

Foreword

Investing in the development of researchers at the University of Liverpool remains a priority for the university within the new strategic plan that is being developed under the leadership of a new Vice Chancellor. An extensive strategic review consultation is in progress (as of Sept 2015) and research staff are actively participating in this process. The university recognises and values the contributions made by research staff to its research environment and appropriate processes will continue to be developed to enhance the careers of our researchers.

1. Introduction

Following the submission in September 2013 of the two year review of the implementation of the Concordat to support the career development of researchers at the University of Liverpool, this reports presents the progress made against that review. In addition, it discusses the future priorities and actions to be taken relating to the university's research staff development agenda. The University of Liverpool continues with its commitment to support and develop research staff across its faculties. Earlier in 2015, the university subscribed to the new Vitae membership model and university staff responsible for developing researchers continue to engage with Vitae in various regional and national initiatives and working groups.

2. Internal evaluation process

The internal evaluation process was coordinated by the university's Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) which is chaired by a Senior Academic. CIG was formed following the 2011 initial submission for the HR Excellence in Research Award. Since then, a core group of four staff have met on a monthly basis to review and plan towards the implementation of the 2008 Concordat. A wider CIG group comprising representation from a range of academic, research and professional services staff meets three times per year to discuss developments and review progress made against each review cycle. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact is kept up-to-date of progress made through reports submitted by CIG to the university's Research and Impact Committee. Where appropriate, members of the core group liaise with other parts of the university (for example, the Careers and Employability Services; Computing Services Department; Research Support Office). This process allows for ongoing communication mechanisms to be established and engage with strategic developments in the research environment of the university. The four year review has been informed by the 2013 and 2015 CROS and PIRLS surveys; the 2013 and 2015 research staff conference and input from representatives of research staff associations from schools and research institutes. The Head of the Research Policy Division has attended the extended CIG meetings and provided strategic direction to inform the review of this process. Due to the development of the new Strategic Plan at the university, the PVC for Research and Impact is in the process of reviewing the reporting structures across all committees and working groups to ensure effective communication channels are in place. The PVC has expressed confidence in CIG in championing the research staff agenda since 2011 and the expectation is that the work done over the past four years will continue to take place through a more effective alignment to the priorities set in the new Strategic Plan.

3. Achievements and progress against two-year review

3.1 Recruitment and Selection

The university has responded to the plan drafted during the 2013 review for this principle of the Concordat. Many of these actions are now embedded into university systems and it is our aim to continue reviewing and developing effective practice in relation to university processes on recruitment and selection. We are also monitoring developments in the UK and European Higher Education Sector in relation to demonstrating compliance to the Charter & Code for the recruitment of researchers and forthcoming processes for the *Human Resources Strategy for Researchers* ([HRS4R](#)). Along those lines, it is important to note that at the university the training and support for job interviewers has been developed in order to maintain appropriate recruitment standards and expectations. A dedicated 'Recruitment' page on the [HR intranet](#) provides advice and guidance on the job advertising and recruitment process, including the preparation of job descriptions and person specifications. Further advice on shortlisting and interviewing techniques is also available, including face to face and online training supporting the recruitment process. In addition, following the recruitment of a new member of staff, new support resources in the form of how-to-guides on induction is available through a new website, developed by Human Resources, which is dedicated for researchers. This online Hub presents a wealth of information targeting postgraduate researchers, research staff and Supervisors/Principal Investigators. [The Researcher Hub](#) has been in place since 2014 as a result of the commitment we presented in our 2013 review plan. The website provides information relevant to researchers from the university and the rest of the sector and we aim to continue developing the resource whilst at the same time monitoring its effectiveness and the clarity of information it provides. It is our aim for the next academic period (2015/2016) to revisit the structure of the website in order to make it a 'one-stop-shop' for information relating to recruitment, selection and development of researchers at the different phases of their careers.

