

Oxford Brookes University six-year review: supporting statement

HOW THE INTERNAL EVALUATION WAS UNDERTAKEN

Formal mechanisms for ongoing consultation and review

Since our original 2012 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan', the HR Excellence in Research Award has been a standing item on the agenda of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). This embedded practice ensures that both our Action Plan and consideration of how we address the principles of the Concordat are reviewed regularly and formally in the context of our overarching research strategy. RKEC is an inclusive group, chaired by the PVC Research (PVCR), which encourages and facilitates the input of researchers and their representatives at every level, and across the University. Its members include:

The Associate Deans Research & Knowledge Exchange (ADRKE) for each Faculty	The Research Support Director, Research and Business Development Office (RBDO)
Research Leads and Research Managers from each Faculty, on a rotational basis	The Commercial and Knowledge Exchange Director, RBDO
Two research student representatives appointed by the Research Students' Committee	A member appointed by, and from, the University's Contract Research Staff
The Chair of the Research Degrees Committee	The Chair of the Research Ethics Committee
The Director of Researcher Development	

Members are responsible for 'feeding down' information to researchers in their areas and there is close two-way communication between the University RKEC and the four Faculty RKECs, which also have broad researcher representation. Thus, the Gap Analysis and Action Plan have been regularly, formally reviewed since we first achieved the HR Excellence in Research Award. Views of researchers have been taken into account at every stage, including the six-year review process.

Establishment of a working group

RKEC agreed the formation of a working group to oversee the six-year review process. At our four-year review, we carefully considered the composition of the group at that time in order that it should best reflect the interests of researchers and, in particular, we ensured that a greater proportion of researchers, and researchers at different levels of seniority and from our four faculties than at our initial gap analysis and two-year review, were included. For the sake of continuity, we made the decision to keep the group composition consistent with that at the four-year review point, and will review and refresh it at our next review in two year's time to avoid over-burdening members and to ensure a wide variety of views and expertise are taken into account. The working group was as follows (those who are actively engaged in research are identified *)

Professor Linda King, PVC Research*	Mrs Alison Cross, Director of HR
Professor Simonetta Manfredi, ADRKE, Faculty of Business*	Dr Barbara Giraud, Senior Lecturer in French, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*
Dr Marcel Vellinga, Reader in Anthropology Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment*	Dr Verena Kriechbaumer, Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences*
Mrs Sarah Taylor, Research Support Director, Research and Business Development Office	Professor Susan Brooks, Director of Researcher Development and Professor of Cell Biology*
Mrs Kathy Greethurst, HR Business Partner	

The review

The working group thoroughly reviewed our original 2012 and 2014 Gap Analysis and Action Plans, and our most recent 2016 Action Plan and ensured that all aspects of the Concordat were carefully mapped against University policies, procedures and practice. We paid particular attention to the 2016 Actions and considered whether they were completed, ongoing, required updating, or whether practice was now embedded and the action complete. We also discussed the need for new Actions since our 2016 review.

We took full advantage of mechanisms for canvassing researchers' views and for reviewing data and evidence of researcher experiences that were available to us. This included analysis of CROS 2017. However, having increased our response rate in CROS 2015 to 30% (from 16% in 2011 and 2013) we were disappointed to see only an 18% response rate to CROS 2017. Possible reasons for this were discussed at University and Faculty RKECs and actions agreed to address this in CROS 2019.

In parallel to, and complementing, our six-year review for the HR Excellence in Research Award, work is ongoing across the University for Athena SWAN, both at University and Faculty level. We successfully renewed our Institutional 'Bronze' award in April 2016 under the new charter that covers all academic disciplines. Our Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment achieved Departmental 'Bronze' in

November 2016; Health and Life Sciences applied in April 2018 to renew its 'Silver' award. Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Business School are currently engaged in their self-assessment process. These applications required in-depth analysis of data on research staff at all levels, their career development and key transition points, including focus groups considering specific aspects of provision for research staff (maternity, paternity and adoption leave, and training and career development). We have scrutinised the results and integrated relevant actions into our HR Excellence in Research Action Plan to reflect this wider agenda.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & PROGRESS AGAINST STRATEGY (mapped against key concordat principles)

