

Plymouth University

European Commission HR Excellence in Research: Action Plan 25th September 2015

Plymouth University achieved the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award on 5th September 2011 which was renewed on 27th September 2013. This Award reflects our commitment to the principles of the **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**.

Following the initial award in 2011, an 'HR Excellence in Research Steering Group' was established to review, update and progress our on-going commitments. This steering group currently comprises of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Head of Research Support and Development, Researcher Development Programme Manager, Organisational Development Manager (HR) and two current Research Staff members representing the Researcher Forum, the Research and Innovation Committee and, the wider community of researchers at Plymouth University.

The following Action Plan details our progress and future work in supporting Researchers at Plymouth University.

Recruitment and Selection			
2013 - 2015 Actions	Concordat Principle	Update September 2015	2015 – 2017 Actions
<p><u>Recruitment</u></p> <p>From the CROS 2011 survey analysis it was noted the number of fixed-term contracts at Plymouth had increased some 10%, whilst the national average had decreased by 10%. HR investigated this finding and found that it was the result of an increase in successful funding bids across the University. CROS 2013 noted a minimal change. Monitoring of fixed-term contracts for Researchers to be on-going. Lead: HR August 2015</p>	<p>1, 6</p>	<p>Early analysis of CROS 2015 indicates a 3% decrease in the percentage of Research Staff at Plymouth University on fixed-term contracts however it is 7% higher than the sector.</p>	<p>HR will continue to monitor fixed-term contracts for researchers and is a strategic project for HR in 2015-2016. The strategic objective is to reduce reliance on FTCs.</p> <p>Success measure: A FTC Project Start-up Meeting is scheduled for 15th October 2015 – this project will review the use of FTCs, with a view to reducing the number of staff on FTCs, and include communicating to researchers a better understanding of rights and responsibilities as contract researchers.</p> <p>Lead: HR December 2016</p>

Recognition and Value			
2013 - 2015 Actions	Concordat Principle	Update September 2015	2015 - 2017 Actions
<p><u>Mobility</u></p> <p>Plymouth University are a Local Contact Point for the British Council/EURAXESS “Researchers in Motion”. Opportunities to</p>	<p>1, 2</p>	<p>The Research Support and Organisational Development Programme websites promote EURAXESS.</p>	<p>Research Support Programme to maintain links with Specialist Advisors to coordinate training and support activities as well as continued UKRO events.</p>

<p>promote this network to be increased during 2013-2014. Plymouth to work with network members to improve awareness of this scheme.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development / Graduate School December 2014</p>		<p>The Research & Innovation Directorate Specialist Advisors (Research Funding) work closely with the Horizon 2020 European funding initiative and provide support for individuals and group training events at Plymouth University. The UK Research Office held events at Plymouth in January 2014 and February 2015.</p>	<p>Success measure: Research Advice Surgeries to increase by 100% for 2015-2016 (9 sessions were delivered in 2014-2015).</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development July 2016</p>
<p><u>Participation in decision-making bodies</u></p> <p>Researcher Forum representative to the R&I Committee and HR Excellence in Research Steering Group to maintain on-going links and promote the activities of these three groups. Researcher Forum representative to brief the R&I Committee meetings, maintain an equal input into the HR Excellence in Research Steering Group meetings, participate in conferences and events related to Researchers.</p> <p>Lead: Researcher Forum representative August 2015</p>	<p>2, 3, 4, 5, 6</p>	<p>The Researcher Forum representative remains an active member of the Researcher Forum, HR Excellence in Research Steering Group and, the Research & Innovation Committee. The former Researcher Forum representative remains on the HR Excellence in research Steering Group for continuity. The current representative has worked with HR and tabled a paper at the R&I Committee regarding “Stability of Research Careers at Plymouth University”. Communications from the representative to the community of researchers is maintained through working</p>	<p>Researcher Forum representative to continue their active role in highlighting issues and opportunities as well as providing a ‘voice’ for researchers at Plymouth University.</p> <p>Success measure: Research staff representative to attend Research & Innovation Committee meetings (3 times during 2015-2016). Researcher Forum to increase meetings to 5 for 2015-2016 with a 6th meeting proposed for 2016.</p> <p>Lead: Researcher Forum representative July 2016</p>

		with the Graduate School and Research Support & Development team.	
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Support and Career Development

