HR Excellence in Research Award: Ten Year Internal Assessment - September 2021

The HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) reflects our commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat. HREiR and the Concordat support the delivery of our Strategy 2030 and commitment to recruit and retain talented research staff, to recognise and value their contributions, to support their professional and career development, and to equip and empower them to succeed in their chosen careers. Key to sustaining HREiR is a Concordat Working Group, comprising of Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise, Doctoral College, HR and four Research Staff representatives. Our Research Staff representatives enable representation through the Research and Innovation Committee, Senate, Doctoral College Board, REF Steering Group, University Researcher Forum and, our wider community of 214 research staff. Our Concordat Working Group oversees work and support for our researchers; working across the University, Faculties, Schools and Research Institutes.

Evaluation

This internal evaluation was conducted in July – September 2021 by the Concordat Working Group, assessing progress against the 2019 – 2021 action plan and planning commitments for 2021 – 2023. The evaluation took into account the views of researchers including:

- **Research Staff and the Concordat Working Group.** Key to the group is the membership of four Research Staff representatives from the University Researcher Forum and University-level Committees. The input and views of the Research Staff members of the Working Group is essential to our work supporting our researchers. This provides a pivotal link between the purpose of the Working Group and supporting our community of researchers.

- **University Researcher Forum and Faculty ECR Forums.** The Concordat Working Group works closely with the University Researcher Forum and Faculty ECR Forums on Concordat-related activities. Working Group members participate in Forum meetings, enabling ongoing dialogue between the groups. The Forums are well supported by our researchers and are a highly effective mechanism linking our researchers and staff supporting researchers.

- **Concordat consultation.** The University Researcher Forum held Concordat consultation meetings on 5th and 6th February 2020 and conducted a consultation survey to researchers focussing on priorities, professional development, opportunities, and concerns for researchers.

- **CEDARS survey.** CEDARS 2020 and 2021 findings are incorporated in our HREiR action plans, enabling us to review and identify priority areas.

Key achievements and progress

Sustaining the HREiR Award enables us to continually focus and review support for our Researchers. Our key achievements and progress against the 2019 – 2021 action plan includes:

- **Participation in decision-making bodies.** Research staff representatives have continued to participate in all meetings for the R&I Committee, Senate, REF Steering Group and Doctoral College Board held in 2019-2021 and Research Staff updates are standing agenda items. The University Research Staff representatives work with the Concordat Working Group as a conduit for the University Researcher Forum and wider research staff community through sharing updates and developments, raising issues and opportunities and consultation on the Concordat and other research staff matters.

- **University Researcher Forum.** The University Researcher Forum is open to all contract researchers, researchers, managers of researchers and staff supporting researchers. Five University Researcher Forum meetings were held between 2019 – 2021. The impacts of the University Researcher Forum events have enabled researchers to: acquaint themselves with, and recognise the significance of, the aims and objectives of the Concordat and the commitment of the University as a signatory; participate in Concordat consultation including identifying priorities for researchers; enhance their own networks and receive support through University channels including industry collaboration, enterprise solutions, KTPs and funding.

- **Faculty ECR Forums.** Faculty-facing ECR Forums have been established for all three faculties (Health; Science and Engineering; and Arts, Humanities and Business) and are open to all contract researchers, researchers, managers of researchers and staff supporting researchers. The Faculty ECR Forums are conduits for information,
consultation, representation, career development and support for researchers aligned with each Faculty ECR Forum. The impact of establishing ECR Forums for all three Faculties has led to further opportunities for research staff representatives through ‘Faculty crossover representatives’. The Faculty crossover reps provide opportunities for researchers who are interested in developing their experience/research beyond their Faculty network.