(a) Enhanced support for career development

In our original 2012 gap analysis, we identified that while training and careers advice and guidance for researchers was offered, it should be strengthened and steps taken to raise awareness of its availability. Since that time, we have made a great deal of progress. A new university Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2015-2021 (**principle 1.1, 3, 5.2**) was developed, after extensive consultation with researchers. A major project coming out of this is the integration of research, teaching and learning, and leadership development programmes under an integrative Academic Development Framework, launched in 2017. This emphasises the interconnectedness of the strands in terms of career pathways, and supports research-active staff at every level of seniority through diverse career progression routes (**principle 2.3, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 4.11, 4.12**).

One element of this is our Researcher Development Matrix. This builds on existing provision for newly-appointed research-active staff (the 'Your First Three Years' programme, described below) by providing enhanced support for research-active staff at every level of career progression mapped against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. It was launched in November 2017 through newly-designed, integrated research webpages which have clear signposting for careers support, training and a range of internal and external resources for researchers. We are continuing to develop three strands of support and training for: (1) early career researchers; (2) mid-career research-active staff (e.g., senior research fellows, lecturers, senior lecturers); and (3) senior research-active staff (e.g., readers, programme and research leads, professors). In 2016, we launched a centrally-funded research excellence awards (sabbatical) scheme, open to all research-active staff who are eligible for inclusion in the next REF, which also forms part of the Researcher Development Matrix. 23 awards were made in 2016, and 32 in 2017 (**principle 2.3, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 4.11, 4.12**).

In addition to strengthening core provision, such as enhanced careers training and support, since January 2014 we have run a biennial one-day 'researcher careers pathways' event aimed at early career researchers (**principle 3.2, 3.4, 3.5**). Attendance has increased year on year with 96 registrants in 2018 in comparison to 76 in 2016. 95% of those who completed evaluations said that they would 'recommend it to others'. In 2018, for the first time, we included a panel discussion session on designing your research career around real life, with personal career stories and tips on achieving work-life balance. To support career progression of all research-active staff, in 2015 we initiated a series of 'promotion roadshows' exploring the criteria through our five different promotion pathways and showcasing 'successful researcher stories' (**principle 2.6, 3.2, 3.5, 5.5, 6.3, 6.4, 6.8**).

A major new initiative, we have produced a booklet (online and hard copy) called 'Parent, Carer, Academic' featuring successful research-active academic staff from across the University with on-line videos for use in training and development. These resources will be launched in June 2018 at an event entitled, 'Making a difference: work/life experiences of Brookes' academics' chaired by Dr Katy Gearing, Head of Industry Engagement at the Royal Society (**principle 6.1-6.10**).

Our research staff mentoring scheme (launched 2013) (**principle 3.8, 4.14, 5.4, 5.5**) is integral to our Researcher Development Matrix and we have continued to encourage engagement through face to face information sessions and email alerts plus improved signposting through the newly developed research webpages. We have seen continued and positive engagement in the programme with 39 mentor-mentee matches in the launch year 2013-14; 31 in 2014-15; 23 in 2015-16; and 36 in 2016-17. Enhancing the programme further is a key element of our strategy for the next 2 years (see below).

(b) Improved communication with, and provision for, newly appointed researchers

In our 2012 Gap Analysis, we noted that while the 'Your First Three Years' programme for newly-appointed research staff was well established, not all eligible staff were being identified and invited to attend. The programme introduces people, practices, policies and support for researchers (**principle 2.3, 3.3, 3.6, 4.12**). We reviewed the way in which staff were identified and invited and, as a result, by 2016 had seen an increase in uptake of the programme from 42% of those eligible attending in 2012/13 to 48% in 2013/14 and 2014/15. We have continued to improve the mechanisms by which we identify staff who should be invited to the

programme, how we invite them, and how we address those invited who don't attend. Invitations are sent from the PVCRC directly, giving the invitation additional gravitas. Those who do not attend the first session are sent a reminder and with an updated invitation from the PVCRC to attend the next introductory session. We recognise that these issues, of correctly identifying research-only staff and ensuring their engagement with training and development opportunities is an issue that is shared by many institutions and have submitted a workshop proposal to the Vitae 2018 International Conference in Birmingham to share the progress that we have made in this regard.

