

HR Excellence in Research Award: Progress Report - Eight Year External Evaluation and Review

Introduction

The University of Dundee received the HR Excellence in Research Award in September 2011. We were one of nine Universities in the third tranche to receive this award and have retained it across three subsequent reviews, involving two internal reviews in 2013 and 2017 and an external review in 2015. This report and associated action plans outline our internal evaluation process, the successes driven by our 2017/2019 action plan and how these link to University priorities. The report also sets out the main focus of our strategy for the next two years and the key measures of success which form the basis of an updated action plan for 2019/2021.

Context for the Eight Year review

The Eight Year review of the University's engagement with the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers occurs during a time of significant strategic transformation. In 2018 the University produced its new Strategy to 2022, which recognises the importance of our people, and has at its heart a high performance community. This strategy underpins the University's vision to become *Scotland's leading University* building on recent research related achievements: we are the world's most influential research institution in pharmaceuticals (Clarivate Analytics, 2017); 76% of our research is achieving 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent' standards (REF, 2014), our research is ranked top in the UK for influencing innovation (Nature Index 2017), and over 40% of our total income comes from research. The University vision brings a renewed emphasis on valuing our people and enabling them to flourish, through the promotion of areas including; equality, diversity and inclusion, greater recognition of excellent performance and outcomes, and enhanced personal development. We are working towards this vision in five year stages, and this sense of a journey ensures we are responsive to the development needs of our researchers and, to regularly refreshing our commitment to the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

The University of Dundee remains determined to strive for excellence and demonstrate our commitment to enriching a high performance environment for research staff. In June 2019 a Researcher Enhancement Officer (REO) was appointed with the responsibility to drive forward the implementation, review and evaluation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and its associated award, the HR Excellence in Research, in collaboration with key stakeholders (including Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD), Organisational and Professional Development (OPD), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I), Careers Service (CS), Academic and Corporate Governance (ACG) and Research and Innovation Services (RIS)), under the direction of the Vice-Principal (Research, Knowledge Exchange and Wider Impact).

How was the Eight Year review undertaken?

The process of internal review and evaluation of our action plan is embedded within university core practices where it has successfully become part of the University's governance and reporting structures. Three main approaches supported this two year review period:

1. The previous Concordat Steering Group was replaced by the new Career Development for Research Staff Steering Group (CDRS) in 2015, with a clear remit to promote the implementation of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, by supporting personal and career development opportunities for research staff. The Steering Group, chaired by the Vice-Principal (Research, Knowledge Exchange and Wider Impact), with representation from HR&OD, OPD, ED&I, CS, RIS, and ACG, alongside research staff representatives from the Research Staff Association (RSA), reviews progress and reports to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC).
2. The second method used to support this internal review is the inclusion of face to face meetings by the REO with members responsible for each of the sub-sections within the action plans. This approach ensured that the internal evaluation included a careful review of progress against previous action plans with input from key stakeholders across the university (including HR&OD, OPD, ED&I, CS, RIS and ACG). Additionally, discussion and input by research staff were received via the CDRS Steering Group which also shaped the priority areas focused in this review and action plan.
3. The inclusion of data from the 2017 University Staff Survey includes Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) like questions which are specific for research staff. Feedback from the researcher development workshop programme within OPD has also been included in this review.

A draft of the evaluation report was shared with Vitae at the end of August 2019 for comment and feedback. All key documents and information can be found at: www.dundee.ac.uk/hr/hrexcellenceinresearch

Key achievements and progress against original action plan and six year review and action plan

The 2019 University Staff Survey is scheduled to run between Oct-Nov with the data available in December 2019, therefore data was not available at the time of this submission. The following sections set out our key progress against principles using 2017 Staff Survey data, in addition to other evidence.

Key Progress against Principles 1 and 2: Recruitment and Selection; Recognition and Value

Significant progress has been made in the areas of Recruitment Policy. Efforts to improve the branding and promotion of the University as an inclusive and welcoming employer for new researchers has resulted in more targeted advertising via social media channels like LinkedIn to improve accessibility of opportunities. The University Welcome events also provide new research staff important early exposure to the range of professional service directorates which underpin varied research support functions. In 2018, 123 research staff were invited to the University Welcome and 25 attended.

Following the 2017 Staff Survey there has been a focus of activity in respect of the key findings which has led to the development of Action Plans (AP) by Schools and Directorates. The Staff Survey AP's set out three key areas of focus with associated actions and are updated with progress reports given to RKEC. This exercise enables Schools and Directorates to reflect on their progress to date and provide an opportunity to review and renew focus in preparation for the 2019 Staff Survey.

The University's appraisal process, Objective Setting and Review (OSaR), is an integral part of supporting research staff and provides an opportunity to discuss their training and career development. The OSaR process is implemented across all Schools and completion rates are high (average 87% across Schools with 85% completion for research staff). Our focus now include improvement of the quality of OSaRs and we will work together with researchers to ensure the diverse nature of this community and their development needs are appropriately reflected into our OSaR processes moving forwards. This review process is ongoing, with the intention to have a revised system in place for academic year 2020-21.

