HR Excellence in Research Award: 2 year internal review

1. How was the internal evaluation undertaken?

The internal evaluation was undertaken between January and May 2014. The first stage of review comprised members of the working group (including representatives from Human Resources, Careers Centre, Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development, and Research Policy Office) conducting a review of progress against the original action plan.

The second stage involved analysing the results of the CROS and PIRLS 2013 surveys, and using them to generate a number of actions for the 2014-16 action plan.

The third stage involved consultation with Research Staff across the University via the Research and Teaching Staff Forum, all-staff notices on our Staff memo page, displaying the results of the internal review on the HR Excellence web-page and ‘fast focus groups’ held at the start of research staff workshops. The main purpose of stage 3 was to help generate further actions for the 2014-2016 action plan.

The fourth and final stage was to gain approval and strategic level commitment by the Principal’s Office, who have endorsed the 2014-2016 Action Plan for the University to take forward.

2. Key achievements and progress against the original action plan

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

- Inclusive recruitment guide reviewed and launched.
- The use of fixed term contracts is now on the agenda of the Research and Teaching Staff Forum.
- All staff, including recruiters, must complete the University’s Equality and Diversity training.
- Above average positive results in CROS 2013 in relation to provision of Institutional induction.

**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.

- Establishment of a joint Careers Centre-CAPOD Careers Adviser post with a focus on Postdoctoral staff and students.
- The research web page and Research and Teaching staff forum web pages have been updated.
- The successful result of our HR Excellence in Research submission was publicised across the University.
- The addition of the HR Excellence action plan as a standing item at each Research and Teaching Staff Forum.
- Impact of the revised probation procedure reviewed by HR, and annual review scheme Q6 embedded within it.
- The number of Supervisor Update Sessions has increased to two per year.
- The establishment of a bridging fund for researchers has been agreed.
- A number of bespoke workshops for Principal Investigators were designed and delivered.
- Above average positive results in CROS 2013 re: the University recognising and valuing the contribution research staff make to grant funding/applications and publications. Above average positive results in PIRLS 2013 re: the Institution recognising and valuing the contribution of PIs.

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

- University induction was restructured with an afternoon session specifically for research and academic staff.
- Postdoctoral researchers are offered a development surgery session with CAPOD/Careers post-induction.
- A workshop for Academic and Research Staff in recruiting and supervising PGR students.
- Creation and launch of a set of Careers Centre webpages specifically for Research staff and students.
- Benchmarking undertaken to compare the University’s Researcher Development provision with other sectors.
- A new development programme for research staff, Passport to Research Futures, was launched in Jan 2014, and a broader programme of workshops ‘CoReSkills’ for research staff was also established.
- Establishment of regular networking events for research staff (PostDoc Xchange) and students (PG Xchange)
- NEW Establishment of a Career Planning workshop for research staff.
**Principle 4**: The importance of researchers’ personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

- Established mentee networking events for mentees and mentors on the Cross-Institutional Early Career Academic mentoring scheme to enable participants to share experiences, good practice and networks.
- Vitae’s Researcher Development Framework underpins development provision for research staff/students, and the University has an RDF planner subscription.
- Above average CROS 2013 results in relation to researchers being encouraged in career development, having a career development plan, and internal/external collaboration.
- Creation of e-newsletter for research staff, and a separate weekly e-memo for research students.

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

- The University’s online induction was updated to include links to the University’s Research Staff Code of Practice and Good Research Practice Guide.
- Creation and marketing of a ‘Knowledge Transfer: An Introduction’ workshop for research staff/students.
- Establishment of networking sessions for Arts researchers to counter self-reported feelings of isolation.
- Creation of Careers Centre webpages for researchers, including a focus on addressing skills gaps.
- Additions to the GRADSkills Programme for PGRs include workshops on: assertiveness skills, bibliographic software, conference planning, enterprise and entrepreneurship, fundraising, open access, statistics.
- A successful Research Futures conference was held in the University in 2013 on ‘Public Engagement’.
- Research staff invited to make use of a new pool of internal workplace coaches.
- Establishment of a Research Development fund and research staff representative fund.
- Above average CROS 2013 results relating to research staff presenting at conferences and being first author on papers.

**Principle 6**: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

- A new section was added to the University’s online induction resource for non-UK staff relocating to the University.
- An updated version on the Diversity in Workplace – HE Online Training, which contained information about the Public Sector Equality duty, was promoted as part of REF.
- The University’s Single Equality Outcomes Scheme and how the institution is fully compliant with the Scottish Government’s equality guidance was published on the University web pages in April 2013.
- A new webpage was created signposting ESOL courses for staff and the partners/families of different nationalities.
- Awarded the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award in April 2013.

**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.

- The University took part in the CROS/PIRLS and PRES surveys in 2013, which led to HR Excellence actions.

3. Next steps and focus of future strategy for the next two years, including success measures.

**Principle 1**

- General statistics on recruitment application and success rates are being collated by protected characteristics.
- Summer 2014 student internship will review local induction arrangements for researchers in Schools.

**Principle 2**

- The Research Code of Practice and Good Research Practice Guide will be reviewed, following REF, for improvements.
- The Q6 process for research staff will be reviewed, to incorporate a more extensive recording process (for example, using the HR self-service system).
- More information will be considered in relation to communicating how the redeployment system works.
- New workshops for Principal Investigators will be added to the Academic Staff Development Programme.
• An online exit interview for staff will be created, including a question about the revised probation process.

**Principle 3**

• Work will begin by the Careers Centre to investigate establishing overseas contacts with the Research Staff community.

**Principle 4**

• A review of Q6 for research staff will be implemented to develop a more robust scheme.
• Online resources on leadership and management will be cascaded to Principal Investigators.
• Investigations will begin to set up a mentoring scheme where research staff mentor PGR students.

**Principle 5**

• The University’s Research Staff Code of Practice and Good Research Practice Guide will be updated and will link clearly to one another.
• A webpage 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.
• Investigations will begin to establish if the online course booking system can be used by researchers to record their CPD activities.
• Investigations will begin into the possibility of helping researchers establish a Postdoc Association.
• Investigations will begin into the feasibility of group mentoring.

**Principle 6**

• The current Harassment and Bullying policy will be reviewed to be inclusive of the EHRC Equality Act.
• A review into the effectiveness of family friendly policies will be carried out in Schools.
• Work will begin to achieve the Gender Equality Charter Mark.
• Work will begin to achieve the Race Equality Charter Mark.

**Principle 7**

• The University will continue to work towards a Healthy Working Lives Bronze award.
• Plans will be developed to increase engagement of research staff with next CROS/PIRLS survey in 2015.
• Work-life balance information and wellbeing resources will be targeted at Principal Investigators and research staff.

**Broad Success Indicators**

Our success will be measured by progress against the 2014-2016 action plan, as well as these additional indicators:

• Increased attendance at supervisor update sessions
• Use of the bridging fund for researchers
• Increased number of bespoke workshops for Principal Investigators delivered, and usage of online materials
• Use of new online induction tool for academic and research staff
• Increased hit rate on research staff Career Centre webpages
• Increased number of researchers joining the Passport to Research Futures development programme
• Increased awareness of Vitae’s Researcher Development Framework
• Increased participation rate in CROS/PIRLS/PRES 2015 surveys
• Creation of new set of webpages for Principal Investigators
• Increased number of applications to CAPOD’s Post-Doc development fund
• Increased number of postdoctoral research staff having annual Q6 reviews
• Retention of Institutional Athena SWAN Bronze award, and increased number of departmental awards
• Gaining of Institutional Healthy Working Lives Bronze Award