

HR Excellence in Research Two Year Evaluation Report 2014

All Key Documents and information about the University's implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers can be found at:

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/hr/employee-information/research>

The University of East Anglia (UEA) has taken the strategic decision to use the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers as a vehicle for change to enhance the employment and development of its researchers. This is in line with UK national drivers such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and fulfils requirements of the major funding bodies of research e.g. RCUK, to provide development for staff employed on research grants. In September 2012 UEA was awarded the 'HR Excellence in Research' badge by the European Commission in recognition of the commitment made by the University to implementing the principles of the Concordat.

This report highlights work to date, specifically through the 2012-14 'Action Plan to Support the Implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' (signed off by the PVC-Research, Enterprise and Engagement in July 2012) and outlines the focus of future strategy for 2014-16.

Managing Research Staff Issues at UEA

At UEA the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research, Enterprise and Engagement (PVC-REE) has lead responsibility for ensuring that the principles of the Concordat are implemented. The PVC-REE chairs the University's Research Staff Working Group (RSWG), the purpose of which is to '*maximise the career potential, satisfaction and productivity of research personnel*'. The PVC-REE reports to the University's Research Executive any significant issues relating to research staff. The RSWG meets up to six times per year and is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Concordat through development and review of the University's Code for Research Staff and its Concordat implementation plan. Members of the RSWG include staff from HR, Staff Development (CSED), Careers, Research and Enterprise, Equality and Diversity, as well as academic staff and research staff. In 2012-13 the membership of the RSWG, under the direction of the PVC-REE, was significantly expanded to increase representation of Research Staff from across all Faculties, and to include research staff representatives from the neighbouring Norwich Bioscience Institutes (NBI). Currently 14 out of a total of 34 positions available on the RSWG are held by research staff.

In addition to the RSWG, at UEA, Research Staff Co-ordinators (RSC, members of academic staff with a high level of interest in research staff issues) have been appointed in all Schools (or Research Clusters or Faculties, where numbers do not support a School-only appointment), to facilitate the induction of, and communication with, research staff. Research staff are also represented on the Research Staff Skills Development Steering Group (RSSG). The RSSG, which meets up to four times per year is chaired by the CSED Staff Development Officer for Research Staff (SDO-RS) and guides the development of training provision for research staff at the University. Research Staff forums also exist in some academic Schools.

1. How did UEA undertake its internal review? (Including how researchers' views were taken into account)

RSWG led the University's participation in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS 2013) and the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS 2013) to gather critical data to guide in the development of, and inform progress with respect to, the 2012-14 action plan. The PVC-REE worked closely with Heads of School to ensure high levels of participation. There was a 45% response rate for CROS (exceeding the 26% response rate for the rest of the sector and representing a significant increase from the 20% UEA response rate in 2009), and a 34% response rate for PIRLS (which compares favourably with the 27% response rate for the rest of the sector). The University's Business Intelligence Unit (Planning Office) analysed the UEA CROS and PIRLS 2013 data comparing responses to those of the rest of the sector, and where questions were directly comparable against the UEA CROS 2009 data. Highlights are referred to in Parts 2 and 3 of this report.

Between February and March 2014 the new SDO-RS chaired a series of focus groups, attended by a total of 64 RS (~20% total RS population), to identify the training and development requirements of researchers at UEA. The focus groups revealed issues of concern relating to the general employment and treatment of research staff at UEA. The findings from the focus groups and RSSG meetings were reported to the RSWG. Further guidance was identified from qualitative feedback from researchers provided by research staff representatives on the RSWG, via the annual reports of our RSCs, and from Research Staff fora.

Finally evidence was provided to the RSWG by the Research Staff Co-ordinator annual reports, detailing how the University's Code for Research Staff is being enacted within their area of responsibility.

2. Key achievements to date including examples of good practice in departments

Recruitment and Selection

In 2014 the University introduced a new e-learning training module on Recruitment and Selection. All members of staff involved in recruitment and selection are required to take the training module, and to refresh this training every two years thereafter.

Recognition and Value

The University Code for Research Staff has been reviewed and updated in consultation with research staff through the RSWG. The code provides guidelines to ensure fair treatment of research staff with regard to contracts of employment, status within the University, and support for research related activities and career development. The final draft is awaiting approval by the incoming PVC-REE in September 2014.

