

The University of South Wales (USW) HR Excellence in Research Award (HREIR) Six-Year Review and Future Strategy (2019-2021)

Context:

The University is teaching led and research informed and is committed to transforming lives through knowledge and education. Our industry connections and emphasis on equipping students with real world experiences make our graduates among the most employable in the UK, with 95% of our students in employment or further study within six months of graduating. Our research tends to be applied which spans a variety of industrial, commercial, and cultural fields. Our teaching and research positively impacts the lives of the local, national and international communities and the business we serve.

Six-Year Review:

1. Internal evaluation process: The 6-year review was led by the HREIR Steering Group, chaired by the Director of Research and Business Engagement with members representing the four faculties including research active academics from ECRs to research leaders and professors and professional services staff with a remit to support researchers. This approach is consistent with the initial HREIR application and at the two and four-year review.

To update our action plan we have drawn information from a number of sources including the CROS, and PIRLS 2019, the research student annual monitoring process, PRES and workshops and surveys exploring DPR and career progression. Priorities have been identified via the HREIR Steering Group and other researcher-led strategic groups such as the Faculty Research Committees and the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team. Priorities were considered against the QAA indicators, RDF subdomains, Concordat Principles and the RCUK statement of expectations. The Steering Group will oversee the ongoing fulfilment of the action plan and strategy, and will report directly to Faculty and University Research Committees.

2. Key achievements and progress:

Recruitment and Selection – Building upon previous initiatives such as the establishment of the research toolkit, the research websites have been greatly enhanced through the recruitment of a new Research Digital Marketing Officer resulting in a greater than 10 fold increase in site visits. The officer is a member of the Steering Group to ensure attraction of staff via webpages is maximised. All those involved in recruitment and selection are required to attend mandatory HR training sessions, which also addresses unconscious bias. One to one training is given to anyone who is unable to attend the pre-organised sessions.

Recognition and Value – The third annual USW Innovation and Impact Awards were held in 2019. The Awards demonstrate how the University is fulfilling its mission by celebrating the significant impact that our research and engagement activity is having beyond the university. All shortlisted nominees were invited to attend the USW Impact Award dinner with their external partners to showcase and celebrate their achievements.

The Faculty Research Committees are well established and working well to embed research in faculty thinking. Heads of Research chair the committees, which meet at least 3 times a year. The committees comprise of 10-12 research active staff, and include research students and early career researchers, as well as colleagues from RBE thus providing a good mechanism for two-way communication, allowing academics to hear about the latest developments on topical issues such as REF, Athena SWAN and HREIR. The Faculty Research Committees have formal reporting lines to the University Research Committee.

Support and Career Development – RBE run a comprehensive series of CPD events that take place across all campuses to ensure fair access to training opportunities. The calendar of events is launched via Faculty

RBE Roadshows. These lunchtime events are designed to highlight the support available to academics via RBE, and are hosted by the Dean of Faculty; they also provide an opportunity for academics to network.

The CPD programme consisted of 59 workshops, delivered to over 400 academic staff. Workshops included a series of 5 one hour, “bite-size” lunch time sessions covering: Understanding Impact, Career Pathways, Developing Collaborative Partnerships, Developing Commercial Projects to Meet Client Needs and Developing Successful External Funding Proposals. In addition to this, 7 in-depth, specialist, half day workshops using external facilitators were provided to support the funding, intellectual property and impact agendas. We also provide one to one coaching for academics who are considering applications for Reader and Professorial titles. Our CPD is complimented by external programmes including the Times Higher Award winning Welsh Crucible and the Effective Researcher programme for PhD students (action 3.1.1).

We conducted a survey of all our Associate Professors/Professors to understand their experiences of the application process. It revealed a lack of visible female role models in these roles particularly part-time Associate Professors/Professors, a lack of guidance about how to apply, a lack of support during the application process and failure to discuss career progression at DPR. We are addressing this feedback with targeted interventions to support career progression to Associate Professor/Professor including updating our regulations with clear mitigation for staff working part-time or with absences for ill health/caring, a buddy system for applicants and a communications campaign highlighting in particular, female Associate Professors/Professors.

Research Student Representatives and ECRs continue to have a position at research related committees at both faculty and University level, including a new Graduate School Board which will oversee research training and research student experience. RBE continues to monitor the attendance of, and contributions to, the research student community by student representatives; student feedback is also measured using Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

The Graduate School was established as the home for postgraduate research degree programmes in 2018. The aim of the school is to provide overarching support for postgraduate research and training of PhD students and their supervisors, and provide pathways for experience in external and public engagement through programmes such as Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships and the new External Engagement Fund. The Graduate School reviews supervisor training to ensure that USW is in line with the UKCGE Research Supervisor Good Practice Framework and recognition scheme.

