European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award

University of St Andrews: 4 year external review report

1. Internal review process

The internal review was undertaken between May 2015 - May 2016 by the University HR Excellence in Research working group, which includes representatives from HR, Equality & Diversity, Careers Centre, CAPOD, Research Policy Office, research staff and PGR reps. Members also sit on other working groups (e.g. Athena Swan and Research Integrity), ensuring effective communication across areas which impact on the research environment. The internal review consisted of 4 principal processes:

1.1 Review meetings, which from May 2015, have been at 6-8 week intervals. These have been used to monitor progress against the action plan and to systematically review the plan itself, ensuring that:
   - Actions in progress were regularly updated
   - Completed actions were marked as complete and/or reformulated as ‘review actions’ where appropriate
   - Out of date or unrealistic actions were rewritten or removed
   - New actions were added where gaps, opportunities and emergent issues were identified

1.2 Surveying relevant cohorts and analysing the results to validate extant actions, provide evidence of progress and to generate new actions.

1.3 Consultation with Research Staff via the Research and Teaching Staff Forum, the HR Excellence web-page, ‘fast focus groups’ held at the start or end of workshops, and inclusion of HR Excellence material in newsletters and mail outs for researchers.

1.4 Gaining approval and strategic level commitment by the Principal’s Office, who have endorsed the 2016-2018 Action Plan for the University to take forward, ensuring all of the work is in line with the University Strategic Plan 2015-2025. Note that the 2016-18 Action Plan includes all actions from the original and 2-year action plans, as well as all actions subsequently added. All iterations of the action plan are published on our HR Excellence webpage, along with a glossary of terms.

2. Key achievements and progress

The following tables set out progress against some of the key ‘next steps’ and success indicators included in the 2 year review report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1</th>
<th>Next step</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>Summer 2014 student internship will review local induction arrangements for researchers in Schools</td>
<td>This resulted in a published Vitae case study. CROS 2015 shows improvement in attitudes towards local induction. It was one of the highest scoring questions at a 90% positive response, compared to 58.7% in the 2013 survey. Other feedback indicates that this is not consistent and a new action has been formulated to carry out a pilot project to develop and implement an improved and more systematic local induction process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>The Q6 process for research staff will be reviewed, to incorporate a more extensive recording process (for example, using the HR self-service system)</td>
<td>A new Academic Review and Development Scheme (ARDS) was introduced with a robust reporting process. Implementation is currently being reviewed and online systems are also being evaluated with a view to moving the ARDS system online in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| c)  | New workshops for Principal Investigators will be added to the Academic Staff Development Programme. | New workshops added including:
   - Time management for academics
   - Working with Staff and Students in a multicultural environment
   - Dealing with difficult people
   - Recruitment and selection for academics
   - Managing people in research teams |
| d)  | A web page and e-newsletter for Principal Investigators will be created to help signpost them to resources on recruitment and selection, budget management, staff performance and equality and diversity. | New ‘Principal Investigator’ webpage has been created with links to a wide range of relevant content. An email newsletter ‘Aspire’ was launched and is sent to all academic staff and PIs every 6-8 weeks. |
| e)  | The University will continue to work towards a Healthy Working Lives Bronze award | Bronze Award achieved December 2014 and retained December 2015: http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/wellbeing/healthyworkinglives/ |
| f)  | Work-life balance information and wellbeing resources will be targeted at Principal Investigators and research staff. | A wellbeing e-newsletter ‘Well Now’ has been launched, and items included in the other newsletters and mail-outs. Posters and flyers have been targeted at Schools and a much more active programme of health and wellbeing activities has resulted in increasing levels of engagement. |
2.2 Success indicator | Progress
---|---
a) Increased attendance at supervisor update sessions | Refer to 2.3 c) in the Action Plan. Attendance in 2014-15 increased by 67% on 2013-14 (from 58 to 97), with 53 attendances to date in the current year.
b) Use of the bridging fund for researchers | This is offered to contract research staff who need support between roles. Uptake has been very low - just two applications (both successful) in the last 12 months.
c) Increased number of bespoke workshops for Principal Investigators delivered, and usage of online materials | See 2.1 c) above. Online resources have been expanded with 1023 page views of the academic staff resources webpage and 182 clicking through to the online resources.
d) Use of new online induction tool for academic and research staff | An online resource for new Academic and Research staff has been developed in consultation with research staff, PIs and the Principal’s Office. It was launched in summer 2015 with positive feedback from users. This will be reviewed and updated during summer 2016. We are unable to specify viewing figures due to the technology used to host this resource.
e) Hit rate on research staff Career Centre webpages | Careers Centre Researcher page views totalled 2985 from 25th Mar 2015 until 24th March 2016 and 3973 during the previous year.
f) Increased number of researchers joining the Passport to Research Futures development programme | 36 research staff have enrolled with 3 graduates so far receiving their St Andrews PRF Certificate and the ILM Development Award. Feedback indicates that the programme provides research staff with a structured approach and a clear pathway for professional and career development. This was the subject of a workshop at the 2015 Vitae conference and has attracted interest from other HEIs and Wellcome Trust who used PRF as a model for their own programme which is under development at the time of publishing. The Wellcome Trust said “A programme such as the PRF is crucial in developing researchers’ management skills and starting to show funders and employers that researchers can not only be great scientists, but also productive and confident managers and leaders of the future.”
g) Increased awareness of Vitae’s Researcher Development Framework | During the last two years 40 postdocs have been given an RDF Planner subscription. Development events are mapped against the RDF, which is publicised during staff and PGR induction, PGR Supervisor Training, on relevant webpages, newsletters and mail-outs.
h) Increased participation rate in CROS/PRLS/PRES 2015 surveys | CROS participation increased to 24%, from 15.7% in 2013. PRES 2015 achieved a response rate of 36% (no increase from 2013).
i) Creation of new set of webpages for Principal Investigators | See 2.1 d) above
j) Increased number of applications to CAPOD’s Post-Doc & Research Staff Development Funding | Research Student Development fund Applications by PGRs remain high – 43 in total last academic year and 24 so far this academic year. Applications for Research Staff Funding & PostDoc Rep Funding total 69 for the 2 years up to March 2016, up from 57 for the previous 2 years.
k) Increased number of postdoctoral research staff having annual Q6 reviews | CROS data shows a small increase from 50.9% having an annual review in 2013 to 53.3% in 2015. The transition to the new review process should result in further increases, which will be monitored and reviewed during 2016/17
l) Retention of Institutional Athena SWAN Bronze award, and increased number of departmental awards | See 6.10 b) in Action Plan

