

University of Plymouth

HR Excellence in Research Award: Eight Year Internal Assessment - September 2019

The University of Plymouth first achieved the HR Excellence in Research Award on 5th September 2011 which is successfully renewed every two years. The Award reflects our commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Key to sustaining this Award is a Steering Group representing the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise, Researcher Development Manager (Doctoral College), and four Research Staff members representing the Research and Innovation Committee, Senate, Doctoral College Board, REF Steering Group, the Researcher Forum and, the wider community of 180 research staff at the University of Plymouth. Our HR Excellence in Research Steering Group oversees our Concordat-related work and support for our researchers; working across the University, Faculties, Schools and Research Institutes, and maintains and updates an Action Plan.

Evaluation

This internal evaluation was conducted in June – September 2019 by the HR Excellence in Research Steering Group. The Steering Group assessed progress against the 2017 – 2019 action plan as well as planning commitments for 2019 – 2021. The evaluation took into account the views of researchers including:

- **Research Staff membership of the HR Excellence in Research Steering Group.** Key to the group is the membership of four current Research Staff who in turn provide representation from the Researcher Forum, Research & Innovation Committee, Senate, REF Steering Group and, the Doctoral College Board. The input and views of the Research Staff members of the Steering Group is essential to our work supporting our researchers. This provides a pivotal link between the purpose of the Steering Group and supporting our community of researchers.
- **Researcher Forum.** The HR Excellence in Research Steering Group works closely with the Researcher Forum on Concordat-related activities. Steering Group members participate in Researcher Forum meetings (and vice-versa), enabling ongoing dialogue between the two bodies. The Researcher Forum is well supported by our researchers and is a highly effective mechanism linking our researchers and staff supporting researchers.
- **CROS survey.** In 2019 we participated in the Careers in Research Online Survey. The findings of CROS are incorporated in our HR Excellence in Research action plan. The 2017 CROS and PIRLS findings were disseminated to HR, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and, the Doctoral College for planning in 2017-2018 including: E&D networks, events and training, Athena Swan award activities, PDR updates and, Researcher Forum activities. The 2017 CROS findings were delivered to the Researcher Forum on 6th December 2017 for consultation with our researchers, the outcomes of this forum led to further Researcher Forums focussing on recognition and value (8th March 2018); career management (20th June 2018) and, PDRs (21st November 2018). The HR Excellence in Research action plan enables us to review these findings and, continue to work closely with the identified University departments.

Key achievements and progress

Sustaining the HR Excellence in Research Award enables us to continually focus and review support for our Researchers. Our HR Excellence in Research action plan 2017 – 2019 was mapped against the Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers. Our key achievements and progress includes:

- **Recruitment and Selection**
 - CROS 2019 indicates 55.55% of research staff had been a researcher at the University for 3 or more years compared with the sector (51.25%).
 - CROS 2019 indicates an increase in the percentage of research staff who had held 2 or more individual contracts of employment with the University compared with the sector (62.95% UoP, 48.94% sector). CROS 2017 (56.06% UoP, 49.63% sector).
 - CROS 2019 indicates that 55.55% of research staff agreed they were treated fairly with regards to career progression/promotion compared with the sector (53.93%).
- **Recognition and Value**
 - The Researcher Forum continues to host events and provide support and opportunities for research staff. 2017 – 2019 five Researcher Forum meetings were held including: CROS, recognition and value, career management, PDRs, REF. The meetings were led by the Doctoral College, HR and DVC Research and, continue to represent a University-wide approach to supporting research staff.

