

HR Excellence in Research Award: 4-year Review

Durham University

1. How the internal evaluation was undertaken (including how researchers' views were taken into account during the review and, where relevant, how the review links with existing QA and other implementation/monitoring mechanisms)

Implementation of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (the Concordat) and the evaluation of progress against our objectives is the responsibility of the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG). The CIG has the following membership:

Dean and Deputy to the PVC(Research) – Chair
Deputy Director of HR
Director of the Research Office
Dean of Equality and Diversity
Deputy Head (Research and Scholarship) in the Colleges division,
Two representatives of the Research Staff Association (RSA),
Durham UCU Executive responsible for research staff,
Director of Researcher Development at CARD*
CEEC** officer responsible for advising contract researchers.

The Dean of E&D, the Deputy Head of Colleges and CEEC had been added to CIG since submission of the 2013 HR Excellence in Research Report.

* Centre for Academic and Researcher Development; renamed CAROD from Autumn 2015 – the Centre for Academic, Researcher and Organisation Development.

** Careers, Employability and Enterprise Centre

CIG meets at least once per term and documents are also circulated for review between meetings.

CIG reviewed progress against the 2011 Action Plan (updated 2013) in the spring term 2015 and considered how developments elsewhere in the University affected contract researchers. It reviewed the CROS13 results and subsequently the CROS15 results in June 2015.

Researcher input into the review process was achieved in several ways: first, through the RSA representatives on CIG; second, through consultation of the RSA representatives with the RSA Steering Group; third through the CROS15 survey; fourth, through the Research Staff Conference.

The senior representation on CIG ensures that the interests of contract researchers are taken into consideration in organisational reviews and strategy discussions. The Dean and Deputy to the PVC(R) attends the meetings of the University Executive Committee and is on the management committee of the PGCAP (Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice). He chairs the Research Management Committee, which reviews the outcomes of the PIRLS survey. He, and the UCU representative, are on the Annual Staff Review Working Group, discussed below. The Dean of Equality and Diversity has been tasked with providing academic leadership in the development and implementation of the University's E&D Strategy, including external accreditation such as Athena SWAN. She is supported by a team of four, spanning both HR and the central Executive, including a dedicated Equality and Diversity trainer. The Deputy Director of HR works closely with the Director of HR in the development of HR Strategy, and was involved with the review of training provision in the University, which led to CARD being embedded within HR as CAROD. The Deputy Head of Colleges is a member of the Colleges Division management team.

2. Key achievements and progress against the strategy set out in your original action plan and two-year review

Principle 3.9 of the Concordat highlights the importance of research managers (typically the PI on a grant) in encouraging and supporting the career development of researchers. We have increased awareness of the Concordat by requiring all PIs to confirm that they have read the Concordat before a grant application is

approved by the Research Office and by introducing research leadership training for PIs through the Research Leadership module in the PGCAP, supported by on-line material produced in collaboration with Epigeum.

HR reviewed the timing delivery and content of the University induction programme, which is now offered 6 times per year, with the presentation materials online for employees who commence work in Durham in-between the scheduled induction programmes

(<http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/hr/staff.induction/InductionComposite19-06-15.pptx>).

Questions and answers sessions from the induction programme are minuted and made available online (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/hr/staff.induction/150430CompositeQA2015.pdf>)

In 2013, Durham University appointed a Dean for Equality and Diversity, supported by an Equality and Diversity team which spans both HR and the central Executive. Equality and Diversity training is now available for all PIs and take up has been excellent, equality and diversity is also included as a core component of the Research Leadership Programme.

The number of modules in the Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice has been expanded so that it is now possible to complete the PGCAP via a 'research-only route'. The PGCAP is now available to contract researchers, providing an important career development opportunity (leading to Fellowship of the HEA) and is in line with our objective of providing equal commensurate career development opportunities to contract researchers and academic staff.

