development. We plan to participate in the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) to better understand these issues and identify actions to remove barriers. CROS responses will provide indicators of success for both induction and access to training, with the latter compared with our training participation data.

**Principle 2, Recognition and Value:** In 2015, progress with consistent role descriptions will be furthered through the 'Enhancing Working Lives at UH' project. Our Director of Human Resources has hosted focus groups with women and BME staff which led to the project and the integration of two points for our 2014 action plan: 'audit the approach to appointing to roles and duties in Schools, and introduce approaches to ensure there are transparent and equitable processes'. In particular, we will complete an Equality Impact Assessment on academic

promotion focussing on appointments to Reader and Professor, including the assessment of quality and quantity of outputs, and how to allow for part-time working. More generally, we will review and refine the processes by which academics are identified as research active and eligible for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) pool. Our success in work to develop recognition and value will be measured through the CROS satisfaction scores and the University staff survey, satisfaction with the appraisal process via the same channel

**Principles 3 and 4, Support and Career Development:** Further work on opportunities for progression by research staff within the institution's research community will form a focus. The CROS 2013 survey results showed that some of our researchers questioned whether they had been given opportunities to develop all of the skills and experiences shown in the RDF. Analysis of the University's development opportunities against the CROS responses about training and development identified that, in the main, the training is available and researchers are not always participating. We have responded through the September 2014 Excellence in Research conference which featured workshops on social media, career progressions and mentoring, and through the revised 2014-15 training programme. Areas where further development opportunities exist are Career Management and Mentoring, as indicated in the 2014-2018 Action Plan.

Following our successful 2014 conference, we plan biennial Excellence in Research conferences to increase awareness of external and internal researcher development contexts. We plan expansion of our training provision to include mandatory face to face risk management session for researchers working in workshops, laboratories or in the field and a course for research supervisors on supervising safely, based on the existing 'Managers Essentials' Health and Safety sessions. We will assess demand for targeted career development sessions and respond as needed, perhaps with a session on applying for readerships/professorships. As well as considering expanding the development opportunities available in areas such as public engagement, career management, research impact, communication and dissemination, we will support our increased provision with more extensive and targeted publicity for courses, their accessibility and benefits, through the intranet and the publication of an annual booklet. We will further promote research development opportunities in a more targeted manner to all women in STEMM and beyond.

We aim to establish a Research Staff **Mentoring** Scheme, based on a previous pilot and the workshop at our Excellence in Research conference (September 2014), in liaison with our Women in Science mentoring strand. Expansion of mentoring at the University may be facilitated by the inclusion of mentoring time in all Schools workload models (currently this happens in some Schools), clearer guidelines about what the University supports and expects from mentoring, and mentoring skills workshops. Continued and extended dialogue with Principal Investigators (PIs), research leaders, research managers and ADRs will further our work in support and career development, and participation in forthcoming PIRLS surveys is planned to capture views from the former group. Focus groups with staff will identify how managers can be supported to hold better career discussions during appraisals and how staff can be encouraged to access available support proactively.

Following the institution of the Doctoral College as a mechanism for research staff community engagement, and the expansion of the RDWG to include researcher representatives from each of the Schools, we will determine if any further demand for a **research staff association** or research staff fora, e.g. within Research Institutes, remains and act accordingly to meet such a demand. Finally, the researcher representatives on RDWG will administer an annual Researcher-Led Research Skills Development Fund 2015.

Success indicators for the University's support and career development include the identification of a cadre of research leaders equipped to develop research at the University emerging from the 'Developing a Research Community' programme, and the numbers of research staff attending supervisor training and engaging in international networking and conference attendance, based on data supplied by the Doctoral College and ADRs.

**Principle 5, Researchers' Responsibilities:** The RDWG researcher representatives will continue to provide two-way reporting to and from Schools. They will contribute to future researcher conferences, and administer an annual Researcher-Led Research Skills Development Fund 2015. Success in this area will be shown in the numbers of research staff engaging in personal development via attending Human Resources Development, Researcher Development Programme and Research Grants Team events and in the CROS results.

**Principle 6, Diversity and Equality:** We aim to achieve Athena SWAN institutional bronze award and five STEMM School level bronze awards (these are both aims and success measures). We will further build on the Women's Network launched April 2014 and, based on demand within and beyond STEM, will seek to provide three related events per year. We will deliver 'Unconscious Bias' training to all Schools and work with STEMM Schools to ensure targets are met. In addition to the CROS and University staff survey responses, we will judge our success by ensuring all new research staff participate in equality and diversity training.

**Principle 7, Implementation and Review:** We will continue to participate in CROS and PRES, and will run another institutional staff survey and disseminate findings at Institutional and School level. We plan to participate in PIRLS to access PI views and feedback. Reporting at the Research Committee on Researcher Development will continue. Our success in this, and indeed across all of the above Concordat Principles will be measured in a number of ways, including retaining the HR Excellence in Research award.