

University of Salford HR Excellence in Research Award Four Year Report and Updated Action Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents progress on the University of Salford's continuing implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The 2012 action plan presented activities to improve researcher development in the areas of mentoring, induction, comprehensive researcher training, tailored bidding support and further enhancement of the University research culture. Progress on these activities is presented under the relevant Concordat Principle heading, and takes into account changes in the University and the Research & Enterprise (R&E) Professional Services Division, including the appointment of a new Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) (PVC (R&E)) and Associate Director Research in late 2013.

How this evaluation was conducted and how researchers' views were taken into account

This review was undertaken by the Concordat Working Group, led by the Associate Director Research and comprising R&E, Academic Development and Human Resources and Academic members.

Focus groups comprising research staff, drawn from across the University and at all stages of their research career, were held throughout July 2014. Sessions were advertised throughout Colleges and were open to all who wished to attend. In addition, individual early career and senior researchers were consulted on a range of areas, including the new research strategy, mentoring, and access to resources and support. These consultations provided valuable information about researchers' views of career development, the University culture and internal communications. Researchers consulted as part of this process have provided feedback on drafts of this report. In spring 2014 the University carried out a Staff Experience Survey of all staff. Once the results have been compiled and released, R&E will work with Human Resources and Schools to identify data of relevance to researchers and define future recommendations and actions.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2010-2014

- Production and promotion of an online induction toolkit¹, improving access and flexibility of the induction programme, with face to face research induction, governance and ethics training sessions
- Launch of a Performance and Development (PDR) process for all staff
- Creation of a dedicated Research Development Team within Research & Enterprise
- Finalisation of the University's staff Coaching Framework and guidance
- Implementation of the Academic Roles Handbook; revision and update
- Launch of Internal Research Support Funding schemes and launch of the Vice-Chancellor's Research Excellence Awards
- University agreement of the 2014-2020 Research Strategy, which places significant emphasis on researcher support and development at all levels
- Creation of 25 new funded PGR studentships and five, 5-year Research Career Development posts at Research Assistant and Research Fellow level for the 2014/15 academic year.

3. PROGRESS SINCE 2012 – BY CONCORDAT PRINCIPLE

A. Recruitment and Selection

The Academic Roles Manual² was revised in 2013 to reflect the University's evolving structure and strategy. The Manual provides a comprehensive set of descriptions for substantive and non-substantive academic roles, including those related to research and research management. The manual contains an introductory

¹ <http://www.hr.salford.ac.uk/employee-development-section/induction-activities>

² <http://www.hr.salford.ac.uk/ARM/index.htm>

section which outlines its purpose and benefits, as well as how the manual might be used, and provides a set of expectations of University staff which align with the University's Student Charter.

B. Recognition and Value

In partnership with Schools, R&E provides a bridging funding scheme to support continuity of employment for researchers between grant funding. In the 2012/13 and 2013/14 financial years, a total of £53,600 bridging funding was provided, in most cases matched with equivalent School investment. The Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence Award, currently in its second year, offers two prizes to recognise excellent research with impact, at least one of which must be awarded to early career researcher(s).

C. Support and Career Development

The University of Salford's researcher development programme was aligned with the national Researcher Development Framework (RDF) in 2012, setting out the knowledge and skills of successful researchers so that researchers' development at the University is based on international standards of good practice.³

Research training forms an integral part of the institutional induction toolkit⁴, provided to all new staff members. Research active staff, and those who intend to undertake research, must complete online and face-to-face research training, including a research induction, governance and ethics and supervisor training. A range of development opportunities and resources are available through the University Blackboard, Schools, the staff intranet and the Research and Innovation Blog⁵, and are brought together in an online resource³. The Hub⁶ is a research environment which brings together PhD students, researchers and external partners from different fields and disciplines. A new institutional blogging platform has been developed⁷, providing a forum for staff and students to blog and find out about University activities. Regular PI Post Award training has been integrated into the Salford Postgraduate and Research Staff Training (SPoRT) programme⁸, launched online in March 2014. In addition to an annual training programme on all aspects of research and funding, the R&E Research Development Team works closely with Associate Deans/Heads (Research & Innovation) to develop and deliver bespoke training courses on research and bidding at Research Group/Centre or School level. In January 2012, the University launched tri-annual, residential research writing and profile development retreats, open to all disciplines and career stages.

