

HR Excellence in Research Award 6 Year Review

In September 2012 UEA received the 'HR Excellence in Research' Award granted by the European Commission. In 2014, a two-year internal assessment of progress was carried out against the original 2012 Concordat Action Plan, which led to an updated Action Plan for 2014-2016. A four year review took place during 2016; resulting in a further updated 2016-2020 Action Plan. All Key Documents and information can be found [here](#).

1. About University of East Anglia- Research Strategies and Structure

1.1 UEA's Corporate Strategy – UEA's new corporate strategic plan 'Vision 2030' incorporates the essential theme of 'Research Success' – as a clear strategy to 'increase the volume and impact of our research' while 'most importantly (continuing) to recruit, develop, support and celebrate our world class researchers and academics'. As of May 2018, there are currently 373 research staff (RS) working at the University.

1.2 University Structures and Committees - The implementation of the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' is led by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation (PVC R&I). Following appropriate consultation, the PVC R&I determined that the Research Staff Advisory Network (formerly the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG)), who meet to review the implementation of the Concordat via our HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan, should be replaced by a more effective process. This has facilitated a new monitoring and reporting structure that reflects a closer integration of the HR Excellence in Research Award with the University's Athena SWAN objectives. Feedback from a wider range of research staff is now sought as outlined below (section 2.2) and progress is reviewed three times a year by the PVC R&I (in consultation with HR, Centre for Staff and Educational Development (CSED), Careers Service (CCEN) and the Athena SWAN Central Strategic Group (ASCSG)). The PVC R&I then raises any issues of concern and relevant action points to the University Research Executive.

2. The Review Process

2.1 Internal evaluations at UEA - The internal evaluations were managed by the Staff Development Officer for Researchers (SDO-R, CSED), a PGR and Research Staff Careers Adviser (CCEN), and a Human Resources Manager (HR), reporting to the PVC R&I. Evaluations included a review of the 2012-2014, 2014-2016 and 2016-2020 Action Plans, with additional input from Equality and Diversity, the Research and Innovation Division (RID) and CSED, with regards to University policies and practices that affect research staff. Since 2012, 19 Research Staff Coordinators (RSCs) have been appointed in Schools and Faculties (or Research Clusters) to help support the University in enacting the local 'Code of Practice for the Management of Research Staff'. RSCs provide an annual report that aids in monitoring progress.

2.2 How the views of Researchers were taken into account- The RSWG led the University's participation in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS 2013, 2015, 2017) and the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS 2013, 2015, 2017) to gather critical data and assess progress against the Action Plan. In 2015, 57% of research staff responded to UEA CROS, representing a 12% increase on the 45% response rate of 2013, far exceeding the sector average. In 2017, CROS completion rate was 40% (possibly a reflection of 'survey fatigue') which still allowed statistically significant analysis and compared favourably with the sector response rate of around 24%. Further feedback from research staff was gathered from School-level Athena SWAN surveys and focus groups.

2.3 How the review links with other monitoring mechanisms and processes

From May 2018, the University has enacted a closer integration of the Concordat / HR Excellence with Athena SWAN reporting and activities. This is reflected within the updated 2016-2020 Action Plan. The University's Head of Equality and Diversity (E&D) ensures that the Action Points that arise from the HR Excellence review process align with our Athena SWAN action plans and submissions and are reviewed by the ASCSG.

3. Implementing the Concordat at UEA

UEA has put into effect a range of actions to align institutional policies and practice with the Concordat's Principles. The 2016-2020 updated Action Plan demonstrates current compliance with best practice and highlights key actions going forward; including measures of success. These are summarised below:

Principle 1: Recruitment, Selection & Retention of researchers

Human Resources continue to ensure that all staff have undertaken and/or have refreshed their on-line recruitment training knowledge and skills. Between 2015-2016, 353 staff were trained in Recruitment and Interview and 121 staff in Appraisal. Between, 2016-2017, this number increased to 355 in Recruitment and Interview. For Appraisal training, between 2016-2017, the number increased to 304 staff; which is an approximate increase of 250%. The 2016-2020 Action Plan also included a SMART objective of having a minimum of 80% staff with completed/refreshed 'Diversity in the Workplace' training. Between 2015-16, 794 staff undertook the training and between 2016-2017, 1520 staff undertook this training; which is a 91% increase.

Principle 2: Recognition and Value

UEA CROS 2017 results reveal recognition is consistently growing with the percentage of research staff agreeing they feel valued increasing across most of the contributions and exceeding sector results in nearly all cases. Research staff feel more integrated into the institution's research community (69% 'agree' in 2017 up from 50% in 2015). In January 2019, the PVC R&I will lead the inaugural annual 'Research Staff Summit' to formally recognise the contribution of research staff to the institution, and to communicate and discuss research, innovation, career development, training and other relevant initiatives and activities. The summit will also enable UEA to raise awareness amongst and gather feedback from research staff around the HR Excellence in Research Award initiatives, including relaunch of the Code of Practice for the Management of Research Staff. Appraisal guidelines were revised in 2015 to explicitly include the need to discuss a researcher's career, their aspirations and what support is required to enable this to happen. The proportion of respondents reporting appraisal has been 'useful' increased from 55% in 2015 to 66% in 2017.

