

University of Dundee HR Excellence in Research Award

Two Year Internal Review Report September 2013

This report provides an update on activities carried out to progress and achieve the deliverables detailed in the action plan of 2011. Following the most recent review of the plan, further tasks have been identified and form the basis of an updated action plan in cognisance of the progress made across the University.

How was the internal evaluation undertaken?

The internal review was overseen by the University Steering Group for the Concordat and included a detailed examination by the Working Party on the Concordat. Postdoc Associations' and representatives' inputs to the report were received and the results from surveys including the University Staff Engagement Survey 2013 taken into account.

The Steering Group for the Concordat is comprised of the Vice Principal and Head of College of Life Sciences, research academic representatives and researcher representatives from across each of the four Colleges as well as Organisational & Professional Development. It reports to the HR Committee and the Research Committee. The Working Party is comprised of members of Organisational & Professional Development and HR.

The results from the CROS 2011 survey, the Higher Education Barometer survey 2011, the College of Life Sciences Career survey 2013 and the University Staff Engagement Survey 2013 were evaluated in relation to researchers and the implementation of the Concordat.

The published action plan adopted a traffic light system to indicate deliverables met, in progress and planned. The revised action plan covering 2013 to 2015 focuses on further tasks planned and carries forward those still in progress from the previous plan.

Research Academics and Postdoctoral staff within each of the four Colleges provided progress reports in August 2013. Areas that provided insufficient information on progress will be further contacted and support offered.

Consultation with researchers about their awareness of the Concordat and the progress made is provided through representation on the Steering Group, the Postdoc Associations and via the various surveys. The opportunities provided by local level induction and local level training on the University's Objective Setting and Review (OSaR) process are also taken to promote and engage in discussion with researchers about the Concordat. Vitae briefings for the various stakeholder groups are used.

A draft of the internal evaluation report was shared with Vitae at the end of August 2013 for comment and feedback.

Key Achievements and Progress against the Strategy, indicators and actions identified in the original action plan.

The Working Group re-presented the further related tasks identified into an updated action plan for the period 2013 to 2015 and explicitly mapped the various actions to the 7 Principles of the Concordat. A number of key achievements are identified for the purposes of this short evaluation report.

(Principles 1&2) The number of research staff on fixed terms contracts has decreased significantly over the last two years. The University has a commitment to move staff with more than four years' continuous service onto open-ended contracts and this is formally monitored through collective consultation with the Campus Unions. Our HR for Managers course covers recruitment and selection as well as the consultation requirements around the expiry of fixed-term contracts as detailed in the University's Avoidance of Redundancy Policy and the on-line Redeployment Portal mechanism whereby priority access to University of Dundee job advertisements is given to staff in posts at risk of expiry. A comprehensive review of induction was undertaken at University and local level.

(Principles 3&4) The CROS benchmarking data from the 2011 survey was used to inform on improvements to researcher development programmes, details of which can be found on the [OPD website](#). Key examples of the significantly extended provision of Organisational & Professional Development workshops and programmes focussing on research include 'Effective Writing and Editing for Publication', 'Maximising the Impact of your Research', 'An Introduction to Coaching – Getting the Best from Others' and 'Taking Control of your Career'. The number of new courses is continuing to increase in response to demand and following Postdoc Association consultations. OPD has identified a Training and Development Officer specifically for research staff with the job title of

Researcher Development and Projects Officer. 171 individual researchers attended one or more courses on the OPD Programme between 01 September 2012 and 31 August 2013. OPD encourage participation in other institutional and national events and fund these where appropriate. Details of the successful launch of, and delivery of associated training, for the cross institutional (with the University of St Andrews) mentoring scheme for early career academics with separate briefing sessions for mentors and mentees planned for October 2013, can be found on the [University of St Andrews website](#). 53.9% of Researchers had an OSaR or career development review as reported to University Court in 2012 and training and awareness-raising on the conduct of OSaR has been extended at the University and local level.

(Principle 5) Evidence of a vibrant Postdoc Association in the College of Life Sciences established in 2005 includes the hosting of 12 career development focussed seminars over the last two year period as well as funding course attendance in topics that are not related to current research (including English language courses), networking events (autumn ceilidh and summer barbecue) and coffee mornings. The College of Arts and Social Sciences and the School of Medicine have now either established or re-established Postdoc Associations following consultations with the Life Sciences Postdoc Association on good practice sharing and actively supported by the College/School by way of a budget and the provision of facilities.