Moreover, as part of the different levels of induction available to research staff, an institutional level Welcome Event takes place four times a year and introduces new researchers to the university's Obligatory Training Framework ([HR intranet](#)) with role specific training to assure legal compliance and institutional expectations. This training includes online modules on 'Diversity and Equality'; 'Information Security'; 'Health and Safety in the workplace'; 'Data Protection Act'. In addition, newly appointed research staff have the opportunity to find out about the [researcher development programme](#) available to them as part of their professional development. Earlier in 2015, the university developed a Research Data Management policy and [website](#). This information will soon be incorporated to the e-induction material already in place. Brief overview videos for researchers from each faculty have already been developed and are available through the [website](#). Finally, the university has launched a framework to support and promote research impact. Research staff will engage with the framework as part of their professional development and faculties are developing appropriate support mechanisms and training.

In relation to contractual arrangements, the university recognises all staff that have accrued four years' service as the result of two or more fixed term contracts as being permanent and continues to be successful in offering redeployment options to researchers by allowing individuals to identify suitable alternative roles and to secure preferential interviews. To allow alternative opportunities to be explored, individuals and their PIs/Heads of Department are contacted by HR eight months before their contractual expiry dates to ensure that meaningful consultation takes place and researchers are aware of their possible options should their project or activity end.

3.2 Recognition and Value

Significant efforts have been made in this area to raise awareness and harness views and comments from research staff. The 2015 CROS survey participation increased significantly since 2013 (2015: 21%; 2013: 13%) and this allowed for the gathering of reliable data for analysis of research staff opinions. The focus of this analysis has been on the effectiveness of the Professional Development Review (PDR) in order to achieve a meaningful and supportive professional development opportunity. A new online version of the PDR was made available to all staff in 2012. Based on CROS results (2011, 13 and 15) it is clear that the participation of research staff in annual PDRs has increased steadily. From 2016, the university will strengthen the process of PDR to ensure development reviews are scheduled for all staff, including all researchers, with a view in achieving the highest possible completion rates. The effectiveness and quality of the PDR discussion remains a priority and formalised development sessions for PIs will be scheduled in 2016 which will set out more transparently the mutual expectations of researchers and their supervisors and will include coaching on how to conduct a mutually satisfactory PDR and how to recognise progression beyond the original scope of a research role. Researchers will continue to maintain Liverpool's online 'Portfolio of Activity' which is a repository of all past and current academic activity which informs PDR discussions and underpins any cases made for regrading. The university will seek to streamline the Portfolio with a new research information management system which will begin to be implemented in the second part of 2016.

Furthermore, the latest CROS survey (2015) showed that efforts made to engage research staff in meaningful PDRs have made a difference. The overall usefulness of the PDR as seen by research staff has increased (CROS 2015: 53%; 2013: 35%); the PDR seen as a tool for highlighting issues has gone up (2015: 61%; 2013: 53%); using the PDR process to identify strengths and achievements increased (2015: 58%; 2013: 49%); There is also a recognition, that by having a PDR this leads to further training or other CPD (2015: 44%; 2013: 33%). Finally, the PDR as a tool for reviewing personal progress continues to grow (2015: 66%; 2013: 46%). A similar picture is seen by PI responses in PIRLS (2015).

Since the 2013 review, we have seen a strong increase in research staff representation. Currently, there are in place six research staff associations across faculties. This represents a prospective representation cover of 88% of the total research staff population at the university. All research staff associations are members of CIG and contribute to the research staff development agenda at the university. Furthermore, in addition to the central [research staff conference](#) which has been running annually since 2009, in the last year each research staff association has organised good practice events where participants explore research and career development topics with academic, industry and other employment sectors (including HE non-research services). A comment from one recent participant reflects the value of attending such activities: *"I really liked having the opportunity meeting my colleagues in our forum and talking about our development instead of our research work only"*. In total eight events of this type have taken place in the last 18 months and more are scheduled for 2016. CIG has invested significant effort and resources to get this process off the ground and since 2013 this area has been a key mechanism to allow research staff to represent themselves in relevant institutional formal networks and committees.

Finally, since 2012 the university has an '[Achieving Excellence](#)' recognition scheme for its staff with one category for an 'Outstanding Early Career Researcher'. This award values the contribution made by an early career researcher in relation to their scholarly work, scientific output and citizenship. Further, there are other award categories to which researchers can be nominated either as individuals or as a team.