2013 - 2015 Actions	Concordat Principle	Update September 2015	2015 - 2017 Actions
<p><u>Evaluation/ appraisal systems</u></p> <p>CROS 2013 highlights the PDR process needs to be embedded further for researchers at Plymouth University. CROS 2013 notes 52% of Research Staff at Plymouth University participated in a staff appraisal in the last two years with a low satisfaction in the process. PIRLS 2013 additionally noted low satisfaction with the PDR process. Human Resources will focus on increasing participation, understanding and satisfaction in the PDR process by August 2015.</p> <p>Lead: HR August 2015</p>	2, 3, 4	<p>Early analysis of CROS 2015 notes 64% of respondents of research staff at Plymouth University participated in an appraisal with 53% satisfied with the usefulness of the process. This marks an increase in both participation and satisfaction. Early analysis of PIRLS 2015 however notes that more than half of Principle Investigators felt the appraisal process was not useful.</p> <p>The 2013 staff survey showed that 52% of the research respondents had a PDR and of those 37% found it useful.</p>	<p>HR to continue to focus on increasing participation and understanding of the appraisal process for all staff.</p> <p>PDR completion rates as at 31.07.15 show that 16% of research staff had not had an appraisal and 84% classed as completed. However, 31% of those did not have a PDR for valid reason (which is classed as completion).</p> <p>This will be a key measure for the strategic project group that are reviewing how FTCs are used.</p> <p>Success measure: participation by Research Staff in PDRs to become in line with other staff categories (90% participation). Review guidelines for PDR to reflect that non-completion of</p>

			<p>PDR due to staff being on FTC is not a valid reason for non-completion. And target training for managers of research staff so that where they have staff who are FTCs they are trained on how to provide effective PDRs.</p> <p>Lead: HR December 2016</p>
<p><u>Research environment</u></p> <p>Staff Survey, CROS and PRES feedback has enabled us to establish the Researcher Forum to ensure it meets the needs of this specific staff group.</p> <p>The analysis and action plans of the 2013 CROS, PIRLS, PRES and Staff surveys will be reviewed and disseminated to the appropriate University Committees (including R&I and Graduate Committees) and cohorts by June 2014.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development / Graduate School June 2014.</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</p>	<p>PRES 2013 action plan reported to Graduate Committee and in Graduate School Annual Report and actioned.</p> <p>CROS 2013 findings were presented to the Researcher Forum on 21st October 2013.</p> <p>Analysis of CROS and PIRLS 2013 was completed and disseminated to all Faculties in 2014.</p> <p>PRES, CROS and PIRLS 2013 were analysed by SERIO (Research & Innovation) with full reports completed in September 2013.</p> <p>CROS, PIRLS and PRES were all administered in 2015 with analysis and reports due for</p>	<p>CROS and PIRLS 2015 analysis to be completed by September 2015. Reports to be disseminated through the R&I Committee and Researcher Forum.</p> <p>Success measure: CROS and PIRLS analysis to be disseminated to Associate Deans Research (ADR) at the Research & Innovation Committee November 2015. Action for the ADRs to take results of CROS and PIRLS to their Faculty Research Committee for distribution and action planning for 2015-2016.</p> <p>PRES to be disseminated through the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee September 2015 and the Graduate Committee October 2015.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development / Graduate School December 2015.</p>