3. Progress by concordat principle

**Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research**

Much progress relates to monitoring/review of processes and the provision of training, including recruitment and selection training. A new online recruitment course has been implemented, covering the recruitment process and legal issues. Completion is now a pre-requisite for attendance on face-to-face training and is mandatory for staff on selection panels. 108 recruiters have completed the course since its launch in September 2015.

Since September 2014 a further 67 recruiters have attended the face-to-face recruitment training, on top of the 99 attendees from July 2012 to July 2014. The training has been revised to recognise the online content and improve the relevance to academic/research recruitment.
Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation’s human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research

We have made efforts to ensure that development provision is better targeted to researchers’ needs, and that they are better-informed and supported in planning their own professional development.

A newsletter for PIs and academic staff (ASPIRE) has been established and is sent out to all 700 academic staff with 10 issues to date. This supplements the Research Staff newsletter ‘Developing News...’ (30 editions and counting) and the weekly GRADskills newsletter which is emailed to all research postgraduate students. Each publication includes information about professional development opportunities for the relevant cohort, within and outside the institution.

The professional development web pages for academic and research staff have been reviewed and updated and an additional page for PIs created, signposting a wide range of online materials and development opportunities. In total, 2129 views were made on these pages Mar’15 to Mar ’16, compared to an average of 1369 for the 3 previous years.

Development provision has been reviewed and changes made in response to identified gaps. For example a Software Carpentry workshop was piloted for research staff, which will now be embedded in the annual programme.

Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

The ‘Passport to Research Futures Programme’, focussing on career development and employability, has 36 participants and 3 graduates so far. Core components focus on careers paths, career planning and personal development planning, while optional units enable participants to tailor the programme to their needs. Participants are given an RDF planner account and have priority access to the Early Career Academics’ Mentoring Scheme, networking sessions and Social Learning Groups. The programme is recognised by the Institute for Leadership and Management and is also certified by CAPOD. The benefits highlighted in our Passport to Research Futures CASE STUDY, were captured by one participant who said “I am due to leave in two months, to a postdoctoral position in neuroscience in Italy. Several suggestions from the Interview skills workshop were really handy for making my way through the selection for this new job! In general, the programme really helped to broaden my perspective from the everyday desk routine, and consider more carefully and critically my career and my choices”.

Research postgraduate students can also choose from over 50 skills workshops on the GRADskills Programme, as well as having access to online courses, and Innovation Grant funding to design their own transferable skills workshops.

Principle 4: The importance of researchers’ personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

A new review process has been established for academic and research staff. The Academic Review and Development Scheme (ARDS) is more focused on specific academic and research activity. Reviewing and defining development needs is an explicit part of the process, ensuring that academic and research staff, at every career stage, have this conversation with their line manager. A formal review of ARDS is being carried out. CROS 2015 indicates a 16.8% improvement in the reported ‘usefulness’ of the review process, with 39.5% reported in 2013 compared to 56.3% in 2015. This is helping to focus on career aspirations for the individual.