(Principle 6) The Public Sector Equality Duty consists of a general duty and specific duties and incorporates an Equality & Diversity Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcome Plan 2013 to 17. The Equality & Diversity on-line training modules have been further promoted in relation to the REF exercise. The University provides its commitment to the Athena SWAN charter. An application for the institutional bronze award is being prepared for a future submission and a new full-time position has been appointed to support this initiative. The Library and Learning Centre have been approached to contribute a good practice case study on the cross institutional mentoring scheme by the Equality Challenge Unit which is developing guidance on the use and impact of mentoring for women in the HE sector.

(Principle 7) In terms of monitoring progress there are regular formal mechanisms for reporting on researcher development strategies and activities to University Committees, e.g. the Human Resources and the Research Committee. The University continues to take part in regular staff surveys. The University Staff Survey 2013 supports the University vision and transformation agenda and includes researcher specific questions covered by the CROS survey.

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

We have developed an updated action plan that sets out the focus of our strategy for the next two years. This incorporates continuing action from the original plan and further action that builds on our progress to date. Progress will continue to be monitored by the HR Committee.

(Principles 1&2) Our HR strategy and response to operational plans will build in recognition of the importance of researchers as set out in the Concordat. Training on good recruitment and selection practice to be offered with advanced interview skills training coming up in 2013/14. The University Strategic Plan has OSaR as a Key Performance indicator.

(Principles 3&4) We shall continue to make RDF linkages and consider the use of the Vitae online RDF planner. A structured suite of induction and orientation has been developed and we shall continue to promote this fully at the local level. The OPD programme seeks to raise awareness amongst new academic staff of the responsibilities they have in supporting researcher careers. We shall continue to encourage increased engagement of Research Leaders in leadership training. Guidance to PIs about the consultation process prior to the expiry of fixed-term contracts is included in the HR for Managers course and will be reinforced following the implementation of the HR systems on-line project.

(Principle 5) It is noted that this two year internal review itself provides Postdoc Associations with a good opportunity to establish/review remits and set policy. Careers Seminars hosted by the Postdoc Associations will continue to take place on a regular basis. The Researcher Development Framework will be promoted through linking our training and development courses to the framework and researchers will be encouraged to make use of it in reviewing and planning their skills development. Early discussions are taking place between the Chair of the University's Research Governance Committee and OPD about the provision of training to support the Research Integrity Concordat agenda. Training to be piloted on effective CVs and job applications and succeeding at interviews. Review of PDP in light of the Researcher Development Framework as well as other software to help researchers with their career development. and associated tool being published.

(Principle 6) Athena SWAN submission for bronze institution award. Review of on-line training with specialist workshops in 13/14 programme.

(Principle 7) Updates on progress will continue to be reported to the relevant University Committees. Postdoc representatives on management committees from department/division to School, College and indeed Academic Council level will continue to receive ongoing active support and encouragement from the Steering Committee e.g. highlighting the importance of succession planning, spreading and cascading the good practice taking place in Schools such as local welcome, orientation and induction activities as well as the Postdoc Career Development Scheme, providing support, facilities and budgets to Postdoc Associations. The University will continue to use surveys to monitor progress and improve researcher experience. The University's 2013 Staff Engagement Survey includes CROS type questions and it is the University's intention to run the CROS survey in its entirety again in 2015. Survey results will be evaluated to inform improvements to researcher development programmes.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Recognising and communicating the progress to date continues to be a challenge in a fast moving and competitive environment. Maximising the marketing of the HR Excellence badge on our recruitment and training materials provides an opportunity to raise awareness. There is opportunity in continuing to engage Schools through newly established and re-vitalised Postdoc Associations working with our longest established Postdoc Association. Athena SWAN alignment provides an opportunity to consolidate and focus efforts. Initial analysis of the 2013 Staff Engagement Survey results indicates a low level of awareness of the Concordat and HR Excellence badge. The opportunity will be taken to highlight the survey results, actions and outcomes to researchers through various events and communications at University, College and School level. We shall run the survey again in 2015. We shall provide ongoing support for national surveys such as RCUK Doctoral Impact and Careers Tracking Survey. We shall review and develop a researcher career development strategy.

Broad success indicators:

Success is measured in the timely achievement of the actions set out in the Action plan which include specific deliverables and a flexibility to refocus. Broad measures include:

Evidence of improvement in surveys, increase in take up of OSaR, continuing and maintaining the reduction of number of fixed term contracts, further embedding of RDF in our workshops and courses, extending roll-out of PI programme, a review of the RDF tool and integration with training programmes and discussions on integration with performance management and career development processes awaiting outcome of pilot in order to assess benefits and decision on implementation, achievement of institutional bronze Athena SWAN award.