		completion in September 2015.	
<p><u>Working conditions</u></p> <p>The Plymouth University Staff Survey 2013 is under analysis with initial findings expected by November 2013. Research Staff feedback to be highlighted for dissemination to the HR Excellence in Research Steering Group and Researcher Forum. Lead: HR December 2013</p>	2, 3, 4	<p>Overall the 2013 staff survey findings for the Research staff showed that Research staff were happier with their work and environment than the wider staff community.</p> <p>96% agree that it is a good place to work (88% University wide).</p>	<p>Staff survey is due again in early 2016 and the results will be available during the autumn term.</p> <p>Success measure: maintain very high level of satisfaction.</p> <p>Lead: HR July 2016</p>
<p><u>Stability and permanence of employment</u></p> <p>From the CROS 2011 survey analysis it was noted the number of fixed-term contracts at Plymouth had increased some 10%, whilst the national average had decreased by 10%. HR investigated this finding and found that it was the result of an increase in successful funding bids across the University. CROS 2013 noted a minimal change. Monitoring of Fixed-term contracts for Researchers to be on-going. Lead: HR August 2015</p>	1, 2, 3, 4	<p>Early analysis of CROS 2015 indicates a 3% decrease in the percentage of Research Staff at Plymouth University on fixed-term contracts however it is 7% higher than the sector.</p> <p>Early analysis of CROS 2015 indicates 38% of research staff at Plymouth University had held just one contract compared with 48% nationally, although 61.7% at Plymouth had held two contracts compared with 50.26% nationally.</p>	<p>HR will continue to monitor fixed-term contracts for researchers and is a strategic project for the HR for 15/16.</p> <p>Success measure: A FTC Project Start-up Meeting is scheduled for 15th October 2015 – this project will review the use of FTCs, with a view to reduce the number of staff on FTCs, and include communicating to researchers a better understanding of rights and responsibilities as contract researchers.</p> <p>Lead: HR December 2016</p>
<p><u>Career development and CPD</u></p>	3, 4	The Research Support Programme was first launched in	The Research Support & Development team and Graduate School to continue

<p>A new Research Staff Development Programme has been drafted and will commence from September 2013 and is expected to support the University's Performance Development Review action plan for Research Staff, Principal Investigators and Research Managers. Programme to be reviewed annually.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support and Development December 2014</p>		<p>October 2013 and had 435 engagements from 2013-2014. The programme for 2014-2015 had 541 engagements as a result of its development and publicity.</p>	<p>to develop and promote the programme to research staff, PIs and research managers.</p> <p>Success measure: we will work towards a minimum 5% increase in programme engagements by July 2016.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development/ Graduate School July 2016</p>
<p><u>Supervision and managerial duties</u></p> <p>The Plymouth University Staff Survey 2013 is under analysis with initial finding expected by November 2013. Research Staff feedback to be highlighted for dissemination to the HR Excellence in Research Steering Group and Researcher Forum.</p> <p>Lead: HR December 2013</p> <p>The analysis and action plans of the 2013 CROS, PIRLS, PRES and Staff surveys will be reviewed and disseminated to the appropriate University Committees (including R&I and Graduate Committees) and cohorts by June 2014.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development / Graduate School June 2014</p>	<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7</p>	<p>CROS was analysed to understand research staff perceptions of roles and responsibilities. Early analysis of CROS 2015 indicates a significant decrease by 25% of research staff who feel valued in their contributions towards supervising research students.</p>	<p>CROS 2015 analysis to be disseminated to all Faculties and Schools.</p> <p>Success measure: CROS and PIRLS analysis to be disseminated to Associate Deans Research (ADR) at the Research & Innovation Committee November 2015. Action for the ADRs to take results of CROS and PIRLS to their Faculty Research Committee for distribution and action planning for 2015-2016.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development / Graduate School July 2016</p>

