

Concordat Implementation: HR Excellence in Research Award Two Year Internal Review Progress Report - October 2015

USW received the *HR Excellence in Research Award* in November 2013. As a holder of the award we are required to undertake an internal two year review of our progress and actions against the Implementation Action Plan published on our website in November 2013.

Change - In November 2014 support for research underwent restructure with the formation of a consolidated team named Research and Innovation Services (RISe) within the broader department of Research and Business Engagement (RB&E) which provides strategic and operational support to a broad but interlinked portfolio of research agendas. RISe supports researchers, research institutes and research and project committees, administers the higher academic awards process and develops the open access and data requirements for research publications and a repository process. The team includes all central support for research governance and ethics. Research student support and administration is continued to be led by the Graduate Research Office (GRO).

Research Institutes provide the overarching management framework for research staff where the management and measurement of research performance and associated review is undertaken. Led by a Research Institute Director, they are embedded within the faculty structure and report to faculty and university research committees. Members receive a time allowance within the workload model for research, access to funding and mentorship.

Internal Review - The Internal Review has been a continual process led by the Deputy Director of the RB&E and the HR Excellence in Research Working Group that was established in 2013. The HR Excellence in Research Working Group met regularly over the past two years to discuss and update the action plan at every meeting throughout the two years that we have held the *HR Excellence in Research Award*. The Concordat Working Group has had changes of membership due to people changing roles but membership consists of Deputy Director RB&E, HR Representative, Chair of Research Programmes Sub Group, Research Excellence Manager, Strategic Research Projects Officer and Faculty representatives including experienced and early career researchers.

In terms of Quality Assurance and to ensure that Senior Management is engaged with the action plan, it is a standing item on the Research Committee agenda to ensure that updates and issues are highlighted at this University-wide committee. The final review of the two-year period gathered information from a number of sources including:

- CROS and PIRLS data from the 2015 Surveys
- An internal electronic survey sent to all Research Institute members (200 academics) about their experiences as research active staff
- Women in Academia Focus Groups
- Face to face meetings with Deans and Research Institute Directors

The full report of the internal review of the action plan was considered by Research Committee. This Committee's membership includes the DVC Academic, Executive Director and Deputy of RB&E, Research Institute Directors, the Chair of Research Programmes Sub Committee and academics from research active areas. Feedback has been built into the updated action plan.

Key Achievements and Progress Against Action Plan - Full details of progress against the original action plan are provided in the updated, accompanying document. A summary of key highlights is provided here.

Recruitment and Selection - The Research Toolkit has been well used averaging nearly 500 visits every month. It was launched at the Induction event for Research Institute members and has been updated to

include the latest revisions to regulations and policies. The newly established RISE has consolidated and harmonised all funding support. All projects are supported by expert Funding Development Officers and during the development of a project or programme of work all grades/personnel staff reviewed. With regards to research support staff (RAs and RFs) a number of generic specifications are available online. This sets out the relevant grade, the main purpose of the role and detailed principal duties and responsibilities. Difference in the duties can be viewed and compared across the different roles and respective grades.

Recognition and Value - A key action was to ensure that those in roles leading research were given clear "job descriptions" so that expectations are consistent and understood by all. Research Institute Directors, REF Leads and Research Centre and Group leaders all have job descriptions now in place for that aspect of their substantive role. In terms of development, Research Institute Directors have all taken part in Wales Senior Research Leaders Programme and have had bespoke training on improving influence, communication and collaboration skills.

Research Institute members have now had two full research reviews and interim reviews with the relevant Research Institute Directors. Compliance with this process is high 167/198 = 84% compliance (for 2014) of Research Institute members having gone through this process. According to the survey of members this review process is the most positive thing about being in a Research Institute.

Ensuring researchers voices are heard, has been addressed at both Research Committee and Research Programmes Sub Committee (RSPC) with Early Career Researchers now being represented at both. The Student Voice Representative Scheme for research student has been reviewed and it was concluded that whilst the scheme works well for undergraduates, it was not working for the research student community and a new approach adopted. Membership of Faculty Research Programmes Committees (FRPC's) has been amended so that the committees include at least one postgraduate research (PGR) student representative for each Faculty. The same representatives will also be invited to RSPC. Students are invited to participate in the initial part of the meeting which includes a discussion of student issues. The Chairs of FRPC's canvas all PGR students (via email) about any matters they wish to be discussed and encourage student representatives to attend FRPC. Depending on the nature of matters raised they may either be referred to RSPC, Research Committee or Faculty Executive.

