

University of Brighton: Report for the six-year review for the HR in Research Excellence Award

1 Internal evaluation

The University of Brighton's Concordat Implementation Plan is overseen by a Concordat Steering Group (CSG), which is comprised of senior academics including the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Early Career Researchers and professional staff. The CSG regularly updates and considers progress towards actions and the sustainability of the plan. In addition, for this review, the Group was informed by: the outcomes of the 2017 CROS and PIRLS surveys (86 and 103 respondents); input from key stakeholders including most significantly Human Resources, the Research Office, Equalities and Diversity and a series of site-based focus groups for ECRs. The University Research and Enterprise Committee (UREC) which includes the ECR Ambassador and all Deputy Heads (Research and Enterprise) reviewed a list of proposed actions and the CSG developed the new Plan for detailed review at its December 2017 meeting and for approval by UREC members. This review and the new plan were signed off by the University Executive Board in January 2018.

2 Key achievement and progress against the previous strategy, indicators and actions

Since the last review, there have been some major personnel and structural changes at the University of Brighton. We have appointed a new Vice-Chancellor, a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) and new Director of People, and created two new Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) posts. The appointment of these new senior posts has resulted in a period of reflection and change for the institution, with the amalgamation of Research, Enterprise and Social Partnership (RESP) functions to provide coherent and consistent support for staff across the institution. A new R&E Strategic Plan 2016-2021 has been developed and is being implemented by a partnership of the R&E Leadership Team comprising, the PVC, APVCs, Director of RESP, Deputy Heads of School (R&E), the Directors of our 13 newly approved Centres of R&E Excellence (CORES) and the Leads of our five Brighton Futures themes which support researchers undertaking cross- and interdisciplinary work, international R&E and provide a focus for our engagement with the external world.

The previous strategy (2016-2018) for implementation of the Concordat had two key objectives. Firstly, to enhance formal structures and frameworks by: a) a review of the SDR system. A review has been undertaken and recommendations made for a revised system; b) roll-out of the research mentoring framework. This has been extremely successful and we now have 191 staff being mentored and 89 individuals have been trained either to mentor or be mentored; and c) a refreshed training programme for research-active staff more closely aligned with the Researcher Development Framework. The new Researcher Development Programme was launched in 2015/16 and has since been extended to incorporate Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer training and to signpost other relevant training (e.g. management, IT provision and support, research supervision and the HEA fellowship support).

Secondly, we wished to improve the local implementation of the Concordat through clarifying the roles and responsibilities of managers, mentors and research staff. This work has moved forward significantly by introducing and implementing the structures outlined above which have enabled us to provide a multi-layered supportive infrastructure for staff. Further work around the development of this leadership team is now underway, including a formal Leadership Programme which is being rolled-out to 140 staff.

Our key success measures identified for the 2015-17 Implementation Plan were:

- a) 90% of posts to be filled first time and 95% of those offered an appointment to take up the post. For the period 1st August 2016–31st November 2017 these figures were 95% and 98% (Principle 1);
- b) CROS survey results show 5-10% improvement in all ‘recognition and value’ responses. CROS results showed an average of 17% improvement across all ‘recognition and value’ responses (Principle 2);
- c) Another two cohorts to complete the Research Leadership Programme (RLP), 40 researchers to benefit from Rising Stars Awards, and 40 staff to benefit from the revised Sabbatical Scheme. Since the last Concordat submission there have been two cohorts of the RLP (26 participants). The Rising Stars Scheme has supported 29 staff and the Sabbatical Scheme has supported 22 staff since the last Concordat submission. We have another round of both the Sabbatical Scheme and the Rising Stars Scheme scheduled for early 2018 which should enable us to meet this KPI (Principle 3);
- d) 200 staff to participate in mentoring under the Research Mentoring Framework. 330 staff have participated in mentoring either as mentor or mentee (Principle 4);
- e) Number of responses to CROS survey to be increased to 50 respondents. In 2017 the University of Brighton had 86 CROS respondents (Principle 5);
- f) Maintain CROS results on the University’s commitment to Equality and Diversity. CROS results to this question dropped by 5%, which in absolute terms is 69 staff responding positively as opposed to 43 in 2015 due to different response rates and is not considered to be a statistically significant drop (Principle 6).

