

## University of Bristol six-year self-assessment for the HR Excellence in Research award. 14/12/16

**INTRODUCTION:** During 2015/16 the University of Bristol (UoB) has developed a [new seven year strategy](#) describing the focus for the institution for this period. The strategy is broad-ranging, representing our varied remit both in research and teaching excellence. The strategy document includes a clear commitment to the development of early career researchers. Some of the commitments in this new strategy have overtaken actions in our Concordat action plan. Therefore this report covers both progress made against our action plan in the last two years along with some actions coming out of the strategy. It then outlines next steps and future focus for actions in the next two years. Some of the particularly relevant commitments will be mentioned below with more in the action plan.

**PROCESS:** Our Concordat Implementation Group oversees the implementation of the action plan and our internal assessment processes. Our internal assessment processes include consultation with key stakeholders such as our Research Staff Reps Committee and Working Party, and it draws on data from surveys such as CROS and our whole staff survey, as well as data from regular internal monitoring processes. More details about the group and the process can be found on our [website](#).

### **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE ACTION PLAN SINCE THE FOUR-YEAR REPORT:**

In 2015 we reviewed our research staff website and re-designed and launched a [Research Staff Hub](#) to replace this. This Hub pulls together information about development opportunities and careers guidance within and outside academia (*action against 3.6*).

A key achievement in 2015/16 was the implementation of a new fixed-term contract ordinance which enables the University to give open-ended contracts to the majority of our research staff (only excluding those on contracts of less than 12 months duration or who are undertaking cover) (*action against 1.3*). This ordinance has had a significant impact; in 2014/15 we advertised 380 research staff positions and only 6% (n24) of those were open-ended contracts, whereas in 2015/16 we advertised 374 research staff positions and 62% (n231) were open-ended – a substantial increase.

Raising the profile of and supporting research staff who undertake teaching at the University has also been a major focus during this period. This was initially in response to feedback from the Research Staff Reps Committee who were concerned about the lack of recognition and support that research staff were receiving for teaching. We undertook a survey of research staff to ascertain the kinds of the teaching they were involved in and what the issues were from their perspective. This has resulted in the development of a [new policy](#) which ensures that Schools keep a record of which research staff are undertaking teaching, that all research staff who teach are supported with a development workshop and that they are all involved in conversations and communications around teaching in their Schools (*action against 3.7*). We have also recruited to an additional role in the Academic Staff Development team which supports the delivery of development to researchers around their teaching practice. This includes a new [Teaching@Bristol programme](#) for research staff to support the teaching policy (*action against 3.11*). Research staff can also access our range of teaching development sessions, as standalone sessions or as part of the CREATE scheme which supports the development of academic practice in teaching, research and leadership and leads to HEA recognition.

In addition to these key areas, the following progress has been made in the specific Concordat areas:

### **A: Recruitment and Selection**

- The new University strategy states that we will “Make our University a destination of choice for international scholars by significantly enhancing the services and support available to incoming staff, visitors and their families”. This will have a big impact on research staff. Actions include the recruitment of a new role within the HR resourcing team to provide advice and guidance to staff recruited from overseas (for example how to set up a bank account etc.) and financial support for staff applying for visas, for “leave to remain” status or British citizenship as a result of Brexit (*new action against 1.2*).
- We discovered that our ability to ascertain whether recruitment panellists had been trained was restricted by the lack of training records prior to three years ago due to a change in systems. Therefore we are developing a “refresher” session and will be providing a tailored session for each academic School to train larger groups of staff (*new action against 1.2*).
- We undertook a recent review of our role profiles, an important aspect of which was an update of the research staff job titles (changing Research Assistant and Research Associate to Research Associate and

Senior Research Associate, respectively) in response to feedback from Research Staff Reps and to bring our job titles more in line with those across the sector (*action against 1.5*).

## **B: Recognition and Value**

- The new University strategy states that we will “*Nurture individual excellence and unlock potential by reviewing personal development and performance management arrangements, and maintain our emphasis on leadership and management development*”. We have enhanced our leadership and management development provision over the last two years and we have introduced a number of new short workshops including a set on *Managing Staff in an Academic Context* (topics such as delegation, giving feedback and different personality types). We have developed with HR Managers a programme on *Managing Performance Effectively* which we have delivered to Heads of School and School Managers this year, and we intend to roll this out to other managers at a range of levels (*action against 2.3*).
- To enable a better understanding of the complex progression processes and how research staff opportunities for development can be included in grant applications we created a [guidance document](#) for PIs and research staff that explains the Finance and HR procedures that enable movement of research staff from Research Associate to Senior Research Associate and how this interacts with our Full Economic Costing (FEC) Tool (*new action against 2.5*).

