**University of Exeter - HR Excellence 4 Year Review**

An internal evaluation of the University’s HR Excellence Award was undertaken in 2014 to assess how well the University is performing in meeting its obligations under the Concordat and to gauge progress against actions arising from an interim self-assessment review in 2012. The original 4-year strategy called the *Concordat Implementation Plan* (CIP) was produced in 2009.

A primary source of data for this evaluation is the national Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) undertaken in 2013, together with internal monitoring reports produced for the Researcher Development (RD) Steering Group. The evaluation was undertaken by the Assistant Director of HR (Learning and Development) and involved sharing and discussing CROS 2013/2009 and Russell Group bench mark data with the Associate Deans for Research (ADR) and Knowledge Transfer in each of the six Colleges, the Researcher Development Steering Group chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Research, the University Athena Swan Steering group, and principal members of Early Career Researcher networks on the Streatham and Penryn campuses. This report summarises the outcomes of these discussions together with suggestions for action and has been approved by the Research and Knowledge Transfer Management Group chaired by the DVC Research and Knowledge Transfer.

The University of Exeter has been shortlisted in the **Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers** category of the *Times Higher Education* Awards 2014.

**Key achievements and progress against the strategy set out in 2009 action plan and two-year review**

**CROS/PIRLS (2012 action)**

CROS was undertaken in 2013 as expected. A decision was made in consultation with the Researcher Development Steering Group not to undertake PIRLS but rather to undertake a series of meetings with ADRs and PIs in 2013/14 to discuss the CROS results with them in person and to identify and agree areas requiring action within each College.

**Athena Swan (2012 action).**

The targets of achieving Silver Awards for disciplines in College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences (CEMPS) and College of Life and Environmental Sciences (CLES) have been moved to April 2015 to allow Athena Swan initiatives to become embedded.To date three awards have been secured and another seven applications were submitted in April 2014.Additionally in 2013 the University was accepted onto the Gender Equality Charter Mark trial and submitted an application for Bronze level award for the department of Classics and Ancient History.

**Performance and Development Review (PDR) (Ref: CIP2009 – point 2; 2012 action).**

Following consultation through the University’s Researcher Development Steering group PDR documentation and guidance have been revised for the 2014 appraisal cycle.

**Rising Stars Programme – PGRs and ECRs (Ref: CIP2009 – point 2; 2012 action).**

The ‘Rising Stars’ programme for PGRs and ECRs was considered and discussed with Associate Deans for Research, Directors of PGRs within departments, PGR representatives, and ECRs during Autumn 2013, although this idea did not attract much support; instead investment has been made to enhance the existing PGR and ECR programmes that we deliver on our Cornwall and Exeter campuses. In the process of doing so, we have ensured that the Cornwall Programme has been tailored more specifically to meet the particular needs of the PGRs in Penryn and Truro, while the Exeter Programme will benefit from the addition of some more higher-level as well as more broader soft skills and personal effectiveness (i.e. RDF Domain B) courses. The enhanced and expanded PGR Cornwall, PGR Exeter and University-wide ECR programmes resulted from discussions within three Working Parties that were established to review each programme, respectively, in 2012/13 (PGR Cornwall and ECR Programmes) and 2013/14 (PGR Exeter).

**PGR Provision – additional actions (2012 action).**

A key strength cited by PGR user groups is the clearer expectations of courses that need to be undertaken during their time at the University. Part of the success can be attributed to an induction mapping exercise which was conducted during Autumn 2012/13 which resulted in more consistent College-based induction advice, with materials and hand outs made available on Intranets and the University’s Virtual Learning Environment. This includes, for instance, materials covering a range of essential skills areas and an expectation that all PGRs will complete the online plagiarism module.Following a pilot in 2012/13, the Researcher Development Team deliver ‘follow-up inductions’ at the start of the Autumn Term just after each College’s main induction session. They are promoted in pre-entry communications that are sent out by the Colleges to all new PGRs prior to their arrival. The percentage of PGRs engaging with the voluntary aspects of the RD Programmes has increased significantly in recent years from 29% in 2010/11 to 40% in 2012/13 and it had already reached 54% for 2013/14 by 20/06/14. In addition, the Professional and Career Development Section Score in the PRES increased from 40% in 2009 to 43% in 2011 and to 73% in 2013.

**ECR provision – additional actions (Ref: CIP2009 – point 2; 2012 action).**

A revised and enhanced ECR programme has been rolling out from the start of 2012/13 with new aspects being added and refined in the past 2 years. Employers, established academics, ECRs and Professional Services staff from outside the RDT were actively involved in the scoping and review process. Over 100 internal academic and specialist Professional Services staff currently contribute to its delivery. In 2013/14 over 135 sessions covering 33 topics have been offered on the ECR Programme and ECR engagement with RD sessions has shown a dramatic increase. 2012/13 engagement figures demonstrated an impressive **127% increase** in the number of ECRs engaging with the RDT’s activities, with 48% of ECRs now engaging and the number of total engagements **increased by 172%**. In addition, 2013/14 data confirm that 52% of the ECR population had already engaged with the ECR Programme by 20/06/14.Furthermore, and with regard to engagement with CPD activity more generally, national 2013 Careers in Research Online Survey results revealed that the percentage of **Exeter** ECRs who spent at least one day engaged in CPD activities in the last 12 months (80.4%) was **nearly 9% higher** than the **sector as a whole** (71.7%). Crucial factors in fostering increased engagement with the RD programme were the introduction of **a structured career timeline and CPD pathway**, providing a more **systematic and comprehensive approach**. This includes formal contact with new starters and those nearing the end of their contracts and three ‘strongly recommended’ gateway activities.

