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

INTRODUCTION: This report focuses on progress made against our Concordat action plan in the last two years, since our 2012 report. It will also outline next steps and future focus for actions in the next two years. Over the last year we have increased resources directed to research staff with our part-time officer role becoming full-time and University of Bristol's (UoB) involvement in the GW4 alliance bringing dedicated GW4 staff into Academic Staff Development (ASD) at UoB, focused on developing staff involved in research and increasing collaborative development initiatives across the four institutions. Lastly, we have become institutional members of Vitae recently.

PROCESS: Our Concordat Implementation Group oversees the implementation of the action plan and our internal assessment processes. Our internal assessment process has included consultation with key stakeholders such as our Research Staff reps committee and Working Party and has drawn 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 research staff website.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE ACTION PLAN SINCE THE TWO-YEAR REPORT: One key action mentioned against several of the clauses of our action plan was the development of an Academic Development framework linked to our Academic Role Profiles. In October 2014, we launched new Academic Staff Development webpages which further developed the links to our Academic Career pathways. All our training and development provision for academic staff is categorised not only into themes but also by pathway (research focused being pathway 2). All pathway 2 sessions for early-career researchers are also mapped to the UK Researcher Development Framework (RDF) domains.

Over the last year we have also further expanded the remit of ASD (with additional team members recruited) to incorporate learning and teaching (L&T) development which has enabled us to develop and launch a brand new Continuing Professional Development scheme (with targeted routes for staff on each of the 3 pathways, including research staff on pathway 2) accredited by the Higher Education Academy and linked to the UK Professional Standards Framework for the core L&T content. The CREATE (Cultivating Research and Teaching Excellence) scheme covers the whole academic role, incorporating a "Research" strand and a "Leadership and Professional skills" strand. The emphasis on Leadership in particular within a scheme which is mandatory early career lecturers is intended to equip our research team leaders with the skills to provide a productive and supportive working environment for early-career researchers. Participants will gain a portable HEA qualification upon completion which will be valuable to research staff who establish longer-term academic careers. Due to all these developments, the review of the research staff website has been delayed but is now in progress and we have already gained the input of the RS Reps with an aim to re-launch this in 2015.

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

A: Recruitment and Selection

- A review of our fixed-term contract ordinance which will lead to the substantial extension of the use of open-ended contracts for research staff once this has been approved by Council in February 2015.
- Ongoing consultation with Research staff reps around the appropriate use of role profiles and research staff grades which has led to a current review of the role profiles and role titles with a view to updating them to ensure relevance, clarity and consistency in their use.

B: Recognition and Value

- Continued high levels of engagement with our training programme for research staff (action against clause 1.2). In the 2012 Staff Survey 74% of research staff respondents agreed with the statement "*I feel that access to training and development opportunities is fair*" (9% higher than the University average). 70% of research staff said that the available development opportunities at UoB were good or very good,

again above the staff average. In the 2013 CROS survey, 76% of respondents agreed that they are "*encouraged to engage in career and personal development"* and 72% of respondents had attended some form of training event/CPD activity in the past 12 months. 98% of respondents who left comments on UoB training courses that they had attended in the past 12 months used the words "*useful*" or "*very useful*" to describe training that they had attended.