The University's Coaching Framework and Guidance has been finalised. All staff have the opportunity to explore mentoring and coaching as a development option through institutional mentoring⁹ and coaching¹⁰ programmes. Pilot peer-to-peer coaching for postgraduate researchers was trialled, however, take-up was low. Wider postgraduate researcher networks, aligned to the supportive environment of research centres were thought to be more effective in supporting postgraduate researcher development.

The institutional peer review process has been embedded into the research development and approvals process, and is mandatory for researchers preparing proposals for the submission to the UK Research Councils and the British Academy. A voluntary submission is currently recommended for other research funding bodies where Salford University is the lead and the requested grants are in excess of £100,000¹¹.

The R&E Division offers a range of research funding to support researcher development, including international conference presentation, commercialisation of research and open access publication. The bidding support fund enables researchers to resource their bidding activities effectively, develop richer

³ <http://www.salford.ac.uk/research/concordat>

⁴ <http://www.hr.salford.ac.uk/employee-development-section/new-to-us>

⁵ <http://blogs.salford.ac.uk/research-support/category/training/>

⁶ <http://hub.salford.ac.uk/>

⁷ <http://blogs.salford.ac.uk>

⁸ <http://www.ri.salford.ac.uk/training-development>

⁹ <http://www.hr.salford.ac.uk/employee-development-section/one-to-one-support>

¹⁰ <http://www.hr.salford.ac.uk/employee-development-section/coaching>

¹¹ <http://www.ri.salford.ac.uk/page/peerreview>

research networks with impact, and focus on improving their bidding success. Since August 2012, £104,000 of funding support has been provided. In 2013 a £25,000 Open Access fund was created to support researchers, and publicised across Schools, in addition to the block grant received from RCUK to fund open publication of RCUK-funded research outputs. This has been increased to £30,000 for 2014/15. A proposal for a University sabbatical scheme was proposed in 2012, however it was not felt to be effective or good value for money at the time. The Vice-Chancellor's Early Career Research Scholarships (VCECRs) continue to be supported, with a total of £46,000 in funding provided since August 2012. In March 2014 a workshop was held with VCECRs to discuss the scheme and identify needs/opportunities to develop the scheme.

As part of the 2014-2020 Research Strategy, the University has recruited fully-funded 25 Pathway to Excellence PhD Studentships for 2014/15. These students will be supported to develop excellent research with impact and to produce high quality research papers and other outputs.

D. Researchers' Responsibilities

The University signed off the 2014-2020 Research Strategy in May 2014. This strategy emphasises development, support and promotion of excellent research with impact. The strategy comprises four interlinking strands to optimise the structures and support mechanisms to enable researchers at all levels to achieve high quality research, outputs and impact. R&E is working with School Associate Deans/Heads (Research & Innovation) to engage with the research community in implementing the strategy.

An Impact Development Fund assisted researchers in developing Impact Case Studies for the REF 2014 and will be available as part of the preparations for REF 2020. The University's impact case studies and approach to developing the impact of its research are now showcased in a range of online resources¹²

The University appointed a Head of Industrial Partnerships in 2013 whose role is to work closely with businesses, services and communities to address community challenges with a research impact focus. An example of this is the University engagement on multiple levels with the Pendleton Together partnership¹³.

E. Diversity and Equality

The University's Research Governance Manual, which includes the 'Statement on Integrity and Self-Regulation in Research' is currently under review as part of the University's Research Strategy implementation. Contract researcher representation is in place on the University's Senate Research Committee. The University is currently working towards Athena Swan accreditation.