**Provision of PGR & ECR Support and 1:1 Coaching (Ref: CIP2009 – point 2, 7; 2012 action).**

PGR Mentoring Training is being developed by Education and Quality Enhancement staff. A training workshop is being piloted in 2013/14 with specific disciplines with a view to a roll out to Colleges in 2014/15. The revised and enhanced ECR programme contains a course on ‘Peer Mentoring, Coaching and Action Learning sets in the Workplace’, which is delivered by the Researcher Development Career Coach. A 0.6FTE RD Careers Consultant and 0.2FTE RD Career Coach were recruited in 2012/13 and 2013/14 respectively and regular 1-2-1 appointment slots are available to all PGRs and ECRs with these specialists. The introduction of these roles has also allowed the RDT to provide a range of new career development workshops and webinars.

**Governance and Management of RDT provision (Ref: Concordat Implementation Plan (CIP) 2009 point 4, 8, 2012 action).**

* A Steering Group is fully established and meets 3 times a year to discuss RD issues. It has senior academic representation from each College, ECRs and PGRs, relevant Professional Services teams as well as the RDT. The Cornwall PGR & ECR User Group continues to meet and provide feedback at least once a term and the PGR Programme Manager has developed closer links with PGR discipline level representatives to provide more direct routes into the PGR Liaison Forums in Exeter than the previous Exeter-based User Group. In addition, the ECR Programme Manager has developed close links with the leaders of the ECR networks that have begun to develop within the Colleges with STEMM disciplines. The RD PGR Programme Manager attends the Guild PGR Academic Affairs meetings and the Head of RD attends the Graduate Research Faculty Board meetings.
* RD engagement and feedback data is provided to each of the groups mentioned above and additional key College contacts at the end of each term on a cumulative basis throughout the year.
* RDT updates are also a regular feature of the Employability and Graduate Development Team’s weekly management group meetings (EGD being the functional division within which Researcher Development sits at Exeter).
* The RDT is represented on the University-wide Athena SWAN Working Group and reports annually to this group. RDT has provided a number of Athena SWAN specific activities over the last two years, many of which have been delivered through the RD Researcher Led Initiative (RLI) awards. These activities include: Women in Academia training day x3, Women in the Sciences RLIs x2, and One Day Cross-Disciplinary Gender Workshop RLI x1. In addition, the RDT has commented on DTP/C applications prior to submission and is involved in ongoing meetings with DTC/P managers to ensure that centrally provided generic/transferable skills training remains current and meets Research Council requirements.
* The RD website was transferred to a new platform at the start of 2012/13. The content was fully revised again at the start of 2013/14 and continues to be updated on a regular basis to ensure that information is kept up-to-date. The implementation of an online career management system (‘MyCareerZone’) has also enabled efficient management of the RD programmes connecting them with wider university-wide careers management provision.
* RTD has continued to fund the LTHE programme: 50% (2012/2013) and 100% (2013/2014)

**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**

**Recruitment and Selection (Ref: CIP2009 – point 2).**

The 72% of respondents reported having seen details of their current post openly advertised or heard about it by word of mouth in line with the trend in other Russell Group Institutions (RGI). 36% of respondents reported that they were not offered an Institutional Induction, which could be partly explained by the fact that prior to December 2012 all staff were only expected to complete an on-line induction process. All staff are now invited within two weeks of joining to attend a face-to-face event. Further work is however required to improve local inductions as approximately a quarter of respondents said that they were not offered a departmental induction.

**Recognition and Value (Ref: CIP2009 – point 2, 3).**

Exeter: 66% of respondents said that they have received an appraisal (58.1% in RGI). Over half of those stating that they have not received an appraisal did so because they had only recently been appointed. 67% of reviews are conducted with someone other than the PI and 44.7% stated that they found PDR useful which is consistent with data from the 2012 staff survey.Equal treatment in relation to other groups: the results indicate an improving picture at the University and reflect the increase in focus on Early Career Researchers in Colleges and increased provision of learning and development delivered through the Researcher Development team. It should be noted that drivers like the HR Excellence Award and Athena Swann have helped to engage the attention of senior management. In particular:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Agree Exeter 2009% | Agree Exeter 2013% | Agree RGI 2013% |
| Access to training and development | 78.1 | 87.5 | 86.3 |
| Requests for flexible working | 65.6 | 75.1 | 68.2 |
| Integrated into department’s research community | 75 | 82 | 77.6 |

