

Four year self-assessment for the HR Excellence in Research Award (July 2015)

The University of Bath received the HR Excellence in Research Award in September 2011 and retained it in 2013. This report focusses on the progress made since 2013 and will also outline key future actions. A complete list of actions completed and planned can be found in the updated action plan.

A key aim of the Universities research strategy is to conduct research of global significance by recruiting and retaining '*excellent researchers and develop an active research culture that fosters the highest achievements, encourages originality and innovation*'. The HR Excellence in Research Award action plan is one of the initiatives to support these intentions in addition to e.g. the People Strategy and Athena Swan Action plans as well as the recently formed GW4 Alliance with the Universities of Exeter, Cardiff and Bristol which is focused on encouraging collaborations and developing collaborative development initiatives for researchers.

Process of internal review:

The responsibility for implementation of the strategy lies with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and is managed by the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG). The RSWG, that also leads the review of the implementation, comprises eight early career researchers representing the different Faculties and the School of Management, the Researcher Career Development Advisor and the Staff Development Manager (research & enterprise). The group is chaired by a senior academic (currently Professor Chris Brace) who sits on the University Research Committee. Progress on the action plan is regularly reviewed informally and actions are added as and when they arise. In addition a formal review has taken place in 2013 and 2015. Researchers' views have been taken into account through consultation with and constant input into the RSWG and CROS 2015 as well as focus groups. Major stakeholders, such as Human Resources (HR), were consulted on their progress and further actions towards the action plan.

Key achievements and progress against original action plan

1 & 2: Recruitment & Selection and Recognition & Value

- To raise awareness of the HR Excellence in Research Award, the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the Code of Practice for Employment of Research Staff across the University we held a celebration event for the re-award in 2013. The event, hosted by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research, was attended by over 50 staff. The re-award was also celebrated as an internal news item and through appropriate internal newsletters.
- Staff Development Performance Reviews (SDPR) are now mandatory for all staff. Reminders were/are send out to all reviewers and reviewees that research staff should take part in a review and training to support the process was offered. As a result participation in the SDPR process by 2015 has increased significantly to 65% (from 36% in 2013, data from CROS).
- HR and the Careers Advisor for Researchers have developed and run regular training on how to best deal with the redundancy process and redeployment. Feedback on the training was positive and it created awareness over issues regarding the redundancy process that could be addressed to make it more personal.
- Development of generic job descriptions for researchers is still in progress. These will be published online as soon as they are agreed.
- An initial investigation has taken place to look at the re-grading process for research staff. As a result the Career Progression document for the Education

& Research Job Family now includes research staff. It has also led to an action for 2015-17 to set up a working group to discuss and develop a framework for career progression in research only roles.

- One aim in the past few years was to improve departmental induction for researchers. As a result the percentage of researchers who have received an induction to their role has improved significantly to 75% (from 49% in 2013, data from CROS 2015). An induction checklist for managers specific to research staff has been developed by the RSWG to support the induction process.

3 & 4: Support and career development

- As part of showing our commitment to researcher development and continuing to stay up to date with the newest developments we have become institutional members of Vitae.
- After an initial pilot in the Faculty of Science the mentoring circles for researchers were reviewed and successfully rolled out across the University. 43 members of research and academic staff participated in the University wide circles sharing experiences and supporting each other. Feedback was very positive.
- The Careers Advisor for researchers ran regular popular lunchtime careers networking events for researchers to facilitate discussions and support around career development and progression with over 40 researchers attending.
- The Bath Science Academy was developed to support 15 research staff in developing a career in academia. This one year cohort programme for ambitious and talented members of research staff aimed to give the insight and knowledge needed to reach the next stage in the academic career. It is envisaged that we will run it every other year in future with the next cohort starting in September 2016. Feedback showed that not only benefited the research staff participating from the programme by feeling more prepared for a career in academia but senior academics sharing their experiences learned about the issues of research staff today.
- We have run two SouthWest Crucible in collaboration with the Universities of Bristol and West of England to foster collaboration between the Universities and support researchers in developing collaborative skills. Participants found the programme increased their confidence in many skills necessary for collaboration. We are currently considering running a GW4 Crucible to build on the success.
- Research and Innovation Service (RIS) has developed a comprehensive one day workshop to support early career researchers in writing funding applications. It is run twice a year.
- To improve the number and quality of fellowship applications RIS is supporting cohorts of researchers to apply for fellowships, e.g. ERC, ESCR, by bringing professional services from across the University together to provide comprehensive support programme and building a support network across the University.
- To integrate research staff into the research community and make their voice heard the Faculty of Engineering has, since spring 2015, established regular meetings for their research staff to discuss issues. The research staff representative and Departmental Research Staff Coordinator (DRSC) then take outcomes of the meetings to the Faculty Research Committee.
- DRSC have now been appointed in all departments. They are all invited to an annual networking and information event with the RSWG. Some great initiatives have been recently established for research staff by some of the