F. Implementation and Review

Progress on the University of Salford Concordat Action Plan is overseen by the updated Research Strategy Implementation Group¹⁴, Chaired by the PVC (R&E). Concordat implementation updates will be provided on a quarterly basis, with papers and discussion points raised for individual Concordat projects and schemes.

The Research & Enterprise Division (formerly Research and Innovation) is responsible for the implementation and development of the Concordat and Action Plan, working closely with (among others) the Academic Development Unit, Human Resources, Heads of School, Associate Heads/Deans (Research & Innovation), Research Centre Directors, and individual research colleagues at all levels. Reporting to the University Registrar and working closely with the PVC (R&E), the Research & Enterprise Division comprises Research Development (Bidding Support), Contract Support, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Research Policy and Strategy – including the Research Excellence Framework and the Impact Agenda, Postgraduate Research Management and Commercial/Intellectual Property support. Concordat implementation work is led by the Associate Director Research.

¹² <http://www.ri.salford.ac.uk/impact>; <http://www.salford.ac.uk/research/impact/case-studies>

¹³ <http://www.pendletontogether.co.uk/#>

¹⁴ Current membership: PVC (R&E); R&E Director; Associate Director Research; Associate Heads/Deans (Research & Innovation); Head of R&I Contracts Support; Associate University Librarian; College R&I Managers.

4. STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN: 2014-2018

Work over the next four-year period will align with the 2014-2020 Research Strategy, with an emphasis on a supportive and vibrant research culture, delivered through effective research structures, professional support, enabling researchers at all levels to maximise the quality, impact and reach of their research output.

Actions	Critical Success Measures	Responsibility & Deadline
A: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION		
Increase the University research community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new appointments to academic posts are research active 	PVC, R&E, Schools; 2015
Create strategic, 5-year Career Development Research Assistant and Fellow posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early career researchers appointed to posts Retention and career development of post-holders 	PVC, R&E, Schools; 2016
B: RECOGNITION AND VALUE		
Support early career researchers (ECRS) to achieve REF submission standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased numbers of ECRs in REF with 3/4* outputs ECRs with impact case studies 	R&E, Schools; 2018
Standardise research workload recognition and allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent and effective research time allocation Increased researcher productivity and satisfaction 	PVC, R&E, HR, Schools; 2015
Support researchers to develop a higher profile for their research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased volume and quality of researcher outputs and citations Increased positive researcher social media presence Increased researcher external networks and partnerships 	R&E, Marketing, Comms, Schools; 2016
Review and implement career development pathways for research staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise promotion route to Senior Research Fellow Career development is aligned to Researcher Development Framework 	PVC, R&E, HR, Schools; 2016
C: SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT		
Continue to develop training and learning resources for researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High attendance and excellent feedback from researchers 	R&E, ADU; ongoing
Update and optimise research structures and academic/R&E support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased researcher performance and profile Increased research bidding activity and success rates Increased early- and mid-career researchers with bids and awards 	PVC, R&E, Schools; 2016
Pilot a scheme to link ECRs with public and private partners to enhance research support and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme successfully piloted and assessed for impact Increased success for ECRs supported by the scheme 	R&E, Advancement; 2017
Formalise and expand researcher mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All early and mid-career researchers to have a research mentor 	R&E, HR, Schools; 2017
Provide effective technology and resources to enhance researcher performance and profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open access and research data management services in place University roll out of SciVal and journal identification resource 	R&E, Library, Schools; 2015
D: RESEARCHERS' RESPONSIBILITIES		
Appoint ECRs as Deputy REF Submission Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECRs appointed for the majority of REF Units of Assessment 	PVC, R&E, Schools; 2015
Embed research impact into Research Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased impact to University public and private partners Increased numbers of impact case studies 	PVC, R&E, Schools; 2017
E: DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY		
Implement a new Research Governance Manual and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Governance manual and integrity/misconduct policies in place 	PVC, R&E, Schools; 2015
F: IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW		
Embed concordat principles in research strategy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued oversight through Research Strategy Implementation Group 	PVC, R&E; ongoing