Principles 3 & 4: Support and Career Development

New appraisal guidelines were rolled out across Faculties and a new HR template developed to allow accurate recording and monitoring of research staff appraisals at School level. CROS revealed that participation of research staff in the appraisal process has increased slightly (2015=74% vs 2017=75%), remaining just ahead of the sector. However, the proportion of respondents rating the appraisal process as 'useful' overall has increased significantly from 60% in 2015 to 70% in 2017. CROS results showed an 11% increase in respondents reporting to have attended any Careers Service course, event or appointment in the previous 12 months, with those attending rating provision as 'useful' from 81%-100% across all categories of career management topics.

Principle 5: Researchers share responsibility for their own personal and career development

UEA research staff are taking more responsibility for their own personal and career development with 61% CROS 2017 respondents reporting to have a clear career development plan and are maintaining a formal record of CPD (improvement on 54% and 57% respectively recorded in CROS 2015). 64% of all RS respondents also spent the recommended 2 or more days on CPD activity in the past 12 months, with 44.3% participating in 5+ days, exceeding the sector average of 34%. The University aims to increase these metrics by a further 5% over the next two year reporting period, ensuring that research staff who have been employed for <1 year are also undertaking appropriate training or other CPD activities, including research ethics training. The University continues to empower research staff to 'develop their ability to transfer and exploit knowledge where appropriate'.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

The University joined the Athena SWAN Charter in October 2011 and submitted a successful Bronze application in April 2012 and retained its Bronze Renewal Award in April 2016. All Bronze and Silver Awards

achieved to date are fully listed in Section A2i) of the Action Plan. The University runs an Equality and Diversity Awareness course, together with other related training through CSED. A mandatory E&D training module has also been introduced since 2013 for all members of staff. 92% of CROS 2017 respondents agreed that the University is committed to Equality and Diversity (increase of 1% from 2015). A transparent 'Dignity and Respect in the Workplace' policy has been published on the HR web pages [here](#). CROS (2017) results showed that 70% of respondents were satisfied with their work-life balance (an increase of 3% from 2015), comparing favourably with the sector which saw a 2% decrease to 68%. Furthermore, 91% of respondents believe they are treated fairly with requests for flexible working (increase from 85% in 2015). As part of our Athena SWAN action plan, working practices which are supportive of those with parental / caring responsibilities are in place and consistently used across Faculties.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

Evidence from CROS, the annual RSC reports and Athena SWAN surveys have enabled the monitoring of progress made against our HR Excellence in Research Action plan. The PVC R&I and Head of Equality and Diversity will continue to ensure that the UEA Concordat Action Plan aligns and integrates with the University's Athena SWAN initiatives and University Strategy and Plans (UEA2030 Vision).

Next Steps

For Concordat Principle 1, the University aims to attract and recruit more women to areas in which continuous under-representation is occurring, via the use of positive action statements within each School. The University also promotes opportunities for research active Technical staff to gain professional recognition through the Science Council's Professional Registers to promote transferability of skills across academia and industry and UEA signed the Technician Commitment in 2018. For Concordat Principle 2, HR are launching indicative job descriptions for use in appraisal discussions to facilitate career development discussions and the Head of E&D is producing guidance on the use of bridging funding. For Concordat Principles 3 and 4, qualitative CROS data and CCEN internal engagement data reveals there is still a lack of awareness of the support available. CCEN aims to increase engagement levels by a further 5% over the next reporting period by increasing CCEN presence at induction, presenting at the annual researcher summit and including service referral information within induction and appraisal checklists. The University also plans to establish a PI-driven approach for local induction during 2019 with support from RSCs. A checklist will be provided to PIs as part of the researcher appointment acceptance process that will offer additional guidance and support. In addition, as part of the University Athena SWAN action plan, researcher information pages will be included on each School's website. For Concordat Principle 5, research staff will be encouraged to actively participate in the biennial 'Impact week', aiming to increase RS attendance to ~30% (<10% RS attended Impact week in 2017), with some RS leading workshops. Strong promotion of the Athena SWAN and Concordat /HR Excellence initiatives in the Faculty of Medicine and Health sciences (via proactive RSCs and local Athena SWAN committees) have resulted in significant levels of engagement with training and CPD activities (including use of central careers support by research staff). The aim is to further expand upon this level of success achieved in other Schools and Faculties. The use of this co-ordinated approach possesses a huge potential to initiate a positive impact; especially in the Social Sciences where engagement by research staff with personal and career development is significantly lower than it is in the other Faculties (CROS 2017). For Concordat Principle 6, Faculties will be encouraged to fund 2 places per annum for women (out of 8 places in total) on the Aurora programme and both women and those from minority backgrounds will be encouraged to submit applications for selection via a fair and transparent process. All Athena SWAN progress and future plans can be viewed [here](#). For Concordat Principle 7, the new Research Staff Annual Summit (commencing in January 2019); together with the new Research Staff Blackboard portal (launching in December 2018) will be analysed and sent to the PVC R&I along with the findings from the biennial CROS and PIRLS. Following the recent amalgamation of Athena SWAN and HR Excellence in Research Award action plans in May 2018, the impact of positive change and action at UEA has been enhanced. Finally, the University will continue to participate in regional and national initiatives including Vitae events and provide feedback to the PVC R&I who chairs the Research Executive.