Progress has also been made to expand the professional development provision for all researchers with a broader ‘Academic Staff Development Programme’ (ASDP) and online learning made available for PIs.

Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

Progress has been made on induction for research staff, with improvements in coverage and accessibility of professional and career development information. This includes the ‘All Staff Induction’ event which was redesigned with a whole afternoon specifically for academic and research staff.

CROS 2015 shows that ‘usefulness’ of departmental induction increased by 48% points and local induction by 31.3% points. Departmental induction rates 28.6% points higher than the aggregate national average for CROS 2015, while local induction is 27.3% points higher and institutional induction is 22.3% points higher.

Information sent to new appointee’s signposts the relevant web resources, as do the induction checklists for managers. AIR, the online induction resource for academic staff, particularly those from outside the Scottish HE system has also been produced and launched.

Web pages for research staff and PGRs exist both on the CAPOD and the Careers Service websites to support professional and career development. The CAPOD site also now has a specific page for PIs and research leaders, which
Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

The University has been pursuing relevant awards such as Athena Swan and Stonewall and there are explicit links between this and HR Excellence via cross-representation on the respective working groups. The legal aspects of recruitment are being more effectively addressed through online training as above, while other training provision includes topics such as cross-cultural competence and unconscious bias.

In the 2009 University staff survey 67.7% of respondents said that they were able to maintain a satisfactory work-life balance. This increased to 76.3% in 2015, demonstrating progress on wellbeing and work-life balance. CROS 2015 also shows a 10.6% point improvement in working hours rated as ‘reasonable/normal’, while satisfaction with work-life balance is 11.1% points higher than the aggregate national average for CROS 2015. The University achieved the NHS Healthy Working Lives Bronze Award and alongside an expanding calendar of wellbeing initiatives launched the ‘Passport to Health and Wellbeing Excellence’ programme and a wellbeing newsletter, ‘Well Now’. All of this has helped to achieve much greater levels of researcher engagement. For example, in 2015 no researchers took part in Step Count Challenge. This year 13 teams include researchers.

Principle 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

Efforts have been made to regularly review and update the HR Excellence in Research Action plan. Progress has been documented and new actions added. The content and format of the plan have also been revised and improved with successive iterations published on the HR Excellence webpages.

After a hiatus in 2011, the University participated in CROS and PIRLS in 2013 and 2015. Response rates were poor but improved in 2015, from 15.7% to 24%. CROS/PIRLS have been used to generate additional HE Excellence actions, with survey results and narrative summaries published on the University CROS/PIRLS webpage.

4. Strategy for the next 4 years

The reality of aligning activity with the Concordat is that actions often relate to more than one Principle. Our strategy therefore targets key improvement themes rather than individual actions against particular Principles. The strategic themes have been mapped against the 2016-18 Action Plan which will continue to be developed and updated. We will aim for progress across of all seven Principles of the Concordat, whilst maintaining a focus on the key strategic themes outlined below.

Strategic theme 1: Improving the quality and effectiveness of induction, institutionally and locally, for all research staff. Action Plan Ref: 2.1, 2.3, 3.6, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.9, 6.10
Success Measure/s: 50% uptake of Academic Induction Resource by new researchers and PIs; 20% improvement in attitudes towards local induction for contract research staff; above average rating for local, departmental and institutional induction for research staff (measured via CROS), 80% of new research staff aware of online induction resources and events. All research staff signposted to the Equality & Diversity & Unconscious Bias online material.

Strategic theme 2: Improving the knowledge (including Equality & Diversity), skills and confidence of PIs in managing people and supporting professional and career development of researchers. Action Plan Ref: 2.3, 3.9, 4.1, 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.9, 6.10
Success Measure/s: 30% improvement in attendance figures of PIs to relevant workshops/events; 20% improvement in positive response rate to relevant questions in PIRLS. All PIs have to undertake the Unconscious Bias and Equality & Diversity on-line training modules.

Strategic theme 3: Continued focus on developing a mentoring/coaching culture to support professional and career development for researchers, such as more sophisticated matching in existing schemes to address specific career development issues, new issue-based networks (e.g. Public Engagement) and integration with induction processes. Action Plan Ref: 2.6, 3.7, 4.13
Success Measure/s: 20% increase in mentoring partnerships for Early Career Academics, 20% increase in mentors from mid and senior career stages; 90% satisfaction rating with mentoring scheme and support; 90% of participants would recommend mentoring scheme to colleagues.

Strategic theme 4: Improve the information and support around career paths and career planning and enhance the employability and entrepreneurial skills of researchers across all cohorts. Action Plan Ref: 3.9, 4.1, 4.13, 5.6
Success Measure/s: 20% improvement in awareness of information/support about career planning, employability and entrepreneurship; 20% increase in uptake of workshops/online resources on employability and entrepreneurship.