Establishing Researcher Forums was investigated. Given the number of different campuses (6) and the number of researchers on some it was decided to adopt Faculty Research Committee rather than informal forums. The Faculty Research Committees report up to the University Research Committee that is a sub Committee of Academic Board. The Faculty Committees have early career researchers as members as well as research professors and Research Institute Directors.

Support and Career Development - All academics submitting an application for a Higher Academic Award (HAA) are strongly advised to attend a workshop or a one to one session before starting the application process. Over the last two years there have been eight workshops held (two per faculty) with approximately five academic staff attending each workshop. There have been two HAA meeting in the last 12 months consisting of 14 internal applications with the success of 6 professorial and 3 reader appointments. New workshop sessions have also been introduced to the RB&E Road shows. Sessions for Faculty Senior Management Teams have also been held so that they are better equipped to advise and support staff with respect to the application process.

Training and information provided are reviewed annually and there now exists a comprehensive calendar, including business engagement, knowledge exchange and impact development. More recently we have developed a more comprehensive, broader CPD series for academic staff to include activities such as consultancy, commercialization, contract management and compliance with new initiatives such as the open access and data management agendas.

The Research Mentoring Scheme was launched with a one day development session for mentors and mentees. 20 applications to be a mentor and 31 for mentees were received - so far, a total of 28 mentoring pairs have been established. The method for selecting mentee/mentor relationship was based on areas of support that the mentee felt they needed from a mentor. This was matched to a mentor who indicated they had experience in the same areas. Consequently many of the matches were made across the Faculties and Research Institutes unless a mentee/mentor had specifically requested a match in the same discipline area.

All those who have taken part, both mentors and mentees, have been invited to take part in a survey. It revealed that, in the majority of cases, respondents who were mentees agreed that the scheme worked for them, met their expectations, their mentoring relationship was a successful match and that they felt more confident about their research career as a result of participating in the scheme. The majority of mentors also thought their mentoring relationship was a successful match but also felt that they had contributed to the development of their mentee, that the commitment to the scheme was worthwhile, and that they felt supported by the structure of the scheme to perform their role in the relationship. The University has considered the feedback from the survey in preparations for a new round of the scheme to commence in early 2016.

Researcher Responsibilities - The Code of Practice for Research which has been designed by the UK Research Integrity Office was adopted formally by the. We are overhauling our governance and ethics provision to ensure, taking into account the UKRIO principles, that we can offer comprehensive provision for all types of research across all of our Faculties and Research Institutes. This includes the development of an overarching governance framework and embedding within staff development training and to ensure that it and the Ethics Policy is fit for purpose.

Diversity and Equality - The University achieved Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze in April 2014 and is currently intending a submission for a Departmental Bronze award in November 2015. As a result of focus groups with female academics, including research active academics, a "Women in Academia Network" was established. Several events have taken place to allow female academics the opportunity to network, learn from role models and to hear inspirational talks from external speakers. Representatives from the Women in Academia Networks have also met with staff in HR and Central Timetabling to discuss the issues raised. This has led to some positive changes in terms of HR processes and understanding of the issues that female academics face. In March 2016, the University will be holding a Wales Wide Women in Academia Day to celebrate International Women's Day.

Implementation and Review - The University conducted an institutional wide research student annual monitoring survey in the 2015 summer term, with a high response rate of approximately 70%. To gauge researcher views, a survey of all Research Institute members was conducted over the summer of 2015. A response rate of 50% (100 responses) was achieved. In addition to this electronic survey, face to face meetings were conducted with Research Institute Directors and Deans of Faculties to discuss how research and research staff are being supported. The HR Excellence Action Plan is a standard item on the University Research Committee agenda. The Concordat Steering Group has met once a term over the two year review period and Faculty members are encouraged to feedback to their Faculty colleagues.

Cross Cutting Success Indicators - Our success has and will continue to be measured in terms of achievement of the actions set out in the Action Plan in a timely manner. In addition, our success measures include the following:

- Evidence of improvement in CROS, PIRLS and Research Institute survey data when compared with previous years
- Increased take-up of research reviews with Research Institute Directors
- The further development of our calendar of events for research staff and students
- The achievement of Athena Swan Awards.