Key Progress against Principles 3 and 4: Support and Career Development

The Researcher Development Programme aims to meet the needs of research staff in both their current and future career ambitions. New provision is identified and delivered subject to training identified through an annual review process, workshop feedback, committees and national initiatives (such as the Research Concordats, Mental Health and Wellbeing etc.). In 2017/2018 OPD ran 57 specific researcher development workshops with an engagement level from our eligible population of research staff at 36.23% from 28.35% in 2016/2017 an increase of 7.8%. In 2018/2019 OPD ran 47 specific researcher development workshops with an engagement level from our eligible population of research staff at 30%. The decrease in engagement with face to face provision reflects the increasingly dynamic and cross-institutional approach to supporting researchers which has altered the access to specific researcher development training. For instance at a School level there is localised training for research staff (e.g. Unconscious Bias and Public Engagement training) which is not captured by OPD data. Training is now further supported by the University by the appointment of a dedicated Associate Dean for Professional Culture within the School of Life Sciences in April 2017.

Year	Researcher Development Workshops	Total Attendance	Engagement Levels from eligible population (%)
2015/16	47	327	23.5
2016/17	50	373	28.4
2017/18	57	469	36.2
2018/19	47	346	30.0

A full listing of our [OPD programme and events](#), and our [Researcher Development Policy](#) and Annual Reports which give more detail of researcher development activities are available on our OPD web pages.

As part of the University's ongoing efforts to support the varied career trajectories of our research staff, in response to feedback OPD instigated a new opportunity in 2018/2019 for formal accreditation in Project Management Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM). This development opportunity provides research staff with 23 hours of project management education through workshops and group work. As part of the application, the Principal Investigator and applicant were requested to provide a supporting statement on how the training will benefit career development in reference to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the University's HR Excellence in Research Award, and the Researcher Development Policy. Four members of research staff applied to the programme with a 100% success rate. This training opportunity is ongoing until November 2019 and will be run again in 2020/2021.

There are two formal mentoring schemes at the University of Dundee. The Cross Institutional Early Careers Mentoring Scheme, founded in partnership with the University of St Andrews, has recently rebranded as the Teaching, Research and Academic Mentoring Scheme. This mentoring scheme includes a host of networking and information events available to academic and research staff. In 2017/2018 there were 121 members of staff and 51 live partnerships in this scheme. Research staff are also able to access mentors from non-academic backgrounds via the [Professional Development Mentoring Scheme \(PDM\)](#). The PDM Scheme runs exclusively for University of Dundee staff and is available to research staff interested in transitioning into

non-academic careers. In addition to localised mentoring there are a range of School level mentoring opportunities available to researchers (e.g. School of Life Science Mentoring Program).

Key Progress against Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

The University of Dundee is committed to supporting research staff in their responsibility to be proactive in developing their understanding of good research practice and the various standards that govern research and [Research Integrity](#). All research staff have access to a range of resources to support responsible and ethical practice in research which is designed to promote researcher awareness and engagement with research integrity issues.

Support for our research staff wellbeing and personal development is also encouraged through an additional online resource called Resilience in Research. This has been developed along with a Wellbeing Workplace workshop. A 'Train the Trainer' event for the workshop was also developed in 2018 with 15 educators and researcher developers across nine Higher Education Institutes in Scotland and Northern Ireland completing the training in April 2019.

In addition to developing ethical research practice, the University also continues its long standing support to encourage an enterprising mind-set amongst its research staff population, with £12,500 awarded for innovative projects over the 2017-2019 period, as part of its flagship Venture – New Business Competition. The Venture competition was originally developed by OPD in 2011 using funds awarded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). This scheme is now managed by the newly formed dedicated Centre for Entrepreneurship (CfE) which provides entrepreneurial support to all staff including research staff. Areas across the University sponsor seed funding for the competition with OPD supporting the category for research staff.

As part of the University Innovation Fund collaborative business engagement training initiative, the University of Dundee hosted a 'Business Skills for Researchers' workshop where 19 research staff attended from four universities across Scotland. The aim of this workshop was to equip research staff with key skills for identifying, engaging and working with businesses.

Key Progress against Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

Equality and Diversity considerations are embedded throughout the University's policies and procedures and the University has actively promoted equality, diversity and inclusion through training and awareness raising, its governance structure and mainstreaming plans under its Public Sector Equality Duty. The University is fully committed to advancing equality and diversity and this is demonstrated in the development of the enhanced [Equality Outcomes Plan 2017-2021](#) (April, 2017), and [Equality Mainstreaming and Outcome Updated Report \(2019\)](#). This Report details progress towards the completion of a range of actions which include further increases to the number of Schools holding [Athena SWAN awards](#).

Key Progress against Principle 7: Implementation and Review

There has been a genuine review of progress of the university's commitment to support research staff which is monitored and reviewed through CDRS. The appointment of a REO in June 2019 has enabled further drive and progress of positive changes to research staff such as university wide networking opportunities for research staff, and increasingly early exposure with colleagues from key research services. The efforts of the REO are further supported by the incorporation of two new research staff representatives onto CDRS. The augmentation of CDRS through diverse and sustained representation of research staff will enable more robust succession planning, and will be supported by a review to the Terms of Reference of the group which was last completed in 2016. CDRS meet regularly across each academic year with minutes and actions published on a dedicated University of Dundee [web page](#).