<p><u>Access to research training and continuous development</u></p> <p>Researcher Development Programme to continue to be reviewed and revised annually (annual revisions since 2003). Lead: Graduate School August 2014</p> <p>New Research Staff Development Programme mapped against RDF rolled out from September 2013. Programme and to be closely monitored during its pilot year from September 2013. Lead: Research Support & Development / Graduate School August 2014</p>	<p>3, 4, 5</p>	<p>The Researcher Development Programme continues to be developed annually. It is available to all PGRs and Research Staff.</p> <p>The introduction of an additional Research Support Programme focussed on research staff means that researchers can access training and development opportunities in two programmes.</p> <p>CROS 2015 highlights 89% Plymouth University researchers agreed they had access to training & development opportunities (83% for sector).</p>	<p>Graduate School and Research Support & Development to continue to develop programmes and opportunities for researchers' development.</p> <p>Success measure: we will work towards a minimum 5% increase in programme engagements by July 2016.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development/ Graduate School July 2016</p>
<p><u>Public engagement</u></p> <p>Following the successful pilot Public Engagement training session in November 2012, training will be offered twice during 2013-2014. Public engagement training and opportunities for Researchers will be promoted and reviewed during the 2013-2014 Researcher Development Programme.</p> <p>Lead: Graduate School August 2014</p>	<p>1, 3, 4</p>	<p>In November 2014 a Research Impact and Quality Officer was appointed to develop and support research impact at Plymouth University, including public engagement.</p> <p>Public engagement training remains embedded in the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) the RDP maintains links with the University of the Third Age to</p>	<p>Continue to promote and support public engagement and Impact through the Researcher Development and Research support Programmes and, the Researcher Forum network.</p> <p>Success measure: 4 Impact and Public Engagement sessions are scheduled for the 2015-2016 programmes.</p> <p>Lead: Graduate School and Research</p>

		<p>enable researchers to engage with the public.</p> <p>The Researcher Forum in June 2015 and September 2015 showcased support for 'Impact'.</p> <p>The Researcher Development Programme and Research Support Programme now include sessions on 'Impact'.</p>	Support & Development July 2016
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Researchers' Responsibilities			
2013 - 2015 Actions	Concordat Principle	Update September 2015	2015 - 2017 Actions
<p><u>Ethical principles, Governance and Integrity</u></p> <p>The University policy on ethics:</p> <p>Research Ethics: a policy for staff and research students which includes an Annex on Ethical Principles for research involving human participants approved by Academic Board Dec 2005. The policy is revisited by the UHREC on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>This establishes that there is an overarching</p>	2, 3, 4	<p>In 2013 a Research Governance and Engagement Officer was appointed with responsibilities for ethics and integrity. Ethics and integrity sessions are now featured within the Research Support and Researcher Development Programmes.</p>	<p>Ethics and integrity training to remain in the Research Support and Researcher Development programmes and will be reviewed and developed annually.</p> <p>Success measure: 15 ethics, integrity and governance sessions are scheduled for the 2015-2016 programmes.</p> <p>Lead: Faculty Ethics Committees, Research Support & Development/ Graduate School July 2016</p>

<p><u>University Human Research Ethics Committee and Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs).</u></p> <p>Achieved January 2013</p> <p>The new Plymouth University Research Ethics Policy was published in January 2013</p> <p>Lead: Faculty Research Ethics Committees July 2012</p>			
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Diversity and Equality			
2013 - 2015 Actions	Concordat Principle	Update September 2015	2015 - 2017 Actions
<p><u>Non discrimination</u></p> <p>Equality & Diversity Policy and associated codes or practice. E&D responsibilities are mainstreamed into all job descriptions. E&D training is a mandatory requirement via a bespoke e-learning package for all staff. Promoting a positive work environment code of practice is an underpinning part of the mandatory “Leading Fairly” session for all managers. Equal Pay Review is undertaken regularly and all posts are scrutinised via a transparent matching and grading process. E & D committees and sub committees meet termly with representation from across all</p>	<p>6, 1, 3, 4</p>	<p>Early analysis of CROS 2015 indicates a decrease to 83% of Plymouth University research staff who felt positive about Plymouth University’s commitment to equality & diversity. Whilst the sector response was 86% it marks a significant decrease from respondents of CROS 2013.</p> <p>The 2013 staff survey showed that 93% of the research respondents believe the university is committed to</p>	<p>Further analysis of CROS and PIRLS 2015 findings is necessary. Findings to be reported to HR Excellence in Research Steering Group and E&D Committee.</p> <p>Staff survey is due again in early 2016 and the results will be available during the autumn term.</p> <p>Success measure: CROS and PIRLS analysis to be disseminated to Associate Deans Research (ADR) at the Research & Innovation Committee November 2015. Action for the ADRs to take</p>

