

Eight year self-assessment for the HR Excellence in Research Award (July 2019)

The University of Bath received the [HR Excellence in Research Award](#) in September 2011 and has retained it since. This report looks at progress made since 2011 with a focus on the progress made since 2017 and will also outline key future actions. The full list of actions completed and progress made since 2017 and the action plan for 2019 – 2021 are published on the HR [Excellence in Research Award webpages](#).

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 Vision for Research Staff working at the University of Bath, the People Strategy, Athena SWAN Action plans as well as the [GW4 Alliance](#), which aims to encourage collaborations and includes collaborative development initiatives for researchers. Actions in our current HR Excellence in Research Award are mainly focussed on supporting research staff (RS) and their managers.

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, also leads the review of the implementation. It comprises of eight early career researchers representing the different Faculties and the School of Management, the Researcher Career Development Advisor and the Academic Staff Development Manager. A senior academic chairs the group. In January 2019, the post of the Research staff Co-Chair was introduced to give RS more ownership of the agenda. The Co-Chair also attends University Research Committee providing a link between the two groups.

Progress on the action plan is regularly reviewed informally, actions are added as and when they arise. In addition, a formal review takes place every two years. In the formal review in 2019 researchers' views were sought via the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS). In addition, the launch of the '[Vision for Research Staff working at the University of Bath](#)' was used to gather feedback from research staff and their managers. Researchers were also invited to small discussion groups, but did not take this opportunity up. Major stakeholders, such as Human Resources (HR) and Research & Innovation Services (RIS), were consulted on their progress towards the action plan

Progress since 2011 and reflections

Since first gaining the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2011 continuous improvement has been made to the way in which we support research staff to make the most out of their time here at Bath. Significant progress has been made in some areas since 2011. A main focus of the actions during that time was on improving and establishing processes as well as offering development opportunities.

Feedback indicates that initiatives to improve the **Recruitment & Selection** process were successful. For example, having introduced [generic job descriptions](#) 93% of respondents now (76% in CROS 2011) report having been provided with a written job description listing the skills and qualifications required for the role during recruitment. Other areas such as providing meaningful departmental inductions still need some improvement and that has been considered when developing future actions.

We have made significant progress in implementing Principle 2: **Recognition & Value**.

This includes development of a clear career pathway, with a [promotion route](#), for RS. Since its introduction in 2017 six RS have been promoted. In addition, we introduced an annual prize for the most outstanding performance of a member of RS in 2019.

We will continue to work towards ensuring that RS feel a valued part of the community. We have recently recruited a RS member to University Research Committee and aim to increase the number of research staff representatives on departmental/division committees.

Support & Career Development has been an area of continuous development over the past eight years. A major initiative was the introduction of [Prize Fellowships](#) to support research staff with the potential to become research leaders. Overall more than 60 staff were appointed to a Prize Fellowship position enriching our research community. Additionally we have introduced three successful development programmes (for details see below) to support RS in deciding what career they would like to pursue and to develop skills to be competitive. Feedback from CROS indicates that the perceived usefulness of the Staff Development & Performance Review is variable and as a result a new system 'career conversations' is currently piloted in some departments.

Significant progress has been made in the area of **Equality & Diversity**. The University now holds an Athena SWAN Bronze Award, three departments hold Silver Awards and nine departments hold and two are working towards the Bronze Award. A University wide mentoring scheme means that all RS can have a mentor if requested.

Key achievements and progress since 2017

1 & 2: Recruitment & Selection and Recognition & Value

- The RSWG has developed a shared '[Vision for research staff working at the University of Bath](#)'. The Vision, endorsed by URC, was launched at a feedback event attended by 45 staff and aims to give a one page overview of the culture we aim to create at the University.
- To reward excellence and retain talent a [promotion process](#) from Research Associate to Research Fellow has been set up. Since its introduction in October 2017, six RS have already been promoted through this route.
- To recognize the important work of RS we have introduced the annual Ede & Ravenscroft Prize to award the most outstanding performance by a member of research staff in the delivery of their duties. In its inaugural year in 2019 we received 10 applications from across the Faculties.
- To increase the voice of research staff we have appointed a Research staff Co-Chair for the Research Staff Working Group in January 2019. The Co-Chair also is also the first member of research staff to attend University Research Committee further increasing the researcher staff voice.