- Since March 2018 the University has doubled its representation for Research Staff on decision making bodies. Four research staff representatives provide representation through: R&I Committee, Senate, Doctoral College Board, REF Steering Group, Researcher Forum and, HR Excellence in Research Steering Group. This increases the research staff participating in decision-making bodies and increases their communication and consultation with the wider research staff community.
- CROS 2017 indicated low satisfaction with recognition and value for research staff supervising PGRs. Actions to investigate this further were included in the HR Excellence in Research action plan and the Doctoral College action plan. Research Staff were consulted about PGR supervision and the findings/paper were delivered to the Doctoral College Board on 11th December 2018. The University introduced mandatory training for all PGR supervisors on 1st September 2018. During 2018-2019, 18 supervisory training sessions were delivered to 317 staff, representing 53% of all supervisors.
- CROS 2019 indicates a higher percentage of research staff who agree they are recognised and valued compared with the sector for the following: grant applications 48.15% (47.5% sector); managing budgets/resources 33.33% (27.94% sector); public engagement with research 55.55% (53.32% sector); opportunities to participate in decision-making processes 48.15% (46.88% sector).
- 21st – 25th January 2019 the Research Festival included 14 events, 1 public lecture and the Images of Research competition/exhibition. The Research Festival is open to researchers, PGRs, collaborators and members of the public. 1006 people participated in the Research Festival 2019. As part of the Research Festival, the Doctoral College hosted the Images of Research competition/exhibition with entries from 28 PGRs and 10 Research Staff. 316 people viewed the Images of Research exhibition with a further 669 webpage views.
- **Support and Career Development**
 - CROS 2019 indicates an increase in the percentage of research staff who agreed they took ownership of their career development (88.89% CROS 2019; 87.77% CROS 2017) compared with the sector (87.30%).
 - CROS 2019 indicates a high increase in the percentage of research staff who had spent 2 or more days on training and other continuing professional development (85.18% CROS 2019; 70.77% CROS 2017) compared with the sector (75.06%).
 - 2017-2018 Researcher Development Programme: 158 sessions; 87 sessions for both PGRs/Research Staff; 18 webinars; 2206 places attended; 565 PGRs attended 2027 sessions representing 62% of all PGRs; 91 Research Staff attended 179 sessions representing 50% of all Research staff.
 - 2018 – 2019 Researcher Development Programme: 172 sessions; 103 sessions for both PGRs/Research Staff; 18 webinars.
 - 2017 – 2019 Online training: Moodle pages for ‘Researcher Development Programme’ (494 users) and ‘PGR Supervisors, Examiners and Chairs’ (417 users).
 - In 2017-2019 the Faculties, Schools and Research Institutes delivered a significant amount of training, support and networking opportunities for researchers including for example: REF, research leadership, publishing, collaboration, media training, grant collaboration and writing, public forums.
- **Researchers’ Responsibilities**
 - Ethics, governance and integrity sessions were delivered including: 2017-2018 (10 sessions) and 2018 – 2019 (14 sessions).
 - Data Ethics workshop was delivered on 11th June 2019 by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Ethics and Integrity Committee in collaboration with the Doctoral College and Open Data Institute.
- **Diversity and Equality**
 - CROS 2019 indicates an increase in the percentage of research staff who believe the institution is committed to equality and diversity (92.59% CROS 2019; 90.91% CROS 2017) compared with the sector (82.68%).
 - CROS and PIRLS 2017 findings were incorporated in the University Athena SWAN submission in April 2018. Every school in the University is now a recipient of, or will be due to submit by April 2020, a Bronze Athena SWAN Award. The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedicine holds a Silver Athena SWAN award. Since 2018 Researcher Development Programme gender data has been available according to Faculty/School representation and is made available for University/Faculty/School Athena Swan activities.
 - The Women’s network have offered a variety of social, networking, personal development and academic events over the last two years. Lunch-time sessions were run, with guest speakers covering a range of topics including carers and careers, unconscious gender bias and a focus on career conversations. An average 20 staff/PGRs attended each session.
 - The Women’s network organised a half day conference on 22nd June 2018, attended by 120 attendees. This focused on raising awareness of Athena SWAN and the actions to promote gender equality. Sessions within the conference included an opportunity to review Athena SWAN progress and actions from School submissions, and provide feedback, shared experiences from Imperial College London, who gained a Silver award in 2018, together with a

session on mentoring. This provided an opportunity to find out more about being a mentor or joining the mentor programme as a mentee. The session culminated in the recruitment of new mentors and there are currently 23 Women's network staff mentors at UoP.