<p>parts of the University. Generic role profiles for Researchers of all grades are maintained and published.</p> <p>CROS 2013 highlights 98% of Plymouth University respondents were positive about the University's commitment to E&D compared to 86% for the sector.</p> <p>Further analysis of CROS, PIRLS and the Staff Survey are necessary to inform E&D practice at Plymouth University. Findings to be reported to HR Excellence Steering Group and Equality & Diversity Committee Lead: HR and Research Support & Development June 2014</p>		<p>Equality and Diversity.</p> <p>E&D e-learning package has been revised and will be re-launched September 2015 and will be mandatory for all staff. Their will additionally be mandatory online training for Chairs of recruitment panels from September 2015.</p>	<p>results of CROS and PIRLS to their Faculty Research Committee for distribution and action planning for 2015-2016.</p> <p>Lead: Research Support & Development / HR July 2016</p>
<p><u>Judging merit</u></p> <p>CROS 2013 highlights the PDR process needs to be embedded further for researchers at Plymouth University. CROS 2013 notes 52% of Research Staff at Plymouth University participated in a staff appraisal in the last two years with a low satisfaction in the process. PIRLS 2013 additionally noted low satisfaction with the PDR process. Human Resources will focus on increasing participation, understanding and satisfaction in the PDR process by August 2015. Lead: HR August 2015</p>	<p>6, 1, 3, 4</p>	<p>Early analysis of CROS 2015 notes 64% of research staff at Plymouth University participated in an appraisal with 53% satisfied with the usefulness of the process. This marks an increase in both participation and satisfaction. Early analysis of PIRLS 2015 however notes that more than half of Principal Investigators felt the appraisal process was not useful.</p> <p>The 2013 staff survey showed that 52% of the research</p>	<p>HR to continue to focus on increasing participation and understanding of the PDR process for all staff.</p> <p>PDR completion rates as at 31.07.15 show that 16% of research staff had not had an appraisal and 84% classed as completed. However, 31% of those did not have a PDR for valid reason (which is classed as completion).</p> <p>This will be a key measure for the strategic project group that are reviewing how FTCs are used.</p>

		respondents had a PDR and of those 37% found it useful.	<p>Success measure: participation by Research Staff in PDRs to become in line with other staff categories (90% participation). Review guidelines for PDR and target training for managers of research staff.</p> <p>A FTC Project Start-up Meeting is scheduled for 15th October 2015 – this project will review the use of FTCs, with a view to reduce the number of staff on FTCs, and include communicating to researchers a better understanding of rights and responsibilities as contract researchers.</p> <p>Lead: HR December 2016</p>
<p><u>Funding and salaries</u></p> <p>Further analysis of CROS, PIRLS and the Staff Survey are necessary to inform E&D practice at Plymouth University. Findings to be reported to HR Excellence Steering Group and Equality & Diversity Committee Lead: HR and Research Support & Development June 2014</p>	6, 1, 3, 4	The 2013 Staff Survey showed that 70% research staff agreed they were fairly paid for the work they do; 66% felt fairly rewarded; 71% felt they were paid well compared to staff of a similar role. Overall 77% felt Plymouth University offered a fair pay and reward package.	<p>HR to conduct a total reward review.</p> <p>Success measure: Phase 1 of the total reward review to be completed by November 2015. Phase 2 to be completed by July 2016. Both phases are subject to consultation.</p> <p>Lead: HR August 2016</p>
<p><u>Gender balance</u></p>	6, 1, 3, 4	Plymouth University currently hold an institutional Bronze	Plymouth University currently reviewing its institutional application for Athena