3 & 4: Support and career development

- We have introduced focused programmes to support the career development of RS. The [Academic Career Academy](#) aims to prepare RS for application for a lectureship position. From the six participants who provided feedback one year after attending the 2017/18 Academic Career Academy 5 reported that they had been successful at applying for a lectureship position, all had applied for funding and taken up other career development opportunities. [Careers beyond Academia](#) supports RS who would like a career outside academia.
- With Kick Start to HE teaching we have developed a programme, based on feedback, to provide RS with the opportunity to learn about best practice and pedagogy and get some teaching experience. The programme was first run in 2017/18 and is now run annually. Feedback indicates that participants find the programme beneficial and insightful. Three RS have already successfully applied for Associate Fellow of the HEA as a result of attendance.
- After the pilot in 2016 the [GW4 Crucible](#) is now an annual programme for RS and early career lecturers. The programme receives excellent feedback and outcomes include participants developing successful collaborations, applications for funding and articles for the Conversation. In 2018-19 eight staff members (total cohort of 30 from 4 Universities) from Bath were successful in applying.
- As a result of feedback we introduced the opportunity for RS to gain a project management qualification in 2017/18. The programme was attended by 10 staff in 2017/18 and 14 RS in 2018/19. Feedback for the programme is excellent and staff value the opportunity to improve their CV by gaining a qualification.

- To improve providing a clear entry route for accessing career progression information and resource we have created a [web based career resources](#) for all staff in the Education & Research job family.

6: Equality and Diversity

- The University continues to hold the Athena Swan Bronze Award. Four departments now hold Silver Awards and nine departments hold and two are working towards the Bronze Award.
- We continued to promote the mentoring scheme for all staff in Education & Research job family to research staff. 67% of CROS 2019 respondents are aware of the Scheme and 20% have a mentor.

Strategy 2019 – 2021

We have developed an updated action plan looking ahead for two years against the 2008 Concordat. We will update and review the action plan regularly and add new actions in line with University and national priorities and strategies. The plan has been developed by the RSWG in consultation with the PVC Research, Human Resources, Research and Innovations Services and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Unit. RS fed into the action plan via CROS and a feedback event. University Research Committee was consulted and approved the report and action plan in July 2019.

A focus in the action plan for 2019-2021 is on disseminating best management practice for RS, further integration of RS into the community and decision making processes and supporting career development of RS. Below are a selection of the action aligned to the ['Vision for Research Staff working at the University of Bath'](#):

Aim aligned to UoB vision for RS	Action (by principle)	Success measure(s)	Achieved by
RS are recognised for their skills and contributions to the University community	Redeveloping the University Code of Practice for Employment of Research Staff (CoP) to make it more user friendly and to ensure that it aligns with the updated Concordat to Support the Career Development for Researchers. The CoP will be co-developed with the RSWG and ADRs (Principle 3)	CoP has been updated and published via various routes. In CROS 2021 50% of RS are aware that CoP exists	August 2020
	RS representative on the Universities Self-Assessment Team (USAT) for Athena SWAN in preparation for Silver submission (Principle 4)	USAT membership includes RS representative	December 2019
RS are integrated in the departmental, University and wider research community, and are connected to a broad network of fellow researchers	Departments/Divisions (Faculty/School) to support RS in establishment of RS networks (Principle 5)	Survey across University shows that we have at least 5 networks	December 2020
RS are aware of their training needs, actively seek out and attend training opportunities	Support PIs in their management practice by creating a number of short best practice signposting documents	Signposting documents have been developed, widely circulated and are widely accessible on webpage	July 2020

offered by the University and further	(Principle 1)		
RS have knowledge of the range of future career opportunities available to them	Explore development of a database to collect information from exit interviews where research staff go when leaving the University (Principle 4)	Decision made if database development would be of benefit	December 2020
RS are empowered to make well-informed decisions about their future career progression from an early stage	All research staff to be offered a mentor when starting a new role at Bath (Principle 4)	50% of RS are aware of mentoring support available as measured by CROS 2021	March 2021
RS develop the skills relevant for future careers	Consider implementation of additional initiatives to support RS developing Fellowship applications e.g. cohort based programmes (Principle 2) Encourage RS (who teach) to attend centrally offered teaching training and training offered in departments. (Principle 4)	Decision made on support going forward and if needed responsibilities for implementation allocated Survey of RS shows that at least 60% of those who teach were encouraged to attend training (as measured by CROS 2021)	March 2020 March 2021
RS apply responsible research and innovation principles as well as robust ethical principles not only to their research but to all their activities and act responsibly and ethically.	Share examples of good practice on how to have an induction to department/division for all staff	Examples shared via email with DRSC, HoDs and DCs % of RS who been offered a departmental induction increased from 56% to 70% as measured by CROS 2023	October 2020

Implementation and Review

Implementation and review of actions in the 2019-2021 plan will be managed by the RSWG. Progress against the actions will be monitored annually on an informal basis and as a formal review in 2021. Results from future CROS, focus groups and other staff surveys will be taken in account. Actions regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity will be managed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity team and the academic departments through monitoring of the Athena Swan action plans. In addition to the specific success measures listed for each action in the action plan for 2019-2021:

- Achievement of Athena Swan Awards
- Evidence of improvements in CROS as compared to previous years
- Roll out of career conversations, replacing the current appraisal system, thus starting to see an increase in % of RS who find the process useful
- University wide consultation on future direction of the University of Bath