3.3 Support and Career Development

Based on the 2015 CROS results, more research staff say they are encouraged to engage in personal and career development (2015: 70.2%; 2013: 69.4%; 2011: 65.3%). In addition, the implementation of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) has continued to take place and in the revised PDR process, the RDF resources will be mapped onto the review forms used by PDR reviewers and reviewees (from February 2016). The bimonthly lunchtime training events for introducing research staff to the RDF continue to take place and attendance has increased steadily (2012: 46; 2013: 52; 2014: 68). The interactive nature of this workshop and the opportunity to put into practice the framework in small groups appears to provide a useful applied mechanism for learning to use the framework for personal benefit. The efforts to introduce PIs to the RDF continue to be challenging however, a new development in this area will be the inclusion of the RDF to a revised PI training and coaching programme (from September 2016).

The faculty of Health and Life Sciences rolled out in 2011 a tenured-track fellowship scheme to support early career researchers to achieve tenured academic posts. The [structured plan](#) for these fellowships allows candidates to develop their research practice and be better equipped to compete in a demanding environment. The fellowships continue to attract high calibre researchers and the faculty of Science and Engineering is ready to launch a similar scheme. Funding support and managed teaching/administration workload allow Fellows to develop their research portfolio. A significant number of current Fellows have completed the Teaching for Researchers (TR) course (available to research staff and leading to Associate Fellowship with the Higher Education Academy) hence gaining credit towards the academic staff teaching programme they need to complete during probation. In relation to the impact of the TR course to all research staff, since 2010, +120 research staff have gained professional recognition by completing the course. Research staff continue to value this development opportunity; one recent course graduate said: *"This has already proved to be an excellent programme to talk about at interview and has been praised by interviewers. Already proved its worth"*. An evaluation project on the impact of this training course is currently in progress and findings will be reported in internal and external staff development networks and academic journals (IJRD) by spring 2016.

Another major initiative taking place at the university that relates to early career researchers is towards increasing awareness of funding opportunities with the European Research Council. The university aims to increase its funding success with ERC and it has implemented a long term strategy to support applicants at all levels of schemes available. This includes building capacity and expertise through mentoring networks and named points of reference. Series of good practice events have been developed and form a key part of this support process.

The [Research Staff conference](#) continues to provide a forum for raising and debating issues pertinent to the research environment at the institution. This year, a round table discussions format was adapted encouraging extensive discussions on a variety of topics to take place. A participant reflected on the event by saying: *"I liked the variety of sessions and it was good to be able to choose which we wanted to attend. The summary of each session was also very useful, to get the gist of what happened at the sessions we didn't attend"*. Key outcomes from this event included the impact of the PDR to the development of researchers and careers beyond academia. Both areas will be scrutinised by CIG over the next two years. The topic on careers continues to be a priority for CIG and there is commitment to discuss it further as part of the developing strategic priorities of the university. Another conference participant summarised the need for further career support as follows: *"Please continue to invite people who are now working in industry or other sectors; I find really useful their comments in helping me review different options that may be available to me after my postdoc work"*.

Finally, a new information management process has been established in collaboration with the university's Research Support Office that allows the central research staff development team to identify newly successful research Fellows and grant holders. This process allows for the development of training events led by the successful applicants to discuss the application and interview process they were part of. This process aims to nurture future successful applications to prestigious fellowships and other grant schemes. This arrangement is supported by bimonthly 'funding search' workshops for identifying research funds in UK, Europe and beyond.

3.4 Equality and Diversity

The university continues to invest in its structures to ensure equality and diversity as part of its commitment towards staff in relation to career development and progression. According to CROS 2015, 87.7% of research staff believe the university is committed to E&D (2013: 80.7%; 2011: 75%). As of November 2013, the university has achieved the Athena SWAN Bronze award. From 2013 till 2014, three research institutes achieved Silver awards. Moreover, from 2013 to 2015, six schools and research institutes have been successful in receiving Bronze awards. As of April 2015, the Athena Swan charter mark and award has been extended to include professional services staff and academic/research staff in the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. It is the aim of the university to apply for an institutional Silver award in November 2016. First renewals for school/research institute level awards will start from April 2016. Awareness amongst staff on the Athena SWAN Charter has increased significantly as shown in the latest CROS results (2015: 61.4%; 2013: 41.2%). Additionally, research staff associations have organised events to promote activities for female research staff. Similarly, Human Resources have organised a range of [workings groups and networks](#) in order to promote E&D initiatives as well as mentoring support and mentor matching. One such network is for [Female Early Career Researchers](#) (FECRN) which is a forum for academic and research staff to share and discuss

