

Introduction

The University of the West of England, Bristol achieved the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award in January 2012. The Award was retained in January 2014 and again in January 2016. To support this, a Concordat Implementation Working Group was formed comprising the Researchers' Forum Convener, research staff representatives, HR, the Graduate School and Research, Business & Innovation. The working group reports to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of Academic Board.

Evaluation

Following a period of review and refreshment in 2017, the Working Group was reconstituted in March 2018 to review the action plan, compile this update on progress and to renew our commitments for 2018–2020. To undertake the assessment, the working group reviewed progress across relevant areas of work but put the perspectives of researchers at the forefront, for example:-

- The working group has research staff representation from each of the four UWE faculties
- The Researchers' Forum holds regular events to provide research staff with updates on progress with the action plan, and seek their perspectives on it (the next is in May 2018).
- Data collected from the CROS (most recently in 2017) and the latest UWE staff survey (also conducted in 2017) are carefully reviewed and inform further development
- Members of the University Research Strategy Implementation Group and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of Academic Board are invited to comment and contribute.

Key achievements and progress

The following key achievements for 2016-18 are highlighted below:-

Recruitment and selection

In 2016, 70% of UWE research staff were on fixed term contracts. The latest data (2018) indicates that this has decreased to 62% (i.e. an increase of 8% in staff on open-ended contracts).

All staff who chair recruitment panels for researchers attend mandatory training on recruitment and selection. Human Resources has augmented recruitment and selection training with skills booster videos on topics such as unconscious bias.

UWE's commitment to improve the support it offers to disabled job applicants and employees is reflected in its commitment to being Disability Confident (replacing the Two Ticks scheme). We support the guaranteed interview scheme and have been conferred accreditation at level 2.

In CROS 2017, 94% of UWE respondents considered themselves to have an appropriate job description (compared to 92% for all UK respondents, and 74% for UWE in CROS 2015).

Recognition and value

Success measures are linked primarily to improvements to the CROS and Staff Survey results/responses (2017) and through engagement with the Performance and Development Review process.

83% of UWE respondents to CROS 2017 indicated that they had participated in a Performance & Development Review, up from 74% reported in CROS 2013

The UWE Staff Survey 2017 provided some positive feedback on the experience of research-only staff. Among **all** staff groups, research staff scored highest in response to a number of key questions e.g.

- being clear about what they were expected to achieve in their job (93%)
- being treated with respect by colleagues (90%)
- feeling trusted to do their job (91%)
- having a manager who is open and honest with them (93%)
- having a manager who was interested in their well-being (88%)

Scores were less satisfying in terms of having a staff voice that is heard in the University (14% compared to UWE average of 29%) and having a strong sense of belonging to the University (45% compared to UWE average of 61%). The survey outcomes have been considered by the Researchers' Forum Planning Group and are being used to inform further discussion with research staff.

Support and career development

On-going activities include:

- A researcher skills development programme which is refreshed and updated annually.
- The annual Vice Chancellors Early Career Researcher Scheme which provides opportunities for emerging researchers to undertake research and bid for further funding.

In 2016/17 a major project was undertaken under the auspices of a specialty constituted Researcher Development Programme Working Group, chaired by the Convenor of the Researchers' Forum. The Group drew up a list of existing learning and development provision for researchers at UWE, undertook a gap analysis to identify further requirements, and identified a list of topics that should be part of an enhanced annual Researcher Development Programme.

The work of the Group concluded with the publication of an extensive report, '*Towards an Enhanced Researcher Development Programme at UWE*', which has led to a number of key developments, e.g.