Areas that require more attention include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Opportunities to attend conferences and external meetings | 75.9 | 72.7 | 79 |
| Opportunities to participate in decision-making process (committees) | 32.8 | 30.8 | 45.1 |

**Support and Career Development (Ref: CIP2009 – point 2).**

Programmes like ‘Career Explorer’ delivered by the Researcher Development Team, has proved highly successful and 78% of respondents at Exeter felt encouraged to engage in personal and career development (RGI – 72.9%). The University appears to be performing well in a number of areas, and over 10% higher than the Russell group in undertaking training related to Equality and Diversity, Knowledge Exchange, and Research Impact.More Early Career Researchers at Exeter also engaged with policy makers and end users (35.1%) and participated in public engagement activities (48.3%) than the Russell group benchmarks.A significant area where the University performed less well in comparison to the Russell group was in collaboration with colleagues outside the UK (Exeter - 58.3%, RGI – 66.2%). As noted above, the introduction of a revised and expanded RD ECR Programme and the recruitment of specialist Careers staff have resulted in a huge increase in engagement with RD activity.

**Researchers’ Responsibilities.**

Career expectations of respondents at Exeter are in line with national trends: the majority of respondents claim that they take ownership of their career development, although only 48.6% have a career development plan compared to 52.1% in the Russell Group. There is a significant credibility gap between respondents’ career aspirations, expectations and likelihood, with over three quarters of research staff respondents aspiring to a career in higher education and around two thirds expecting to achieve this. Overtime, we expect to see a gradual increase in the percentage of those stating that they have a career development plan and a narrowing of the gap between career aspirations and expectations following the introduction of the revised and expanded RD ECR Programme and the recruitment of specialist Careers staff.

**Equality and Diversity.**

The 78.9% of respondents believe that the University is committed to diversity and equality and that they are treated fairly by the institution across a range of activities, including promotion, access to training and day-to-day treatment at work. However, in line with national trends higher proportions of female respondents perceive unfairness of treatment in relation to career progression and promotion. The survey data at Exeter suggest that 25.4% disagree with the statement that they are treated fairly in relation to career progression/promotion (RGI – 22.3%) of which, approximately two thirds were female. This underlines the need to maintain the University’s focus on Athena Swan

**Outline the strategy for the next four years, including success measures**

Much of our activity for the next 4 years will be focussed on monitoring the continued rolling out and embedding of the recently introduced revised and enhanced RD programmes. A review and update of the RD plan (2012-2015) will, however, take place in 2014 and in the context of wider institutional developments around an Exeter Doctoral College concept currently in the early stages of development and discussion. Headlines include:

**CROS/PIRLS**

1. Undertake CROS in 2015 and consult the RDSG as to whether PIRLS will be undertaken in the same year – Action by Easter 2015 – Action HR

**Further improvements to PDR process**

1. Move to electronic system March 2015 – Action HR

**RD Position Document and Plan 2012-2015**

1. Review and update the RD Position Document and Plan by July 2015 – Action RDT

**PGR Development Provision**

1. Monitor the continued rolling out and embedding of the revised and enhanced RD PGR Programmes in Cornwall and Exeter, respectively – produce engagement data termly with a full report at the end of each year - Action RDT

* KPIs include:
* At least 80% of session attendees stating that sessions met their learning outcomes and that they would recommend the session to their peers
* Continued year on year growth in the percentage of PGRs engaging with the RD PGR Programmes
* Sustaining or enhancing PRES results further with respect to relevant CPD-based questions

1. Increase the number and range of webinars offered as part of the provision for PGRs with the specific aim of improving provision for part-time and distance learners by September 2015 – Action RDT
2. Monitor the rolling out of Peer-to-Peer mentoring training and activity, and report progress to RDSG annually – Action by EQE

**ECR Development Provision**

1. Monitor the continued rolling out and embedding of the revised and enhanced RD ECR Programme, and produce engagement data termly with a full report at the end of each year - Action RDT

* KPIs include:
* At least 80% of session attendees stating that sessions met their learning outcomes and that they would recommend the session to their peers
* Continued year on year growth in the percentage of ECRs engaging with the RD ECR Programme
* Sustaining or enhancing CROS results further with respect to relevant CPD-based questions

**Management Provision and Collaboration with Key Partners**

1. Continue to improve interfaces with Colleges and other training providers at Exeter through the RD Steering Group, RD User Group (Cornwall) and engagement with PGR Liaison Forums and ECR networks - Action RDT
2. Continue to strengthen relationships with partners in the relevant work streams of GW4 and to develop shared and joint training programmes, packages and other activities as appropriate – Action RDT, HR, EQE
3. Continue to support DTC/P provision for Colleges and the developments around the Doctoral College at Exeter– Action RDT ; - and the Athena SWAN process – Action RDT, HR
4. Continue to improve the RD website to enable our researchers to understand their career options and access online tools to enhance their professional development – Action RDT
5. Continue to fund the LTHE Programme