- **Participation in feedback.** CEDARS survey responses have increased to 30% (2020) and 32% (2021) compared with 20% (CROS 2019). 54.12% (CEDARS 2020) and 57.34% (CEDARS 2021) of the total responses made from Managers of Researchers. The new Concordat signalled an opportunity to consult with the Research Staff community through the University Researcher Forum meetings 5th and 6th February 2020 ‘The new Researcher Development Concordat’ consultation sessions and consultation survey. Some main themes emerging from this consultation related to: research management and leadership including, workloads, recognition and value, and support; career development including, career progression and job security; ECR groups and opportunities for interdepartmental networking; concerns relating to contracts and job security, funding, and institutional change. Following the Concordat consultation, the University Researcher Forum hosted events around the themes of interdisciplinary and collaborative research, and funding. The new Health ECR Forum (2020) and Science & Engineering ECR Forum (2021) have provided further opportunities and support for researchers including access to training and support, and additional opportunities for researchers to undertake representative roles.

- **Carers and Parents network.** Launched in February 2021 and has 40 members from across the University https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/staff-parents-and-carers-network. The network provides support, representation and information including: balancing work demands against children’s childcare or developmental needs across different age groups; hearing about local services and activities; Seeking information and support as new/expectant parents; connecting with other parents of children with SEND; peer support among current and former carers; obtaining support and guidance as a new, short-term or long-term carer.

- **Menopause support network.** Launched in October 2019 and has 81 members from across the University https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/university-structure/service-areas/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/menopause-support-network. The network provides a range of support including: a forum to talk about the menopause and share experiences; provide support and guidance where possible; invite guest speakers/clinicians; advise and give feedback on University policy development and associated practice; provide sessions for example: Menopause and nutrition masterclass and, Menopause awareness sessions.

- **Sector initiatives and frameworks.** CEDARS 2021 indicates University of Plymouth Research Staff had a greater knowledge or understanding of four initiatives including: Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (UoP 60.50 %; sector 56.72%); Concordat to Support Research Integrity (UoP 50.00%; sector 51.20%); Concordat for the advancement of knowledge exchange in higher education (UoP 41.10%; sector 40.97%); HR Excellence in Research Award recognition (UoP 47.26%; sector 44.61%); REF (UoP 98.63%; sector 94.13%).

- **Supervising research students.** Supervisors training is reported to the Doctoral College Board and Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee. University of Plymouth supervisors who have been trained increased from 51.78% (November 2019) to 58.59% (June 2020). PGR satisfaction with supervision remains high (90.3% PRES 2020). Supervisory training has been linked on the new Early Career Research page: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/early-career-research

- **Career development workshops for researchers.** The 2020-2021 Researcher Development Programme introduced a new career development workshop for Research Staff and PGRs ‘How to transition well out of academia’. Three sessions were delivered to 33 research staff and 41 PGRs. The FoH ECR Forum and RDP delivered a careers event on 15th July 2021 ‘Simple steps towards developing your research career’ attended by 30 staff.

- **Researcher Development Programme.** 2020-2021: 236 sessions were attended by 127 research staff (81 female staff attended 190 sessions and 46 male staff attended 92 sessions). The number of Research Staff accessing sessions increased by 6% and the number of sessions attended increased by 30% compared with 2018-2019.

- **Impact of COVID.** The most notable impacts of COVID as part of this review included:
  - **Athena SWAN.** The final remaining School submissions were delayed with a revised submission by November 2021.
  - **FTC review** was delayed and has been incorporated in the HREiR Action plan 2021-2023.
## Next steps and success measures 2021 - 2023

**ECR web pages.** Develop and regularly refresh the ECR web pages for Concordat sections ‘environment and culture’, ‘employment’ and ‘professional and career development’, and Faculty ECR Forum sections including guidance and resources for researchers and managers by June 2022 (EC, E, PCD).

**Success measure:** staff awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat, as measured by 2023 CEDARS, target increases by 10% over 2021 (60.5%).

**Employment policies and practices.** Review and update published documentation to ensure considerations of researchers are included, update the ECR web pages and communicate the outcome of this review to all researchers and managers by March 2022 (EC, E, PCD).

