



# HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH: Two Year Review

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May 2018



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## HR Excellence in Research Two Year Review – May 2018

### UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

#### Introduction and Background

In 2015, the University of the West of Scotland established a Concordat Implementation Steering Group to conduct a gap analysis and develop the 2016-2018 Action Plan against the Concordat Principles. The University received the HR Excellence Award in July 2016. In early 2018, a full review of progress has been undertaken and UWS have updated the action plan. The updated action plan and new action plan for 2018-20 is available on the Researcher Development section of the UWS website.

#### Process of Self Audit:

The self-audit process has been led by the Concordat Implementation Steering Group led by the Vice Principal (Academic), who is also a member of the university executive. The views of research staff gathered in CROS 2015 and CROS 2017 have been taken into account. In addition, a number of group consultations were carried out with research staff, principal investigators and research leaders to gain a deeper understanding of this feedback. There has been significant progress (some of which is detailed below and further in the Action plan 2018-2020. Concordat Steering group meeting which includes school and research staff members plus meetings to establish and Early Career Forum also provided an opportunity to consult with researchers on delivery of the 2016-2018 action plan.

During academic year 2017-18 a transformation project is establishing a function called Academic Life encompassing Research, Doctoral College, Enterprise, QuEST, UWS Academy, and Education Futures. UWS Academy will enhance current provision for PGR student development, the research skills of all research staff and academic staff. The development of Academic life means that the Action plan 2018-2020 will be a live document and may also have actions added to it.

#### Key Achievements and progress against the original action plan

##### Principles 1 & 2: Recruitment and selection, Recognition and value

- The contractual status of research staff as professional services staff has been reviewed and all research staff have been transferred to academic contracts.
- We have reviewed our recruitment and selection policy, procedures and practices with the needs of our researcher community in mind. We are supporting line managers in the recruitment and selection process to ensure that they attract and retain the best person for the role, by providing access to training and guidelines.
- The University undertook an extensive review of our performance and development review process, during which, the specific needs of researchers was taken into consideration through feedback on CROS/PIRLS and focus groups. As a result, My Contribution was launched in 2017 and researchers undertake an annual cycle of individual staff review/appraisal meetings with their line-manager. Briefing sessions for research staff and their line managers were delivered in 2017 as the new UWS process My Contribution launched. Data from CROS. CROS 2015 reported that only 42% of research staff had a development plan and by CROS 2017 this figure had risen to 69%.
- Research staff who are coming to the end of a fixed term contract have access to improved support and information on obtaining a new role.

##### Principle 3 & 4: Support and Career Development

- An induction specifically for researchers has been developed and runs twice per year. In addition, there are web pages and intranet pages to support those joining the university. CROS 2017 results indicate that local induction is effective (77% agree) and university/school induction still needs to improve.
- The UWS Mentoring network for researchers was launched as a pilot in 2016. This involved the creation of an intranet space where mentors can be matched with mentees, training for mentors and mentees. A trial of Group Mentoring for staff working on research applications is a main pillar of the Grant Accelerator. A mentoring guide and dedicated resources are available on the staff intranet. 72 staff registered to be research mentoring mentors or mentees. Over 55% of the 44 registered mentees have since submitted a grant application and 31% received a grant.

A number of innovative research development programme initiatives were launched:

- **Research Team Leaders:** A highly focused programme with learning outcomes linked to the application of leadership and management skills including workshops, 360-degree feedback and action learning sets. Participants have created action plans for implementing their learning and are working individually and in groups on projects.
- **UWS Crucible:** Based on Scottish Crucible, this programme is all about helping researchers to see the bigger picture. It aims to help researchers think differently and send participants back to their work inspired. Twelve interdisciplinary research projects pitched by UWS Crucible participants have been given seed funding and participants have been active in setting up the Early Career Researcher Forum.
- **Grant Accelerator:** Aimed at research staff and early-mid career researchers, the Grant Accelerator has been designed to maximise the chance of grant success. Our programme offers a matrix of main sessions, bite size options and mentoring support to help equip researchers with the skills needed to confidently research and apply for funding. This programme model will expose participants to a wide range of ideas and the value lies in participant ability to apply these to improve performance and work more effectively towards winning more and larger grant applications. As part of the Grant Accelerator, participants will commit to identifying at least one funding call and develop a research funding application for submission in the academic year.
- To increase the voice of researchers and to increase their representation and involvement we have supported a team of researchers to launch an Early Career Research Forum and Network in 2018 providing seed funding for events, seminars and networking.
- In addition to accessing the researcher development programme, research staff can book a career session with a professional advisor.

#### Principle 5: Researchers' Aware of Their Responsibilities

- 77% of research staff reported in CROS 2017 that they are encouraged to engage in personal and career development and maintain a formal record of their professional development activities.
- Research and Impact Development receive updates on current research staff from our HR system iRent. This ensures that we can target opportunities directly at this group and they are included in all emails to list for academic staff and be reminded of the career services support six months in advance of the end to their fixed term contract.
- The research development programme and other opportunities including the Early Career Researcher Forum are built into the induction programme.
- In May 2018, a newsletter from the Vice Principal (Academic) will be sent to all research staff and their line managers emphasising researcher responsibilities and signposting to research development opportunities and the Early Career Researcher Forum.

#### Principle 6: Diversity & Equality

- All Staff have been invited to undertake an on-line equality and diversity course. Of the CROS 2017 participants, 92.3% agree that UWS is committed to equality and diversity.
- The Athena SWAN bronze award was gained by the University in April 2016. Other submissions are currently being prepared.

#### Principle 7: Implementation & Review

- The Concordat Implementation group is in place and meets 2 time a year to review progress and actions. It is a sub-group of the UWS Research and Enterprise Advisory Committee, reporting on activities and raising issues to be addressed by schools and professional services departments.

#### **Next steps and focus of the strategy for the next two years 2018 -2020:**

The UWS Action plan will be published on 31 May 2018 on the UWS website under Researcher Development.

The updated plan includes some continuing actions from the previous action plan with a reporting line to the Concordat Implementation Steering Group.

- Going forward UWS we plan to continue to develop an ambitious researcher development programme which provided opportunities for early and mid-career researchers to
- Opportunities for Research Staff to access effective mentoring will be increased.
- Improved support for research development through UWS Academy, recruitment of a 1FTE academic research developer and active partnership development across the teams within Academic Life.
- Within the context of My Contribution, the PDR Process at
- Continue to support the Early Career Researcher Forum to enable
- Preparation and submission of Bronze Athena SWAN awards at academic department level by 2019/2020.

#### **Broad Success Indicators**

Our success will be measured in terms of timely achievement of the of the action plan. UWS success measure include the following:

- Evidence of participation in and improved results from CROS and PIRLs results when compared with previous years.
- Retention of the institutional Athena Swan bronze and gaining departmental Athena SWAN awards
- Evidence of impact and outcomes from participation in the leadership and development programmes forming the research development programme.
- Increased uptake and evaluation of the impact of the Research Induction and My Contribution by research staff.
- Evidence from CROS that research staff feel more integrated and have opportunities to participate in decision making processes.

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