DRSCs, e.g. regular coffee mornings in Psychology, a researchers network in Mechanical Engineering.

6: Equality and Diversity

- The University has been successful in renewing its Athena Swan Bronze Award and 2 departments (Pharmacy & Pharmacology and Mechanical Engineering) have been successful in achieving bronze awards with four more departments having submitted and at least three more departments working towards a submission. Relevant professional services support the departments in completing their submissions.
- The Equality & Diversity team has continued to offer a series of lunchtime workshops focused on women in academia/science.

Strategy beyond 2015

We have developed an updated action plan looking ahead for two years and we will update and review the action plan regularly and add new actions in line with University and national priorities and strategies. The main actions are as follows (additional actions can be found in the updated action plan):

1 & 2: Recruitment & Selection and Recognition & Value

The University has an ongoing commitment to recruit and retain the best researchers from diverse backgrounds. Further enhancements include:

- Continue to raise awareness of the benefits of the SDPR and encourage research staff to take part in it & Monitor uptake of the SDPR by research staff to increase participation to 75% (from currently 65%) as measured by responses in CROS 2017.
- Continue to provide training for reviewers and reviewees & roll out guidance for SDPRs developed by Staff Development/Academic Staff Development
- Improve and disseminate guidance on maternity/paternity/adoption leave for staff on externally funded contracts.

3 & 4: Support and career development

The University has committed to a variety of now well-established mechanisms to ensure that the professional, personal and career development needs of its staff are met as can be seen in our people strategy and Athena SWAN actions plans. Specific activities for research staff will include:

- Set up a working group, to be chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research, to discuss and develop framework for career progression in research only roles
- Support, formal recognition and development for research staff who supervise PhD students and/or teach will be considered as part of the University's QA Code of Practice review in 2015/16
- Develop route for research staff who teach and would like to gain professional recognition through the Bath Scheme
- Offer regular grant writing club for staff & provide individual support to staff who would like to apply for grants and fellowships
- Consider further Prize Fellow appointments after success of first round

6: Equality and Diversity

The University is very actively committed at all levels to Athena SWAN and is energetically pursuing the commitments it has set itself and is supporting all its STEMM departments to achieve departmental awards. It is a long term aim of the University to work toward the Athena SWAN Silver award.

- Continue to support the departments that are applying for Athena SWAN awards
- Develop mentoring scheme for all staff in Education and research job family
- Run an event for women in STEM to celebrate female researchers as part of the Universities 50 year celebrations

7: Implementation and Review

Implementation and review of actions will be managed by the RSWG. Progress against the actions will be monitored annually on an informal basis and as a formal review every two years. Results from future CROS, focus groups and other staff surveys will be taken in account. Actions regarding Equality & Diversity will be managed by the Equality & Diversity team and the academic departments through monitoring of the Athena Swan action plans.

Success measures beyond 2015:

As well as measuring achievement of actions on the action plan we will use the following success measures

- Submission of departmental Athena Swan awards, renewal of University Bronze award and implementation/success of actions from current University/departmental action plans
- Improved feedback and increased participation in training and development opportunities
- Increase take up of staff taking part in annual appraisal by 10% to 75% (measured through CROS 2017)
- Evidence of improvement of CROS data as compared to 2015 survey
- Implementation of mentoring scheme across the University and uptake of the scheme from staff across the Education & Research job family