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

- Our newly-refreshed targeted programme of 19 workshops for research staff can be seen [here](#) and updated attendance info [here](#). This programme incorporates 10 new workshops, including *How to Make the Most of Your Staff Review*, *Being Strategic about your Career as a Researcher* and *Responding to the External Environment*. We also have workshops on exploring a career beyond academia.
- In the 2015 CROS survey, 76% of respondents agreed that they are “*encouraged to engage in career and personal development*” and 65% of respondents had attended some form of training event/CPD activity in the past 12 months.
- We have extended our 1:1 careers support to research staff over the last year, introducing regular 1:1 careers guidance slots (30 mins one-off appointments) with our Research Staff Development Officer to supplement the longer career coaching process. Research staff can access this 1:1 support more quickly and specific queries and support such as CV advice can be dealt with more efficiently. So far we have had requests from 73 members of staff, 41 of which have an appointment or have already been seen. We are looking to further increase this provision in 2017 (*new action against 3.3*).
- We have developed a series of [Induction videos](#) tailored to research staff (*action against 3.6*), introduced regular monthly coffee mornings for new research staff to supplement existing new starter emails.
- New [online guidance](#) around mentoring for mentors and mentees has been produced (*action against 3.8*), alongside an open induction for mentors. We are supporting two local pilot schemes in Engineering and Health Sciences with training for mentors and one scheme ‘[The Peers Project](#)’ specifically to support research staff to thrive in a research career. We are working with Researchers14 to share best practice with institutions such as Sheffield to develop our mentoring practice further and to consider sector-wide practice development, including the development of software to support mentoring.

## **E: Diversity and Equality**

- We have introduced a new group to consider matters of diversity and equality (The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group (chaired by PVC (Research and Enterprise) has replaced the Academic Careers Equalities Working Group) and to enable us to expand our focus to include other staff groups and students. This has allowed us to develop innovative ways to meet our strategic ambitions in relation to attracting, supporting and retaining a more diverse staff and student population.
- Working in collaboration with our LGBT+ Staff Network we have made great progress in this area of equality. We have reviewed and updated all relevant HR policy to ensure that the wording is inclusive, and have introduced rainbow lanyards for staff and students to demonstrate a visible commitment to LGBT+ inclusivity. In November 2016, we won Best Employer at the Bristol Pride awards.
- We retrained our Acceptable Workplace Behaviour Advisors and recruited more staff volunteers to grow this resource which relaunched in 2016. We are developing a workshop on addressing unacceptable behaviors through active bystander techniques, to be piloted in 2017 with a view to wider roll-out.

- We are engaged in a programme of development activities to raise awareness on the impact of unconscious bias. Ways to mitigate this have been built into our recruitment practices and we have worked with an external provider to develop relevant sessions for key decision makers.
- We have relaunched our Returning Carers Scheme to enable independent researchers to apply for up to 10k to help re-establish their research career after taking a period of caring-related leave.
- We now have 14 schools in receipt of SWAN awards – 12 at Bronze level; 2 at Silver. The University retains its Bronze status. 100% of our STEM schools have applied for awards, two remain unsuccessful but they will be supported to develop their practice and resubmit (**action against 6.10**).
- 92% of CROS survey respondents agreed that staff are treated fairly irrespective of gender. 93% of respondents believed that the University is committed to equality and diversity.
- We hold one event per term for our Working Parents and Carers Networks. Recent events have included First Aid for Parents, Coffee Catch up and Looking After Me! workshop.
- During 2016 we launched new guidance surrounding transgender staff and students, and in November 2016 we ran training to coincide with this by GIRE (Gender Identity Research and Education Society). 50 staff attended the training which received fantastic feedback.
- It remains an ongoing priority to support the career development of female academic staff, in order to enable women to progress into key leadership positions and to improve the diversity of the workforce, and this includes an ongoing commitment to monitoring the proportion of female senior academic staff within the organisation. The number of female professors currently stands at 22.3% of the professoriate (as at November 2016), which is a 5% increase since 2014-15, and such population data is shared with Deans and members of the university's senior management team on an annual basis.

#### **F: Implementation and Review**

- In May 2015 we ran the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) with a 49% response rate, the highest UoB has ever had, and very good in comparison with the national response rate of 28%. We analysed the data and developed an [action plan](#) that concentrates on improving the research staff experience in three main areas: improved recognition and stability of research staff, career development (including a focus on staff review) and increased transparency of progression procedures (**action against 7.2**). A whole staff survey was run in 2015 and the details, including action planning, can be found on our [website](#).
- We continue to collaborate with researcher development colleagues across the sector including through the GW4 alliance with Cardiff, Exeter and Bath Universities (**action against 7.4**), and through a group formed in 2014 named Researchers14, of which Bristol is a founder member. This brings together 13 large research-intensive institutions to share practice around strategy, policy and development activity for research staff.

**NEXT STEPS AND SUCCESS MEASURES (SM):** We have developed a new action plan for the next two years. We will continue to review and update this plan in line with current University priorities and our seven year strategy, using the RSWP and Reps committee for consultation in addition to CROS. Key development areas as mentioned with specific success measures in the action plan are:

- Develop support and information for international staff. SM: new support post in place (measure a baseline and then determine a success measure to determine the value of the support) – March 2017.
- Provide targeted development activity for the VC Fellowships scheme. SM: an articulated programme, promoted to all VC fellows and 100% engagement – Nov 2016.
- Increase the availability of 1:1 career guidance support for research staff. SM: increase by 50% - Dec 2016.
- Promote and monitor engagement with Research Staff Hub. SM: Increase in visitors by 50% - Nov 2017.
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy for research staff who teach. SM: All schools have a process to support the implementation and that 70% of research staff who wish to be involved in teaching are given an opportunity to – May 2017.
- Carry out CROS survey in order to assess against various Concordat principles. SM: Increase number of participants in the survey from 49% to 55% - Dec 2017.
- Exploit fully the opportunities that the GW4 alliance creates for research staff development, including running and evaluating the Crucible programme and alumni network. SM: 90% of participants would recommend the main programme to others and that we have an alumni event once a year – Aug 2017.