Analysis of CROS 2013 data showed that UEA still needed to make significant improvements to School and / or Faculty induction for research staff. Led by the Research Staff Co-ordinators (RSCs) new induction guidelines have been drawn up at Faculty level with further tailoring to suit individual Schools. For example the Faculty of Science has produced an 'Induction checklist for PI/ line manager of new Research Staff', with School-specific contact information provided in the 'Induction Handbook for Research Associates'. Since July 2014, HR notifies RSCs of any new research staff in advance of their contract start date, to ensure induction procedures are in place on arrival. In addition, since Spring 2014, HR sends a monthly update to RSCs listing the names, contact details and contract information of all research staff employed at UEA categorised by School. This enables RSCs to communicate with and effectively support all research staff in their area of responsibility.

Data from CROS 2013 showed an improving picture of research staff perceptions of recognition since 2009 and perceptions of being treated fairly. Generally respondents

reported feeling most valued for the public-facing research elements of their roles including teaching and learning and public engagement.

The SDO-RS CSED led focus groups established a method of good practice in consulting and liaising directly with researchers and provided the opportunity for researchers to feedback directly their requirements and to illustrate that the University takes their opinions and needs seriously.

Support and Career Development

The University is committed to improving the rates of participation in, and usefulness of, appraisal for researchers. CROS 2013 revealed that only 46.5% of respondents had participated in appraisal over the preceding two years (13.3% lower than the sector average and an 8.5% decrease since CROS 2009). HR, with feedback from the RSWG, developed three new guidance documents: 'Appraisal for Researchers: How to get the best out of your professional development review', 'Appraisal for Researchers: Guidance for the Appraiser', and 'Appraisal for Researchers: FAQs'. Importantly the guidelines emphasise the appraisal process should be used not only to review progress with the research project, but to consider the wider personal development and career goals of the researcher and how UEA can support them in achieving these goals. The new guidance documents were rolled out across all Schools for the first time in the 2014 appraisal round and apply to all research staff irrespective of length of contract.

A draft 'Code of Practice for the Management of Research Staff' has been developed by HR with feedback from RSWG, which makes clear the University's expectations of all those managing researchers and leading research teams. This document will be finalised and approved by the incoming PVC-REE in September 2014. The Code will be made available on our HR intranet pages for research staff and the RSConnect pages for PIs/Research Managers. The Researcher Development webpages (RSConnect) have been updated by the SDO-RS, providing better signposting and new guidance materials for research staff and their managers.

Existing PIs (and researchers aspiring to become future research leaders) now have access to a newly developed 'Leadership and Management' provision through the CSED programme. It is proposed that information specific to management of research staff could be communicated via joint meetings between PIs and research staff led by the School RSC. This approach was piloted successfully in May 2014 in the School of Biological Sciences. In addition, HR is developing Guidelines for Research Line Managers, which will be piloted in the Faculty of Science later this year, aimed at providing hand book-style information for PIs who are new, or relatively new, to supervising research staff.

The University demonstrated its commitment to the career development of its researchers by appointing an additional fulltime Careers Advisor post (doubling previous capacity) in September 2013, specifically to support research staff and postgraduate research students.

Training and development provision for researchers now includes workshops on career management issues, grant writing, the Research Excellence Framework (REF), research impact, public engagement and how to turn research skills into business-related consultancies.

Researchers Responsibilities

A new research staff forum has been set up by researchers, with support from the Research Staff Co-ordinators, in the Faculty of Medicine and Health. Existing fora in the Schools of Biological Sciences and Environmental Sciences have also being rejuvenated.

Diversity and Equality

Progress against Principle 6 has included the development of the central Equality and Diversity webpages (<http://www.uea.ac.uk/equality/Equality+and+Diversity>) to provide a comprehensive resource for all members of the staff and student populations at UEA. These resources include an online equality and diversity training module that was introduced in 2013 and is mandatory for all members of University Staff. So far 48% of staff have completed the module and the University aims for 100% to have completed by the end of 2014. Individual schools of study, particularly those working on the Athena Swan Charter, are developing their own Equality and Diversity webpages with a focus on initiatives that are available centrally and locally within each school. To date, webpages have been launched in the Schools of Biological Sciences, Pharmacy and Medicine. The University also runs an Equality and Diversity Awareness course, together with other related training through the Centre for Staff and Educational Development. The newly launched 'Understanding Unconscious Bias' course is being rolled out to Athena SWAN Schools, senior management groups and Chairs of Key Committees in 2014-15. Initial feedback has been very positive.