In addition, the University is pleased with the success of our new online Research Orientation for New Staff and Resources for Leaders and Managers. These webpages have had 310 and 60 unique hits during the first year. We have also developed a new Recruitment and Selection Policy that strengthens commitment to open and transparent recruitment based on skills and experience, a new Research Integrity Policy which revises and expands on our previous Code of Good Conduct in Research, and a policy on the employment of fixed-term staff. We have incorporated, extremely popular workshops on planning for a research career to enable staff to consider their research careers using the RDF and to prepare for promotions panels. We have a new Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan which will be published early in 2018. We retained institutional Bronze under the expanded Athena Swan Charter (2016) and are a Disability Confident Level 2 employer (2016). We are also members of the Race Equality Charter (2016), Stonewall (2013) and are signatories to the Time to Change pledge (2016).

3 Next steps, strategy for the next two years and success measures

Our strategy for the next two years has three main elements:

i) Enhancing career support

This stream of work builds on existing ECR support, including the ECR Ambassador Post, Future’s Bright annual conference and has been guided by input from the focus groups. We commit to:

- a) a focus on the development of enterprise and knowledge transfer skills and support for these activities through the newly created RESP department and with the support of a newly created Enterprise Champion position (Actions 8, 9 and 10);
- b) enhancing personal career support through research mentoring. The University has set ambitious targets for mentoring and it is hoped that this focus on individuals and their needs will contribute to the delivery of many of our strategic ambitions (Action 26);
- c) enhancing the understanding of academic quality of research. For example, we will use the quality assessment of outputs in preparation for our REF submission to spread an

- understanding of quality levels within individual disciplines through calibration exercises facilitated at a local level (Action 17);
- d) the development of specific research induction and training provision for the significant proportion of staff at Brighton who are ECRs but who have a professional background (Action 13);
- e) encouraging peer support through our ECR network (Action 30);
- f) a focus on building PGR supervisory experience for ECRs through a new self-directed professional development approach to supervisor development, and through targeting University-funded studentships at less experienced supervisors (Action 31).

ii) Improving the training of managers of research staff

We believe that the experience of our ECR staff can be enhanced by building the management and leadership capacity of those who manage them. We are therefore looking to focus attention on those individuals through the following mechanisms:

- a) mandatory leadership training for all members of the R&E Leadership Team which will include leadership competencies, and an exploration of the collective leadership challenge (Action 6);
- b) mandatory training in Equalities and Diversity, Recruitment and Selection, Unconscious Bias and Managing Staff for Principal Investigators who win their first successful research grant (Action 33);
- c) regular good practice exchanges through the termly forum of the R&E Leadership Team. To date we have covered induction and this is likely, over the next two years, to include appraisals and working with the Researcher Development Framework (Actions 12 & 18).
- d) Implement our new SDR process with associated training for reviewers and reviewees (Actions 5 & 19).

iii) Enhancing the external and internal representation of ECRs

We believe that the experience of our ECRs can be enhanced by both listening to them internally, and by supporting them to enhance their external profile. We therefore commit to:

- a) all School R&E Committees have a space for an ECR representative and we will be expecting each School to consider and implement an appropriate mechanism for obtaining feedback from their ECR community (Action 21);
- b) the refreshed ECR Ambassador role now reports directly to the PVC (R&E), making the role higher profile both among the ECR community through the development of peer support networks and with senior management (Action 30);
- c) ensuring a greater external presence for ECRs through a target of 90% having an individual web presence by July 2019 (Action 27).
- d) a focus on the development of peer-reviewing skills for ECRs in order to support them to participate in external peer-reviewing (Action 15).

The key success measures by which we will monitor progress of the Implementation Plan will be:

- a) 90% first-time PIs to have undertaken Equalities and Diversity, Recruitment and Selection, and Unconscious Bias training to ensure that those recruiting new research staff are fully conversant with legislation, University process and issues relating to Equality and Diversity;
- b) an increase of 10% in CROS/PIRLS results across all recognition and value questions in 2019;
- c) at least 90% reporting workshops as useful or very useful;
- d) 326 staff to be mentored by 2020 (target set in the Research and Enterprise Strategic Plan);
- e) to achieve the following Equality Kitemarks:
 - an Athena SWAN Bronze award by 2020/21 for all our academic Schools
 - an institutional Race Equality Charter Bronze award by 2020/21
 - a Stonewall Workplace Equality index top 100 rating by 2020/21.