(c) Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

The University has been a member of the Athena SWAN Charter since 2009 and in our 2012 review for the HR Excellence in Research Award, we identified an action to apply for institutional 'Bronze' status (**principle 6.1-6.10**). Having achieved this in 2012 (renewed in 2016), two of our Faculties now hold 'Departmental' awards (Health and Life Sciences, 'Silver' since 2014, we have just - April 2018 - applied for renewal; and Technology Design and Environment, 'Bronze', 2017). Our remaining two Faculties have self-assessment teams in place and plan to apply for awards within the next two years.

STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS

Actions relating to this are highlighted in blue in the action plan. S= success measures.

(a) Enhanced central support for researcher training and development (principle 3)

In recognition of the expansion of our training and provision for researchers, the importance of this group of staff to the University, and their key contribution to our Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2015-2021, the PVCRC agreed central funding to appoint a 0.5FTE Researcher Development Co-ordinator (RDC) who took up post in March 2018. She will assist the Director of Researcher Development in driving our strategy over the next 2 years, as detailed below.

(b) Enhanced career development and training provision for researchers (principles 2.3, 3.3., 3.6, 3.7, 3.9, 4.11, 4.12, 5.3) Actions 3a, 3d, 3e, 11, 13

Having launched our Researcher Development Matrix and redeveloped our researcher webpages, we will build on this: (1) review and update the new webpages in light of user feedback (S= users report that any issues identified are resolved in relaunched webpages; we see an increase in footfall on revised webpages in comparison to baseline); (2) gather views on strengths and any gaps in our researcher training and and revise and improve provision (S = revised programme includes new provision that satisfies any gaps identified in analysis, and >80% attendees/participants in new or revised sessions report positively on their experience); (3) continue to monitor the success of our improved mechanisms for identifying and inviting researchers to our 'Your First Three Years' programme (S= attendance figures improve from baseline of 40-50%; we establish a more detailed understanding of barriers to attendance); (4) launch a new on-line training package on research integrity (S = on-line training package is 'live'; review of participant feedback in focus groups indicates ease of navigation, relevance of content, and improved awareness of integrity issues and good practice; baseline engagement levels with the package are established as a starting point for future development).

(c) A mentoring scheme for researchers (principles 3.8, 4.14, 5.4, 5.5) Actions 5a-c

In our 2012 gap analysis, we identified that while a university mentoring scheme existed, it was little used by research staff. We developed a mentoring scheme specifically for research staff, launched April 2013 and now recruiting its sixth cohort of mentor-mentee matches. The RDC has taken over organisation of the scheme and is currently reviewing and revising our publicity materials, application process and records. We have also actioned that all university professors should be specifically invited to join as mentors, and there will be an expectation that they will do so (S= mentoring scheme administered through new on-line system highlighting possibility of mentorship for promotion. Numbers of mentees annually remain steady, at approximately 25-35 mentees/year, or rise. We see mentees specifically requesting mentoring for promotion, with an aim of 5 mentees per year requesting this support; >80% University professors are registered as mentors.)

(d) Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (principles 1.2, 6.1-6.10, 7.5) Actions 1, 7

As described above, we are aiming to renew our Institutional Athena SWAN 'Bronze' award in 2020 and, by then to have all of our four Faculties holding 'Departmental' awards. We are embedding and developing practice and policies in order to work towards application for the Race Equality Charter Mark in 2020 and we are a Stonewall Champion.

(e) Improved engagement in CROS (principle 7.2) Action 6

Having improved researcher engagement in CROS from 16% in 2011 and 2013 to 30% in 2015, we again saw a disappointingly low (18%) response rate in 2017. We have put actions in place to address this and aim for a much more representative sample of researcher views in 2019 to inform our next HR Excellence in Research award submission (S= 30% or higher participation rate in CROS 2019).