We have established a Research Staff Association, with support from CARD (now CAROD). The RSA is represented on CIG.

3. Progress by Concordat principle, reflecting on actions identified in the two-year review and with reference to the original action plan, including indicators and metrics where appropriate

The attached action plan shows the work that has been carried out at Durham against our Gap Analysis and Action Plan. Some key points are extracted below.

Principle 1 - The University has a detailed programme of recruitment and selection training for all staff and further training for chairs of selection panels. Recruitment and selection training is compulsory for all chairs of selection panels, and will be compulsory for all panel members from December 2015. We have rolled out a suite of equality and diversity training (including a workshop on unconscious bias) which has been attended by 785 members of staff to date. A recommendation will be made to our Executive that equality and diversity training should be a compulsory requirement for all staff from 2015-16 onwards.

Principle 2. The Research Leadership module is now part of PGCert in Academic Practice, researchers can take either the module as stand-only development opportunity or as part of the PGCert. The call for the next intake is currently being advertised to all research staff. The programme has been the subject of minor changes resulting from feedback from previous participants. The intake on this module is 20 per year.

Following a review of our Annual Staff Review (ASR) process there is provision in the draft policy for all contract research staff to have an ASR irrespective of whether they are at the beginning or end of their contracts, although the scope and nature of the discussions may differ. Recommendations will be considered by our Executive in October 2015 with a pilot of the new scheme taking place in 2015-16. We will seek feedback from CRs involved in the pilot before the scheme is finalised.

Principle 3. The CAROD web site is currently being redesigned and will include specific sections for 'Researchers'. The Research Staff Association will assist with 'field-testing' of the new website. A working lunch programme has been started. In addition the University has revamped its compulsory induction programme which is now offered 6 times per year. Work is continuing on providing guidance notes on the content of local induction events. With the appointment of a new Deputy Director of CAROD, starting 1/11/15, plans will be developed to further enhance the training and development opportunities offered for 'Researchers'. The new deputy director himself comes from a contract researcher background.

Principle 4. The Research leadership module is available to researchers (after nomination by Head of Department); the module was shortlisted in 2014 for a THE Award. It is targeted at more experienced contract researchers who are at the stage of applying for grants. The aims are that participants should be able to develop (i) knowledge and understanding of the contexts of research; (ii) knowledge, skills and abilities to

successfully lead research projects; (iii) knowledge, skills and abilities to disseminate the outcomes and maximise the impact of research projects; (iv) The knowledge, skills and abilities to develop appropriate research strategies for the future.

Principle 5. Training on Research Governance has been introduced and is available as an on-line module. In addition face-to-face workshops have been piloted and a wider roll-out of face-to-face workshops is planned. The University is in the process of developing a new Information Security Strategy and training is being developed in support of the roll-out of the new strategy. It is likely that this training will be mandatory for all staff. This will be launched early 2016. The recent formation of Centre for Academic, Researcher and Organisation Development (CAROD) provides a one-stop location for staff training and development. The new centre brings together CARD, IT Training, Staff Development and Training and Equality and Diversity Training. As the new Centre develops (the previous Head of Researcher Development has now retired and his replacement starts 1/11/15) new opportunities for researcher will be developed and introduced.

Principle 6. A Dean for Equality and Diversity has been appointed to provide senior academic leadership for the equality and diversity agenda. The team supporting this important programme of work has been recently increased. Equality and Diversity Workshops and Unconscious Bias Training are offered on a regular basis, supported by online e-learning packages. An E&D staff survey was conducted in 2014-15. The University successfully applied for reaccreditation of the institutional Athena Swan bronze award in 2015.

Principle 7. Durham is implementing a new HR/Payroll system, People +, which permits better collection and interrogation of data. Phased implementation of a new Research Information System is planned from 2016. CROS surveys continue to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback on the success of Durham policies and practices.