- A Parents and Carers Staff Network will launch in October 2019 open to all staff and PGRs.
- During 2018/19 the University developed and implemented a Menopause Policy through our Health and Wellbeing group. An active Menopause support group has been successfully established which meets on a regular basis every two months with around 30 regular attendees. Two menopause awareness sessions were also organised on 16th May 2019 to raise awareness, targeted at employees and a separate session for managers with 47 managers and 93 employees attending.
- In 2018 the Doctoral College and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion piloted a session "Every Researcher Counts: equality and diversity in researcher careers". Materials from the session will continue to be made available online through Moodle.
- The University's Diversity & Wellbeing calendar 2019-2020 features 14 entries from PGRs and Research Staff from the Images of Research competition. The calendar provides a creative and engaging approach to E&D and wellbeing and, highlights how well E&D can be incorporated within activities and support for researchers.

● **Implementation and Review**

- Of the thirteen Research Development initiatives, University of Plymouth Research Staff had a greater knowledge or understanding of eight of these initiatives compared to the sector most notably: Athena Swan Gender Equality Charter mark (UoP 100%; sector 91.32%); Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (UoP 59.26%; sector 42.52%); Vitae (UoP 77.78%; sector 51.03%); Vitae RDF (UoP 74.07%; sector 46.99%).
- The HR Excellence in Research Steering Group continues to work closely with the Researcher Forum. The activities of both the Researcher Forum and the HR Excellence in Research Steering Group are pivotal to our support for our researchers.
- Participation of Steering Group members in Researcher Forum meetings enables regular communication and consultation between the two bodies.
- Members of the HR Excellence in Research Steering Group have direct responsibilities for CROS and ensure this critical information and data is reviewed and disseminated accordingly.
- On 1st October 2018 the University hosted a visit by The National Institute of Mental Health - Czech Republic as part of their preparation to apply for the HR Excellence in Research award. This whole-day visit included practice sharing and guidance to support.

Next steps and success measures 2019 – 2021
<p>Recruitment</p> <p>1. HR to investigate why there appears to be more Research Staff on PT contracts and shorter FTCs compared with the sector. HR to provide an update to the HR Excellence in Research steering group by July 2020. HR to investigate UoP staff data including: type, length and source of funding of FTCs between 2018 – 2020. The findings will be used to enable a better understanding of FTCs at UoP with a particular focus on E&D and flexible working for researchers. The data will be used to guide planning in 2020 for researchers including: participating in decision-making bodies and, access to training for example, enabling more researchers working remotely and/or PT to join Committee meetings and training via Skype. Lead: HR, July 2020</p>
<p>Participation in decision-making bodies</p> <p>1. Research Staff representatives to attend/report to 3 R&I Committee, Senate, REF Steering group and, Doctoral College Board meetings in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Research Staff representatives to attend/report to 3 Researcher Forum meetings in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021; provide consultation and communications for the research staff community and; maintain an equal input into the HR Excellence in Research award. Lead: Research Staff representatives, DVC Research and Enterprise, Doctoral College, July 2021</p> <p>2. Research Staff representatives to contact Faculties and Schools to establish a contact list of Faculty/School Research Staff representatives by December 2019. A contact list of University, Faculty and School Research Staff representatives will be used to enable wider communications/dissemination of events, initiatives, consultation, training and support for researchers for example: working towards increasing accessibility and attendance at training by 5%; increasing CROS response rates by 10% and; increasing awareness of initiatives for Researchers ie, the Concordat, HR Excellence in Research Award by 5%. Lead: Research Staff representatives, DVC Research and Enterprise, Doctoral College, July 2021</p> <p>3. Arts and Humanities ECR Forum to expand membership to include the Plymouth Institute of Education and, Plymouth Business School by December 2019. Membership of the Arts and Humanities ECR Forum to increase from two schools to four, including the Schools of Arts, Design and Architecture and, Humanities and Performing Arts; Plymouth Institute of Education; Plymouth Business School by December 2019. Lead: Arts and Humanities ECR Forum, December 2019</p>