issues affecting them in the workplace. Series of events have been organised by this network looking into CV development and career structure. The university's E&D team maintain information on their [website](#) for staff who are parents or have caring responsibilities. A detailed guidance page provides information for line managers and staff on key policies, action plans and training available (face to face or online). A 'news and events' page with relevant contacts available, allows for these arrangements to be accessed by staff at the university.

4. Implementation and Review

The university has firmly participated in all CROS and PIRLS surveys since the beginning of this review process (2011). Discussions on the findings of both surveys have been held at CIG and summary of findings have been shared with relevant university committees and representatives of research staff associations for dissemination to their networks. Furthermore, the annual research staff conference continues to provide a forum where topics raised from surveys and the review of the research staff development programme can be discussed and develop action plans in order to continue to promote and develop appropriate and relevant initiatives for researchers.

As mentioned earlier, the current drafting of the university's strategic plan provides the opportunity to review existing implementation processes at the university. The role of CIG will also be reviewed however, the support of research staff remains a key university ambition. The same applies to the process of reviewing this award and relevant announcements of future structures will be made available on the university's website.

5. Future plans and success measures

Investing in the development of researchers is a top priority for the university. Whilst challenges exist, efforts are being made for appropriate information and resources to be easily accessible and transparent. Research staff play a critical role in the university's research environment and engaging them in the university's research and wider priorities is highly important. As part of the current strategic review process, research staff will be actively consulted through focus groups, events and wider consultation processes. CIG, over the past four years has played an important role in this process. The analysis of the CROS and PIRLS surveys and the development of a forum for representatives of research staff to highlight practice as it happens locally, has allowed CIG to make informed decisions about the way researchers are being supported centrally. This work is mirrored now in schools and research institutes. Research staff engagement with training or other CPD activity continues to grow (CROS 2015: 82.6%; 2013: 72%). The implementation of the RDF and the range of development events offered have allowed research staff to come closer as a community of practitioners within the university and recognise the priorities of the university in research, the student experience and society. Over the next two years, in anticipation of the next strategic plan, it is our intention to engage with the following areas of activity:

- Maintain and where appropriate support the representation of researchers in decision making university forums. An offshoot of this process will be to capture and share good practice on research staff initiatives as they happen in schools and research institutes of the university
- Whilst most research staff continue to consider a career in academia as the most obvious employment destination (CROS 2015), it is our aim to support them in doing so; however we wish to work systematically towards raising awareness about career alternatives that can be identified through mentorship, external partnerships and professional development initiatives
- Mentoring as mentioned above is an area that has grown significantly through central and local initiatives. We wish to continue to improve in this area for mentoring structures to be available to nurture academic and non-academic career ambitions of our research staff
- Development initiatives and events will be reviewed and researched in depth in order to highlight areas that require further attention or identify gaps in our current provision
- Tenure-track fellowships and success in prestigious fellowship schemes will continue to be important and we are maintaining our current support levels for giving existing researchers the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of research capability

For our success measures, we wish to continue seeing improvement within the institution and through our benchmarking efforts with the rest of the sector in our CROS and PIRLS data. Specifically to the data collected from the two surveys, we wish to see further improvements in all areas shown under the 'recognition and value' section and in the 'support and career development' options which are available for PIs and research staff. An evaluation project on the impact of the TR course will give us information on how researchers use this development opportunity to progress with their careers. We also wish to evaluate the new PI development programme in managing researchers and supporting their development. As part of this work, we wish to measure any benefits evidenced as a result of the PI development programme in the annual PDRs for research staff. Further success in attracting holders of prestigious fellowships is another area we wish to maintain and where possible develop further. In terms of the Athena Swan awards, we wish to monitor the number of new successful applications been made as well as the successful renewal of current holders of the award.