4. Strategy for the next four years, including success measures

The review of progress against the Action Plan and the CROS surveys, together with reflection on our internal processes highlighted a number of issues (addressed in detail in the accompanying Action Plan) that fall into four main categories.

(i) Communication (primarily Principles 2, 3, 4)

The term 'contract researcher' (CR) represents a diverse set of roles within the University, not just post-docs en route from a PhD to a permanent academic position. As a consequence, they are identified by a wide range of descriptors that make it difficult for the University to communicate effectively with CRs as a group. The new HR IT system 'People+' will enable the University to flag employees as CRs upon appointment and hence to establish a mailing list of CRs that automatically updates. This will enable us to target communications more effectively at CRs. Knowing that emails are targeted specifically at them should increase engagement and responsiveness of CRs. Success will be measured by increased response rate to the CROS survey and increased awareness of University training, career development and E&D programmes (as indicated by answers to questions in the CROS survey).

Durham has an award-winning training programme with a wide range of courses offered through CARD, CAP (the Centre for Academic Practice) and HR. Yet the CROS15 survey revealed that only 35% of the respondents had taken a training course offered by CARD and, disturbingly, 28% were not even aware of CARD. With the launch of the new centre CAROD it is hoped to increase the number of staff accessing training to >60% and increase awareness of the centre to >90%. Part of the reason lies in the fragmentation of training delivery within the University, which is being addressed by combining CARD with the HR and IT training teams into a single training body within HR – CAROD. A single web portal for training of research staff will be developed that provides an overview of the training opportunities available (including those run by CAP, which remains in the Department of Education on account of its research activities) together with links to information on specific training opportunities. Improved knowledge of training opportunities will be assessed through demand for training courses and through institution-specific questions in the CROS survey.

(ii) Annual Staff Review (ASR) (Principles 2-5)

The CRO15 Survey revealed that virtually all CRs were having an ASR, in line with University policy, but half of the respondents did not find the ASR useful. In particular, the ASR was not seen as an effective in leading to training and development opportunities. There is a university-wide review of ASR and two members of CIG are

on the ASR working group, which will produce proposals for consultation in autumn of 2015 with trials of the new process in January 2016. Two likely outcomes are a renaming of the process as 'Annual Development Review (ADR)' and a variant of the form tailored to the needs of contract researchers. CIG will monitor the effectiveness of the new process through the RSA and the CROS survey and HR will review feedback from the trials before finalising the scheme.

(iii) Implementation of Policies in Departments/Schools (principally affecting Principles 2 and 3)

While the University has policies and programmes in place to implement the Concordat, there is evidence that implementation is not always effective at the level of Departments/Schools or individual research groups. Examples include the lack of a Departmental induction or of appropriate career development opportunities. Among the strategies being explored are an enhancement of PI training (building on the Research Leadership course and Epigeum online material), a 'good practice' guide for local induction programmes, and the appointment of dedicated advisors for contract researchers in Departments/Schools, who would be specifically trained in issues related to CRs. In units with a small number of CRs, these advisors might also be formal mentors. They could, for example, advise PIs and CRs on what constitutes a reasonable amount of time for training, help identify opportunities for teaching experience, advise on the appropriateness of particular training courses, or act as a gateway to other professional services. Success will be measured through the CROS survey and through feedback from Departments.

Members of the CIG will attend Faculty Board meetings in each of our three faculties in the coming academic year, with the aim of raising awareness of Heads of Departments of the Concordat Action Plan, and the important role they have in ensuring its effective implementation.

(iv) Non-academic Careers (Principles 4 and 5)

The Concordat notes that not all CRs will find permanent jobs within Universities. Our ability to give career advice is hampered by the fact that we do not have good data, either for Durham or at a national level, on the career pathways of CRs who leave academia. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to assess whether our career development training is appropriate or effective. We will engage with UK (e.g. Vitae) or EU-wide data collection exercises and explore the possibility of using social networking, such as LinkedIn, to keep in touch with our CRs after they leave Durham.