

## HR excellence in Research: University of Bath two-year self-assessment

### 1) Introduction

The University of Bath is committed to providing a productive and supportive working environment for research staff. To further improve the working environment an action plan for the Implementation of the Concordat was developed in consultation with the Research Staff Working Group. As a result we were awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award in September 2011. This report shows the progress that was made in the past two years in the implementation of the action plan and highlights next steps.

### 2) Review Process

The responsibility for implementation of the strategy lies with the University Research Committee (URC) and is managed by the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG). The RSWG lead the review of progress made. The RSWG comprises 8 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 who sits on the URC. Researchers' views have been taken into account through consultation with and constant input into the RSWG and CROS 2013. In addition focus groups on career support were held to gather more information. Major stakeholders, such as HR, were consulted on their progress towards the action plan.

### 3) Key achievements and progress against the original action plan

A key focus of the past year was the update of the Code of Practice of the Employment for Research Staff by the RSWG. The revised document will be launched at the beginning of the 2013/14 academic year. *(Some achievements are improvements of existing mechanisms & new initiatives and as such were not an action in the last action plan)*

#### A: Recruitment & Selection

- All new research staff members receive a welcome email making them aware of the online Induction module which has been developed specifically for researchers and all new researchers are invited to the general induction.

#### B: Recognition & Value

- The newly introduced version of the HR & payroll system allows identification of line managers and prompts these to carry out their responsibilities including probation reviews and Staff Development Performance Reviews (SDPR)(section 2.3).
- Participation in a performance review is now mandatory for all members of staff and training has been put in place to support those appraising research staff (section 2.3).
- We now offer more workshops on managing staff for academics e.g. 'Managing people in a research environment' and 'leadership@lunchtime' for academics at all levels. In addition the 'University of Bath Academic Leaders' Programme' is for more senior academics (section 2.3)

- Sessions for academics to support the career development of their researchers have been offered (section 2.3).
- To ensure recognition of researchers the contribution pay policy has been revised and Heads of Departments have been encouraged to nominate research staff if appropriate (section 2.6)
- The University is in the process of updating its 'Career Progression in the Education & Research Job Family' document and the new version will contain information on promotion and regarding for research staff (section 2.6 & 3.5).

### **C: Support and Career Development**

- The Code of Practice for the Employment of research staff has been updated by the RSWG (section 3.1). At the same time HR has jointly with Research development & Support Office (RDSO) developed guidance on effectively managing researchers (section 4.10). This is available online.
- Mentoring circles to support researchers were successfully piloted in the Faculty of Science (section 3.8) and will now be rolled out.
- By visiting all departmental staff meetings the Researcher Development Unit has reminded Academics and research staff of the importance of taking part in development opportunities and the offer here at Bath. In addition research staff are encouraged to run training sessions for our PGSkills programme after receiving training (section 4.12)
- The Faculty of Engineering & Design has set up a Fellowship Academy to support promising researchers in developing fellowship proposals. The Research Development & Support Office has started to recruit and support cohorts of researchers to the ESRC Future Leaders Award.

### **E: Diversity & Equality**

- The University is preparing its submission for the Athena Swan Bronze award. Various individual departments have started the process of considering an application.

### **F: Implementation and review**

- We have run CROS in 2011 and 2013 with above average response rates. As a response to CROS 2013 we have run career development focus groups with research staff to determine the further interventions they want to support their career development. We also regularly request feedback from researchers individually and through the RSWG.

#### **4) Next steps and the focus of the implementation for the next two years**

The future actions points have been decided as a result of CROS 2013, career focus groups, individual conversations with researchers and academics as well as the revision of the Code of Practice for the Employment by the RSWG:

##### **a) Supporting the effective induction of research staff:**

- Consultations and results from CROS 2013 show that Induction on departmental and faculty level still needs to be improved. This will be done by reminding Heads of Departments to appoint Departmental Research Staff Coordinators whose responsibility it is to support departmental induction.

- Invite Departmental Research Staff Coordinators to a RSWG meeting to support them and ensure induction into their role and responsibilities.
  - Develop a guide for departments on how to run induction for research staff to ensure early effectiveness and that research staff feel part of their departments.
- b) Supporting the effective management of research staff:
- Continued promotion of the Concordat and the Code of Practice for the Employment of Research Staff and Implementation plan through events such as the Bath Course for Academics in Probation.
  - Providing more training for managers including a 4 day long 'Leading Research teams' programme, half-day 'Managing people in a research environment' sessions, short leadership @lunchtime sessions and further Staff Development Performance Review training for reviewers and reviewed.
  - Mentoring circles for Researchers (research staff and academic staff) will be rolled out to include all Faculties. This provides a space for academic staff to discuss management issues as well as providing a network for research staff to raise potential issues with their line managers. Flagging up of typical issues from Mentors will allow us to tailor our training provision accordingly.
  - Develop training on how to best deal with the redundancy process and make the most out of redeployment opportunities.
- c) Supporting the integration of research staff and building a network of researchers  
CROS 2013 showed that only just over half of all researchers feel integrated into the institution's research community. As a result some activities will focus on integrating research staff into the community. The activities around induction (see a)) will support this.
- Mentoring circles will be rolled out across the University to facilitate the building of a network and exchange of knowledge between all researchers
  - Offer more researchers@bath development sessions for research staff and academics and advertise existing opportunities such as 'the Ignite talks' more widely to research staff.
  - Lunchtime career networking sessions for research staff will be set up to facilitate discussions and support around career development and progression and to help create a community of research staff.

Measures of success include:

Active participation of researchers in mentoring circles and career networking sessions, increased number of combined development opportunities for researchers and academics, all departments have active Research Staff Co-ordinators, created network of Research Staff Co-ordinators, increased numbers of researchers having an induction to the department/school/faculty (measured through CROS 2015), increased number of research staff are participating in the staff development performance review process

*Research Staff Working Group  
September 2013*