- Significant investment in developing training programmes around leadership and management for academic staff (action against clause 2.3) which receive excellent engagement and feedback. For details and numbers attended, see Table 2 in the Appendix. As these have been running since 2008, in 2014/15 we are reviewing them all to ensure they are up to date and that the suite of programmes as a whole is well integrated and covers the right things at each career stage. 88% of research staff survey respondents in the whole staff survey felt that their line manager "*values [their] contribution*".
- Improving the Staff Review process for research staff was a major action at the two-year review point and we have made significant progress since then. Our Performance Enhancement project is well underway (action against clause 2.3) and has involved consultation with research staff. Staff Review and Development (our appraisal process, SR&D) is now mandatory for all staff and we have launched our new online system, MyReview, which will enable us to monitor engagement with the process centrally. This should dramatically improve the situation for research staff as only 62% of research staff respondents in the 2012 staff survey had been offered the opportunity to take part in the SR&D process over the previous 18 months. However in the 2013 CROS survey, 72% of those who had gone through it felt that it had been useful overall, an increase from the CROS 2011 results, where only 59% found it useful (60% said they had engaged with Staff Review).
- Mandatory training introduced for all reviewers. The training session for those reviewing only research staff has been tailored specifically to this group and includes a number of case studies developed with relevant issues in mind such as equality and diversity, part-time working and careers outside academia. It also incorporates a video (interviews with research staff) produced specifically to highlight the issues around SR&D for pathway 2 reviewees and reviewers. Reviewers also receive, as part of the training, information about other support and development opportunities available to their research staff.

C: Support and Career Development

- Research staff mentoring circles scheme reviewed and enhanced, setting up structured inductions for mentors and mentees to ensure shared expectations and approach to sessions.
- Improvement in the range of CPD opportunities offered through Academic Staff Development, engaging both researchers themselves and also their managers (clause 3.9). As mentioned, Academic Staff Development's new webpages have a section dedicated to early career research staff with all courses mapped to the RDF. Updated training attendance data can be found on our research staff website.
- Review of the Teaching and Learning programme now complete and under the remit of Academic Staff Development with significant developments undergone since, as mentioned (action against clause 3.11).
- New approach to SR&D for research staff provides an opportunity for research staff and their reviewers to 'step back' from the day job and to take time out to discuss career development and support.
- Significant improvement was needed in providing effective induction programmes for researchers and was highlighted as an important action within our two-year review report. We had a low level of attendance of researchers at the central induction and feedback from RS Reps is that local induction is inconsistent. We had an action (clause 3.6) to test the effectiveness of local induction via the whole staff survey. In the 2012 staff survey only 35% of research staff respondents who had started in the previous 6 months reported that they had been *"supported by a local induction process".*
- We have since developed online induction videos and a new Welcome lunch which is shorter and more focused so more people are attending. Research staff are invited to this and Academic Staff

Development attends with information about the support we offer. We are also in the process of developing some induction videos tailored to research staff and we hope to launch a new Academic Induction day next year which will include a tailored section for research staff. In addition we are using the RS reps network to support induction by sending reps the names of all new research staff in their School each month so that they can welcome them and answer any questions.

E: Diversity and Equality

- The Academic Career Equalities Working Group (ACEWG), established in May 2013, supports the University's commitment to equality in the career development, progression and retention of all academic staff. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor chairs the Group and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) is a member, demonstrating a collaborative research- and education-led approach. Each Dean nominated two members of academic staff as members, with membership being completed by representatives from HR Services. The Group is initially focussing on gender equality as the results of monitoring in this area show that female academic colleagues' progress less effectively than their male counterparts. The Group's priorities include: exploring what can be done to support female colleagues at key transition points in their careers; identifying how matters might be improved through our recruitment policy and practice, our staff development activity and Staff Review process; and sharing and embedding best practice emerging from our involvement with external initiatives such as the Athena SWAN Charter.
- Successful renewal of University's Bronze Athena SWAN award in 2013. In addition, 7 Schools have awards (3 silver, 4 bronze) and the other 6 STEM Schools are applying for awards in November 2014.
- A new full-time member of the Equality and Diversity team recruited in 2013 which has led to greater support for Schools with Athena SWAN-related initiatives and applications as well as to the launch of a number of central initiatives such as a University SWAN network to share practice, an Athena SWAN newsletter, an annual "Libra" lecture and events for Ada Lovelace day.
- The University has recently become a member of Stonewall and has formed an LGBT+ Staff forum.
- Monitoring has shown that gender representation is roughly equal in research roles at the University but with more women in Research Associate and Research Fellow roles. Over the last few years there has been an increase in female representation at some more senior levels of research roles such as Reader. Associated data can be found on our research staff website.
- 74.3% of CROS survey respondents agreed that staff are treated fairly irrespective of gender. 86.7% of respondents believed that the University is committed to equality and diversity. Only 69.4% were satisfied with their work-life balance.
- Development and launch of a new Acceptable Behaviours policy to replace the previous Bullying and Harassment policy. Two of our RS Reps act as voluntary Acceptable Workplace Behaviour advisers, a useful resource for researchers who are experiencing issues in the workplace.
- The Diversity Team has continued to develop the Work and Family initiative which brings together information and support for parents and colleagues with other caring responsibilities. It also provides information for managers on relevant policy and issues such as managing flexibility in teams. Over the last year, several events were held for the Working Parents' Network and Carers' Network that covered issues such as dealing with the guilt associated with being a working parent, managing the stresses of being a carer and the support services that are available for carers locally.
- The Maternity Connections Scheme, launched in 2014, enables staff to directly contact volunteer female staff members with experience of pregnancy at work, maternity leave and life as a working parent for support and advice.
- Job descriptions for Heads of School were revised to mandate explicit responsibility for delivery of equality and diversity and staff review policies.