<p>Further analysis of CROS, PIRLS and the Staff Survey are necessary to inform E&D practice at Plymouth University. Findings to be reported to HR Excellence Steering Group and Equality & Diversity Committee Lead: HR and Research Support & Development June 2014</p>		<p>Athena Swan Award with additional Bronze Awards for the Faculty of Science & Environment, School of Psychology and Schools of Medicine and Dentistry.</p> <p>Women are in the lower graded roles (65% female, 35% male) for Research Assistant, whereas Research Fellow has a higher male split (43% female and 57% male). The overall split for Research staff is 52% female and 48% male.</p> <p>To address gender imbalance in grades HR have introduced the women's network, and is introducing the Unconscious Bias e-learning as mandatory for Chairs of recruitment panels.</p>	<p>Swan Silver award.</p> <p>Schools of Medicine and Dentistry currently applying for Athena Swan Silver award November 2015.</p> <p>HR to monitor and review progress with e-learning for Chairs of recruitment panels.</p> <p>Success measure: A women's network was introduced in 2015 and met on 15th June 2015. A focus of this network is career progression and mentoring. The network will meet termly during 2015-2016.</p> <p>Lead: HR September 2016</p>
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Implementation and Review			
2013 - 2015 Actions	Concordat Principle	Update September 2015	2015 - 2017 Actions
<p>The Dean of Research and Innovation will join this Steering Group from November 2013 taking over from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research. The Steering Group</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>The HR Excellence in Research Steering Group was established in March 2012 and meets to review the Award's</p>	<p>HR Excellence in Research Steering Group to continue to work closely with the Researcher Forum and promote its purpose and activities to researchers,</p>

<p>will continue to meet and review our Concordat-related activities across the University. The Steering Group reports to the R&I Committee and consults with the Researcher Forum. Lead: HR Excellence in Research Steering Group August 2015</p>	<p>action plan twice yearly. The Steering Group comprises of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor/Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Head of Research Support and Development, Researcher Development Programme Manager, Organisational Development Manager (HR) and, two current Research Staff members representing the Researcher Forum and the R&I Committee. The aim has been a balanced membership that is small enough to act as an effective 'working' group.</p> <p>The new Pro Vice-Chancellor Research is expected to be appointed late 2015/early 2016.</p> <p>The HR Excellence in Research Steering Group continues to monitor and drive activities and initiatives in support of the researchers at Plymouth University. The HR Excellence Steering Group continues to work closely with the Researcher Forum. The</p>	<p>academics and staff supporting researchers. The HR Excellence in Research Steering Group will continue to report to the R&I Committee and the Associate Deans Research.</p> <p>Success measure: We will work towards a minimum 5% increase in staff awareness of HR Excellence in Research and the Concordat by June 2017. We will send updated HR Excellence in Research action plans to the R&I Committee twice-yearly for ADRs to disseminate to the Faculty Research Committees for appropriate actions.</p> <p>Lead: HR Excellence in Research Steering Group June 2017</p>
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		<p>activities of both the Researcher Forum and the HR Excellence Steering Group are pivotal to our support for our researchers.</p> <p>Early analysis of CROS 2015 indicates there is a higher awareness and understand of Plymouth University researchers compared to nationally of the following initiatives: HR Excellence in Research award; Vitae RDF and; the Concordat to Support the Career Development of researchers.</p>	
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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

ADR	Associate Dean Research
CROS	Careers in Research Online Survey
E&D	Equality and Diversity
FTC	Fixed-term contract
PDR	Performance development review
PIRLS	Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey
PRES	Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
RDF	Researcher Development Framework
RDP	Researcher Development Programme
R&I Committee	Research and Innovation Committee
RSP	Research Support Programme
SERIO	Socio-Economic Research and Information Observatory
UKREC	University Human Research Ethics Committee
UKRO	UK Research Office