**Success measure:** staff confidence in ability to manage requests for flexible working appropriately (79.27% CEDARS 2021). Respond to issues relating to health and wellbeing (80.49% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of discrimination (75.34% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of bullying and harassment (70.73% CEDARS 2021). Reporting incidents of research misconduct (61.91% CEDARS 2021) as measured by 2023 CEDARS, target increases by 5% over 2021 metrics.

**Training and support for managers of researchers.** Design and pilot Managers of Researchers workshop for up to 10 managers for feedback and review prior to roll-out by June 2022 (EC, E, PCD). Review and update ‘Management Basics’ training package and updates to online modules and re-launched as part of the Managers of Researchers pilot workshop by June 2022 (EC, E, PCD).

**Success measure:** staff feeling supported by their manager to develop their research identity (57.38% CEDARS 2021), and staff feeling valued at work (58.22% CEDARS 2021) as measured by 2023 CEDARS, target increases by 5% over 2021 metrics.

**University Researcher Forum and Faculty ECR Forums.** 1: Deliver a University Researcher Forum event on the Government’s R&D People and Culture strategy (July 2021) to researchers and managers by July 2022 (EC, E, PCD). 2: Updates and feedback from Faculty ECR Forums become a standing item on Faculty Research Committees by July 2023 (EC, E, PCD). 3: Include the Concordat in communications for researchers, managers and other Concordat beneficiaries by July 2022 (EC, E, PCD).

**Success measure 1:** staff confidence in ability to respond to issues relating to health and wellbeing (80.49% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of discrimination (75.34% CEDARS 2021). Reporting an incident of bullying and harassment (70.73% CEDARS 2021). Reporting incidents of research misconduct (61.91% CEDARS 2021) as measured by 2023 CEDARS, target increases by 5% over the 2021 metrics.

**Success measures 2 & 3:** staff awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat, as measured by 2023 CEDARS, target increases by 10% over the 2021 (60.5%).

**Ethics and integrity.** Review how Faculty and University REICs engage with researchers and contribute to the delivery of the Concordat Inclusion as a standing item for Faculty and University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee’s (UREIC) and in Annual Report to Board of Governors by December 2021 (EC). R&I to deliver research integrity training sessions from 2021-2023 for research staff and PGRs (EC).

**Success measure:** target 50% staff completing training (50% in 2021) and 55% staff awareness of the Research Integrity Concordat (55% in 2021) by July 2023 (EC).

**Fixed-term contracts.** HR to produce analysis of staff data to be reported to Faculties by July 2022 (E).

**Success measure:** HR and Faculties to review the use of FTCs including identifying those eligible to be transferred to an open-ended contract (over 4 years service and no justifiable objective to remain fixed term) by July 2023 (E).

**Professional development.** HR to complete review of current policies to ensure 10 days professional development pro rata is included and HR/ECR web pages are updated by March 2022 (PCD).

Develop processes for recording and reporting of professional development through iTRENT including professional development undertaken through the University, ad hoc and externally that can be recorded by researchers and managers by July 2022 (PCD).

**Success measure:** staff accessing 3 or more days training and development in the past 12 months (50.00% CEDARS 2021), and usefulness of PDR (57.03% CEDARS 2021) as measured by 2023 CEDARS, target increases by 5% over 2021 metrics.

**Career management.** Researcher Development Programme 2021-2023 to deliver careers sessions for research staff including: How to transition out of academia well; Career management portfolios; Interview workshop by June 2022 (PCD). Development and refresh of ECR web pages for Concordat sections ‘professional and career development’ and ‘employment’, and Faculty ECR Forum sections including career management resources and career pathways for researchers by June 2022 (PCD).

Provide guidance for research managers, using materials generated for the Managers of Researchers' workshop including career development and career conversations both within and outside of the annual PDR process by June 2022 (PCD).

**Success measure:** staff awareness in the support the University provides for professional and career development (50.77% CEDARS 2021) as measured by 2023 CEDARS, target increases by 10% over the 2021 metrics.