- Individual Circumstances Group established to support the UoB Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission. A Code of Practice was developed to outline a procedural framework for the development of the UoB REF2014 submission ensuring that it met its equal opportunities legislation obligations.

F: Implementation and Review

- CROS survey carried out in 2011, all staff survey run in 2012 and CROS survey and PIRLS survey run in 2013. The CROS reports and action plan can be seen by all on the research staff website. We also request feedback from researchers, including the RS Reps, on a regular basis.
- We have run the SouthWest Crucible collaborative initiative with the universities of Bath and West of England for a second year, drawing on our combined expertise in developing researchers and encouraging collaborative research between the 3 universities. We are also opening up some of our courses to researchers at other local universities and are becoming increasingly involved in other collaborative ventures such as GW4 and RENKEI, the latter involving a highly ambitious and successful researcher development school hosted by UoB and Kyoto University in 2013.

FUTURE STRATEGY AND NEXT STEPS: We have developed a new action plan looking ahead two years and we will continue to review and update this in line with current University priorities and strategies, using the RSWP and Reps committee for consultation in addition to CROS and our all staff survey. The main areas for development are as follows:

- Continue to improve induction for research staff by working with RS reps on local processes and by designing and delivering a new Academic Induction day with a research staff specific session. Redesign the Research Staff Website to make information more accessible to research staff who are new to UoB, including the development of induction videos specifically targeted at research staff.
- Continue the roll-out of SR&D reviewer training and gather feedback from reviewers and research staff on the overall impact and value of this initiative.
- Review and re-launch leadership development provision with updated content, less overlap and a clear structure allowing academics to choose the appropriate programme for their career stage as well as allowing progression through the programmes.
- Continue to support Athena SWAN-related activity and, when it is introduced the new Gender Charter Mark, activity in Schools and develop provision at a central level.
- Continue to develop our CREATE scheme, including piloting a HEA-accredited route for research staff.
- Develop a policy for research staff who teach, to ensure clarity, transparency and fairness, and roll-out associated training piloted in 2014.
- Complete the review of the Academic Role Profiles and implement changes.
- Implement and embed effectively the new fixed-term contract policy.
- Investigate ways to expand our provision for research staff who are interested in careers outside academia by using previous staff members who have left to pursue new careers.
- Explore and exploit fully the opportunities that the GW4 alliance creates for research staff development.

SUCCESS MEASURES: As well as measuring achievement of Action Plan items, we will also use the following success measures:

- Evidence of improvement in CROS data as compared to previous years.
- Evidence from the biennial all staff survey (next survey 2015).
- Numbers of reviewers trained in SR&D process, numbers engaging in the process and feedback received.
- Take-up of and feedback on training and development opportunities (including CREATE).
- Achievement of Athena SWAN awards.
- People strategy action plan implementation.