- an enhanced skills development programme, including new sessions on working with enterprise, commercialisation and impact of research in society
- additional resources for a new post to take forward the Group's recommendations, focussing specifically on training for early career research staff (currently being recruited)
- working with UWE's new Academic Practice Directorate to support the inclusion of a research route within a proposed Academic Professional Apprenticeship (due to be launched in 2019)

Career Development

A new Research Skills Development Manager, Dr Aga Szewczyk, was appointed in 2017, bringing a strong careers focus to the post (Aga was formerly a Strategic Planning Officer in the UWE Careers Service). As a result, the Researcher Development Programme 2017/18 has included more events that address diverse aspects of alternative career directions for researchers, including 'Women and Careers – Academia and/ or Something Else?', 'You Already are an Enterprising Researcher' and a dedicated career guidance workshop – 'Smooosh it! Designing for Your Wholesome Life'.

Diversity and equality

UWE Bristol had its Institutional Athena Swan Bronze re-awarded under the expanded charter in 2017. Three departments had their Bronze awards renewed and one made its' first successful application:

- Department of Applied Sciences (renewed in 2017).
- Department of Nursing and Midwifery and Department of Allied Health Professions (joint award renewed in 2017).
- Department of Health and Social Sciences (awarded in November 2017).

Three further submissions have been made:

- Department of Engineering, Design and Mathematics submitted for renewal in April 2018
- Departments of Geography and Environmental Management and Architecture and Built Environment submitted a joint bronze application for the first time in April.

Implementation and review

The Concordat Implementation Working Group meets twice a year and enables progress against the implementation plan to be monitored with appropriate rigour. UWE is committed to engaging with CROS, with biannual participation since 2009.

Next steps and strategy from 2018

A new action plan has been developed that takes into account parallel projects under the University's two main strategic programmes, Performance 2020 and Learning 2020, and to ensure that researcher development is considered as part of the implementation. The main areas for action with respect to the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* are as follows:-

- Faculties to be monitored on the implementation of existing research plans in context of Research 2020 [Concordat principle 1-7]
- Review and improve how and where we advertise to ensure we are attracting the best people as part of the Performance 2020 programme [Concordat principle 1]
- Continue to improve the online tools available to make the experience of filling vacancies more efficient for applicants and for recruiting managers [Concordat principle 1]
- Monitor the impact being Disability Confident and the guaranteed interview scheme has on research staff recruitment [Concordat principle 1, 6]
- Ensure new research staff start are supported more effectively through induction [Concordat principle 1, 2, 3]
- Complete the 360° review of senior research managers with respect to UWE Leadership Behaviours and create a personal development plan based on the outcomes [Concordat principle 2]
- Review the career pathways project with respect to research staff [Concordat principle 2, 3]
- Continue to implement the recommendations of the Researcher Development Programme Working Group through an enhanced research skills development programme, including the appointment of a skills development coordinator specifically for the staff programme [Concordat principle 2, 3, 4, 5]
- Following the review and refreshment of the Researchers' Forum, appoint a new Chair to lead it into the next phase of development [Concordat principle 3, 4, 5]
- Continue to support the spread of good practice by encouraging more departments to submit (and resubmit) for recognition to Athena Swan [Concordat principle 6]
- Submit an application to the Race Equality Charter Mark in 2020 [Concordat principle 6]
- Continue to publish statistics to demonstrate the progress made across the institution for all equality groups [Concordat principle 6]

- Commit to undertaking the Careers in Research Online Survey in 2019, evaluate the outcomes and ensure that the resulting actions are channelled back to senior management through the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee [Concordat principle 7]

Success Measures

- A range of measures derived from the Careers in Research Online Survey and the next UWE Staff Survey, showing improvement in comparison to previous years
- Comprehensive staff statistics published in the annual staff compendium, including staff on research grades as a specific group
- Proportion of staff on research grades engaging with the course provision in the Learning and Development Centre
- Engagement and evaluation data from the UWE Core Researcher Development Programme
- Attendance data collected by Human Resources at welcome fairs and engagement with online induction analysed by staff demographic
- The numbers and level of Athena Swan Awards retained and/or achieved
- The numbers of research grade staff acting as independent researchers and potentially eligible for inclusion in REF 2021