

HR Excellence in Research

Gap Analysis and Action Plan

Supporting statement

Oxford Brookes University has recently undergone a major restructuring which has resulted in the creation of four Faculties: Business, Health and Life Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Technology, Design and Environment. The new structures were launched at the beginning of the 2011-12 academic year and this is therefore an appropriate point at which to carry out our Gap Analysis and develop an Action Plan to fully meet the HR Excellence in Research award requirements.

How the Gap Analysis was carried out and the Action Plan developed

The HR Excellence in Research Award was discussed at the University Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee (RKTC) on 11 October 2011 and members agreed wholeheartedly that the University should seek to achieve the award. RKTC is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer, and includes several members of senior University and Faculty managements (the Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge Transfer for each Faculty, and the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee). It includes researchers, including Research Leads and Research Managers from each Faculty, two student representatives appointed by the Research Students' Committee, and a member appointed by, and from, the University's Contract Research Staff. It also includes the Director of the Research and Business Development Office (RBDO), which provides support for researchers in all aspects of research funding and knowledge transfer, and a Support Officer from RBDO.

RKTC agreed the formation of a Steering Committee for the HR Excellence in Research award application, consisting of the following:

- The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer), Professor Alistair Fitt
- The Director of Human Resources, Mr Bob Price
- The Associate Dean (Research and Knowledge Transfer), Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Professor Linda King (representing Research Leads from the Faculties)
- Human Resources Manager, Mrs Claire Morris
- Research Support Manager, Research and Business Development Office, Mrs Sarah Taylor
- Deputy Head of the Graduate School, Dr Susan Brooks

The Steering Group, which met for the first time on 4 November 2011 carried out the Gap Analysis through a comprehensive review of University policies, procedures and documents, consultation and discussion with stakeholders, and consideration of the results of the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS). It met regularly (once a month) over a four month period from November 2011 to February 2012 review progress and, in the latter stages to develop the Action Plan. Between meetings, the group corresponded by email and telephone. The Gap Analysis was extremely informative and readily highlighted areas that should be developed and / or reviewed and these were incorporated into the Action Plan. The Gap Analysis and Action Plan were presented to, and approved by, RKTC at the meeting on 29 February 2012.

The Action Plan – key elements

The Gap Analysis proved to be an extremely instructive process and was especially timely coming, as it did, soon after the University restructuring. While it demonstrated that the University is generally meeting the

requirements of the Concordat, it also highlighted a number of areas where improvements or a further consideration of University policy or practice, would be beneficial. These are detailed in the Action Plan, but key elements are summarised below:

- The University policies, procedures and documents identified in the Gap Analysis will be kept under regular review and revised as appropriate. However, the University's Code of Practice for Career Management and Development of Researchers was last revised in 2004, and was identified as needing immediate review and updating. This will be completed by July 2012.
- Guidance and training is provided for Research Managers in managing and supervising the research staff who work with them, but it was recognised that there is a need for clearer policy and procedures. Such a document will be developed by Sept 2012 and, initially, piloted within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences before being 'rolled out' to the rest of the University during the second half of the academic year 2012-13.
- Careers advice and guidance is provided for research staff, but this was acknowledged as an area that should be strengthened and steps taken to raise awareness of its availability. Careers advice provision for researchers specifically will be reviewed over summer (June to September) 2012 and enhanced provision, at both a Faculty and University level, delivered during the academic year 2012-13. During this time we will also endeavour to raise awareness of provision for researchers.
- The 'your first three years' programme for newly appointed researchers will be reviewed and revised. Review is underway with a view to delivering an improved and revised programme in 2012-13 academic year.
- The current structure of induction training and familiarisation for researchers also needs to be reviewed and revised in the light of the University restructuring. Review is underway with a view to delivering an improved and revised provision in 2012-13 academic year.
- While a mentoring scheme exists within the University, it is little used by research staff. A mentoring scheme specifically for research staff will be developed. Review of current practice is underway. An enhanced scheme will begin with the next academic year in September 2012.
- We have been a member of the Athena SWAN Charter since 2009 and will now work to achieve 'bronze' status with a view to submission by July 2012.
- Compliance with the Concordat and implementation / progress with this Action Plan will become a standing item in University RKTC agendas and will be formally reviewed annually.