Strategy and success measures: 2019/2021

A substantial amount of development to support research staff has been achieved since the university first gained its HR Excellence in Research Award in 2011. However many of the changes have resulted through a combination of legislative requirements and ED&I related charters. Many actions (particularly those relating to HR&OD and ED&I) are now successfully embedded into business as usual processes. This has opened up the opportunity to develop more meaningful and sustainable contribution to the enrichment of the research staff community. Plans to address enhancement areas over the next two years will be focused on further embedding high-quality support for the career development of research staff, and translating the guidance as set out in the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers principles into practise.

The 2019/2021 Action Plan has therefore refocused its approach in the implementing, reviewing and evaluating process. There will be a review of the reporting processes in place by CDRS members with support from the REO, and close partnership working with the Research Staff Forum (RSF), alongside existing research staff networks to identify gaps or issues as well as gain feedback on actions. This activity will be captured within the new research staff newsletter due to be launched in December 2019.

Strategies to support Principles 1 and 2 – Key Measures HRE1, HRE2 and HRE3

The University will continue to work on developing an inclusive culture of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research. Promotion criteria and guidance will undergo an extensive review with support from School Deans in the development and implementation of probation policy, alongside input by research staff (e.g.

input by research staff into the revised promotion criteria covering researchers). Further focus on the OSaR process will be implemented for research staff as part of the development of an integrated Performance Management and Reward Framework, alongside improved communication of the requirements for research staff to undertake OSaR discussions with their line managers. OSaR discussions will also include the incorporation of guidance on continual professional development of research staff as set out in the new Statement of Expectation for line-managers and research staff. In anticipation of the review of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the University has taken a proactive approach to introduce two new pilot workshops to support our line-managers of research staff, namely 'Supporting the Career Development of Researchers' and 'Key Skills and Approaches for Successful Managing', both of which will examine best practice in an academic leadership role.

Strategies to support Principle 3 and 4 – Key Measures HRE5 and HRE6

The 2019 University Staff Survey, which contains CROS-like research focused questions for research staff will run in Oct/Nov. This will provide detailed feedback from our research staff community which will enable further analysis of results for research staff to be carried out and plans for addressing any issues made. Additional measures may be added following further analysis of results and engagement with research staff on outcomes. Any areas of development which emerge from this review will be coordinated by the REO, under the guidance of CDRS and alongside existing activities focused on increasing the awareness of transferability of skills and developing exposure to other careers in addition to academia. The development of a RSF with representation across Schools is a significant area of focus for the university, and represents a new opportunity to build further engagement and dialogue with research staff on opportunities relating to their career development and overall experience of the research environment at the University of Dundee. Any outcomes or actions that emerge from the RSF will be reported to CDRS.

Strategies to support Principle 5 – Key Measures HRE5 and HRE6

The Research Integrity training for Research and Teaching staff includes a network of Research Integrity Leads across Schools. The Research Integrity training at the University of Dundee is leading in the sector and is crucial to supporting the professional culture and excellence in research.

The University will also be launching a Public Engagement Strategy in October 2019, with a number of goals aligned to the University's strategic commitments. This will support our staff and students to ensure they are confident in delivering their public engagement activities and are aware of where support can be found. The establishment of a University Research Office (URO) in 2016 created a coordinated 'single team' approach to administrative aspects of research across the institution. The URO runs regular sessions where staff from across a research theme meet to ensure rapid identification and resolution of issues; to reconfigure research grant support and management; and to support the quality agenda through implementation of an Annual Research Review process. This activity has had and will continue to have a pronounced impact on our research culture and therefore research staff, with plans in development to have at least one session in 2020 to include the research staff population with topics that encompass the Research Concordats.

Strategies to support Principle 6 – Key Measures HRE5 and HRE7

As a commitment to inclusive practice, a review of funding mechanisms alongside the expectations of funding bodies will be undertaken with a focus on research staff at different levels. This review will ensure that funding and procurement have equality impact assessment in their processes. Alongside this, a program of enhanced Work/Life Balance policies will be promoted to research staff with the aim of building knowledge and understanding of the flexible working opportunities available to them.

Strategies to support Principle 7 – Key Measures HRE5

In order to ensure that it effectively promotes the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development for Researchers, CDRS will undergo a review of its remit and appointment of new members. This review will be led by the Vice-Principal (Research, Knowledge Exchange and Wider Impact) with support from the REO. The aim of this review is to include a greater emphasis on collaborative efforts across stakeholders in supporting research staff and an increasing collective commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development for Researchers. CDRS will focus on promoting greater reporting of university level progress through engagement with research staff via the dedicated RSF. This will enable us to better monitor and respond to researcher opinion alongside our existing links with HEIs via the Scottish Higher Education Researcher Developers group and the University Scotland Researcher Development and Training Committee. The work of CDRS will also be supported by a university launch of the new Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers through events such as road shows dedicated to research staff and their line-managers.