UEA has demonstrated a significant commitment to the Athena SWAN charter, with 200 staff across academic roles now actively engaged in Athena SWAN. Since the University received its bronze award in April 2012, all Schools in the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Health and Medicine are engaged in preparing submissions at either Bronze or Silver level, demonstrating that UEA is often in line or ahead of the sector. The Schools of Biological Sciences, Pharmacy and the Norwich Medical School achieved bronze awards in 2013, and the Schools of Environmental Sciences and Nursing and Rehabilitation Sciences submitted bronze applications in April 2014.

3. 'Next steps' and the focus of future strategy for 2014-16

We have developed an updated action plan (see appendix) that details the focus of our strategy for the next 2 years. This incorporates continuing action from the original plan and further actions that build on our progress to date. A brief summary of priorities is provided here.

Recognition and value

CROS 2013 data and additional feedback from the RS focus groups led by the SDO-RS in the spring of 2014 identified a need to improve the ways in which we communicate with research staff about University policies, as well as rights and responsibilities more generally. The Universities HR webpages for Researchers (<https://www.uea.ac.uk/hr/employee-information/research>) have recently been updated to include a central location for all policy documentation specific to research staff. Once approved, the revised 'University Code for Research Staff' will be added, along with the 'Code of Practice for the Management of Research Staff'. New members of research staff are referred to the HR webpages as part of their induction. RSCs will be increasingly used to aid transparency of communication regarding policies and research staff rights.

UEA respondents to CROS 2013 were significantly less likely than the sector average to report that they felt UEA both values and recognises the contributions they make in supervising staff and students, and for their contributions to publications. The University will review practice with regard to authorship of publications and consider ways to help research staff feel valued for non-research related activities, including establishing an 'Excellent Researcher Awards' scheme (proposed in the 2012-14 action plan 2.1.9), and ensuring profiles of Research Staff are visible on School websites. Recognition for contributions by research staff to the University can also be considered more broadly under the Annual Review process (as for other staff) by way of ex gratia payments and special / discretionary increments via Schools' Promotion Committees.

Support and Career Development

HR will work closely with Heads of Schools to monitor the appraisal process. Information from Heads of School is logged on the HR system. Additional confirmation of improved rates of appraisal completion will be obtained through participation in CROS 2015 or similar internal staff survey. Of the UEA respondents in 2013 who had participated in appraisal only 33.6% rated the appraisal scheme as useful in helping them to focus on career aspirations and how they are met by the role, and only 25.2% rated appraisal as useful in leading to training or Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Appraisal training for appraisees and appraisers delivered by CSED will explicitly refer to the new guidelines for the Appraisal of Researchers, highlighting the importance of discussing wider personal development and career goals beyond the role. CareerCentral will provide support alongside the managers of research staff to enable researchers to develop a clear Career Development Plan. In 2013 less than 50% of respondents had a clear plan or maintained a formal record of their CPD. UEA will monitor through CROS the proportion of research staff reporting to have a Career Development Plan.

CROS 2013 findings highlight that research staff across the sector feel they would benefit from increased opportunities for training on a range of topics. Following the research staff focus groups led by the SDO-RS, CSED and Careers are developing additional training provision bespoke to the needs of researchers. New provision in the 2014-15 CSED programme includes a complete new series of 'Computing for Researchers' workshops, courses on Open Access, Research Integrity and an Introduction to Fellowships. The University will consider a minimum recommendation for the time research staff should spend on training and development activities per annum. CROS 2013 indicated 53% of respondents had spent 2 days or less on training or other CPD in the preceding 12 months, with 22.8% undertaking no training and development. The appraisal process could be used to ensure minimum levels are met, but there should be flexibility with regard how training is accrued.

Equality and Diversity

UEA is working towards its submission for the Silver Athena SWAN award in November 2015, with a further three academic Schools aiming for Silver in November 2014. An additional five academic Schools are working towards the bronze award in April 2015. The University is also keen to support the new Gender Equality Charter Mark for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences following the conclusion of the trial study by the Equality Challenge Unit in autumn 2014.

Implementation and Review

Progress will continue to be monitored through the RSWG under the strategic direction of the incoming PVC-REE. UEA intends to participate in CROS 2015 or a similar internal staff survey to help inform the monitoring process.