Researcher Responsibilities – In order to give researchers the ability to update information on their research outputs, impact and research student supervision records, the university has invested in new Information Systems, namely PURE and PhD Manager. PURE also acts as our institutional repository recording information and metrics regarding research outputs and impact. To date PURE holds approximately 10,000 output records, which has grown from 3,500 at its launch in October 2016.

In June 2018, a new research ethics policy and framework for implementation across the University was approved. This policy aims to enhance the consistency and robustness of research ethics and good research governance of all research conducted under the auspices of USW and its partners and applies to all staff and student research. USW subscribes to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity and provides policies and guidance to support both the embedding and compliance with the Concordat. A research governance checklist is available to staff to help provide guidance through the common research governance checks that are applicable to a research project life cycle.

Diversity and Equality – USW will apply for the Institutional Athena SWAN Bronze award in November 2019 and has invested in an EDI analyst and EDI Officer to ensure that our work on gender equality continues. In 2016, the University became a Stonewall Champion and submitted for the first time to the Stonewall Equality Index, over the past 3 years moving up the index table to reach 43rd in 2019. There has been

significant progress in this area with the launch of Fairplay30, the Equality Champions Scheme at USW, we were the 2019 winners of the Advancing Staff Equality award at the Guardian University Awards for 'having a profound impact on creating a culture of inclusivity'. We are building on the success of FairPlay30 by extending the group to new champions in early 2020. (Action 5.1.2)

Implementation and Review – the responsibility for the implementation of the strategy lies with the Director of RBE and the HREIR Steering Group. A key ethos for our implementation and review is effective communication. We are committed to engaging with the staff and students across the institution to ensure their voices are heard. The Steering Group listens to colleagues as well as communicating with them, thus avoiding “top down” messaging and consequently facilitating and encouraging dialogue in a “bottom up” fashion. RBE staff will continue to advocate for research staff by attending Faculty executive meetings and Faculty Research Committee meetings and away days and HREIR is a standing agenda item on Faculty and University Research Committees.

3. A Summary of Future Strategy

In 2018, a new research strategy was co-developed with the research community at USW with a focus on four key areas (1) prioritising people (2) maximising impact (3) diversifying income. USW's future research strategy can be summarised as focussing on four broad areas; 1) Deepening our commitment to equality and diversity, 2) Leadership and management development 3) Supporting academic career development and 4) Professional development of research support staff.

Deepening our commitment to equality and diversity

To support our equality and diversity work USW has committed to renewing the Athena SWAN institutional Bronze Award (action 5.1.1). We will measure our impact via feedback from staff from the WiA Network and from the progression of our female research staff who have taken part in our Women Development Programme (action 5.1.3).

Our CROS and PRILS results continue to indicate that there is work to be done around raising awareness of important initiatives such as Athena SWAN and have appointed Athena SWAN Champions in every school and corporate departments with a set time allocation to enable them to embed equality and diversity principles within their areas. We will also hold focus groups on every campus to discuss gender and its impact on academic life in particular career progression for female researchers. These focus groups will ask the same questions as previous focus groups so we can measure any impact of establishing our WiA Network and our Women Development Programme. We will also use the focus groups to consider what barriers remain to female academic career progression at USW and design actions accordingly (action 5.1.3).

Leadership, Management and Development –RBE staff listen to academics attending CPD events and a common issue reported is that Heads of School do not always have the right information to make informed decisions regarding whether academics should engage in research and innovation activities and how to support them. We launched a mandatory course for Heads of School to help them to understand the benefits of research from a personal development perspective as well as being beneficial to the curriculum and being a tool for student recruitment (action 3.1.2). Engaging with the Heads of Schools and ASMs will enable us to highlight the value of research to those in management positions and to enable academics undertaking research to be recognised and valued for their work.

Supporting academic career development – we will continue to run lunchtime courses and bitesize development opportunities throughout the academic year which will be open for all and be responsive to the changing and challenging external environment and to the needs of our academics (action 3.1.4). We will trial Researcher Forums as our feedback from CROS and from ECRs at Faculty Research Committees suggests that this form of support might benefit those who are in smaller research teams and are not exposed to others in a similar position as them (action 2.4).