Supervising research students
1. The Doctoral College, Faculties and Schools to work towards increasing the percentage of supervisors trained from 53% to 63% by July 2020. Lead: Doctoral College, Deputy Directors Doctoral College, School PGR Research Coordinators, July 2020
Researcher Forum
1. CROS 2019 findings, the HR Excellence in Research award review and, consultation with the Research Staff representatives will guide the development of the Researcher Forum meetings for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. 3 Researcher Forum meetings will be delivered in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Lead: Doctoral College, DVC Research and Enterprise, Research Staff representatives, July 2021
Research Staff career development workshop
1. A career development workshop for Research Staff will be delivered in April 2020. The workshop will include career management for researchers, research leadership and, E&D in a research environment. Lead: Doctoral College, DVC Research and Enterprise, HR, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, April 2020
Researcher Development Programme
1. Researcher Development Programme data 2018-2019 for Faculty/School representation will be available by December 2019 for the Doctoral College Board for inclusion in the Doctoral College action plan 2020 and, Equality Diversity and Inclusion for Athena Swan activities, reporting and award applications in 2020. Lead: Doctoral College, December 2019
2. We will work towards increasing Research Staff participation in Researcher Development Programme sessions from 50% to 55% by July 2020. Lead: Doctoral College, July 2020
Participation in feedback
1. Doctoral College to work with the University, Faculty and School Research Staff representatives to work towards a 10% increase in CROS survey response rates by June 2021. Lead: DVC Research and Enterprise, Research Staff representatives, Doctoral College, June 2021
2. CROS 2019 findings and HR Excellence in Research Action Plan to be disseminated to Doctoral College, Researcher Forum, HR, E&D, Faculties/Schools, Research and Innovation Committee by December 2019. We will work towards a 5% increase in Research Staff awareness of the HR Excellence in Research award by June 2021. Lead: Doctoral College, December 2019
Women's network
1. The women's network lunchtime lecture series has identified the importance of support for parents and carers. A key action is to establish a 'Parents and Carers Staff Network' to launch in October 2019 and, appoint a second co-chair to ensure a gender-representation. The Network will act as a support space and will be the voice of parents and carers across the University to ensure that all policy and procedure reflects their needs. Lead: Equality Diversity & Inclusion, December 2019
2. In September 2019 there will also be the launch of another staff network 'Menopause Support Network' for staff of all genders. This network will offer a supportive space to share issues, invite medical professionals to talk to the group and host training events for staff and managers on the menopause. Lead: Equality Diversity & Inclusion, September 2019
Athena SWAN
1. The University is currently working on its institution Athena SWAN action plan after successfully achieving a Bronze award in November 2018. The action plan will build on this success to take the University to silver level by 2022. Every school in the University is now a recipient of, or will be due to submit by April 2020, a Bronze Athena SWAN Award. The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedicine holds a Silver Athena SWAN award. Lead: Equality Diversity & Inclusion, April 2020
E&D training for researchers
1. The Doctoral College and Equality Inclusion & Diversity will re-design the session materials for "Every Researcher Counts: equality and diversity in researcher careers" to incorporate within a career development workshop for Research Staff. The workshop will be available by April 2020 and will include career management, leadership and E&D for researchers. Lead: Doctoral College, DVC Research and Enterprise, HR, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, April 2020
Research Development initiatives
1. We will work towards maintaining 100% awareness of the Athena Swan Gender Equality Charter mark; a 2% increase in awareness of the REF, and a 5% increase in staff awareness of the other eleven initiatives by July 2021. Lead: DVC Research and Enterprise, HR, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Research Staff representatives, Doctoral College, July 2021