1. Introduction

In February 2013 the Centre for Academic Development was created by bringing together the Centre for Learning & Teaching (Directorate of Academic Affairs) and the Researcher Development Unit (Human Resources). This provides a single point of contact for staff seeking to develop their teaching, learning and research practice within an integrated structure. The Centre also works with students to develop their academic skills.

The Centre for Academic Development acts as a brokerage for ideas about good practice in learning and teaching. In addition to the provision of professional development opportunities, the Centre works with individuals, Schools, Colleges and external agencies. Its unique central position enables it to gather and distribute examples of good practice in teaching and learning support both from within and across disciplines, and also from external organisations.

This report provides an overview of the work completed this year within the newly-merged Centre for Academic Development, with specific reference to Researcher Development activities included as Appendix A. For this year only, with the two Units operating separately for the majority of the reporting year, the reports appear separately; in future the work of the two areas will be merged to produce a single report. It also incorporates the Annual Report on the Identification and Dissemination of Good Practice in Learning & Teaching, following positive comment on this reporting structure last year from UCTL.

2. Institutional learning & teaching activities

2.1 Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium 2013

The Centre for Learning & Teaching held its fifth Annual Learning & Teaching Symposium on January 11th 2013, with the theme ‘Developing and Supporting the Curriculum for Excellence’. Ninety-six members of
staff attended from across the University, along with a number of colleagues from Robert Gordon University.

The Symposium updated staff on current discussions around ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ and its implications for recruitment, teaching and assessment of students at the University of Aberdeen. The Symposium topic complemented the current QAA (Scotland) Enhancement Theme, ‘Developing and Supporting the Curriculum’ and built on last year’s ‘Developing and Supporting the Flexible Curriculum’ topic.

The keynote speaker was Professor Sally Brown OBE, Professor Emeritus in the School of Education at the University of Stirling and convener of the Royal Society of Edinburgh’s Education Committee.

Some feedback from the event:

‘Good to listen to different perspectives especially the final panel’
‘Well organised and useful event’
‘It was very informative and I now have a better understanding of HE reforms in the UK’
‘The speakers were interesting and informative’
‘...I did find it useful. Being presented with multiple perspectives on the same topic is always good’
‘Magnificent venue and very well organised’

Recordings of the presentations from this and previous Symposia can be found on the following webpage: www.abdn.ac.uk/cad/events-workshops/alds.

Planning is underway for next year’s event, which will be held on 15th January 2014 under the working heading of ‘Learning for All’, broadening the perspective of the previous two years’ symposia and asking how we at Aberdeen are continuing to develop our curricula in order to provide access to learners from a variety of backgrounds.

2.2 Teaching Fellows’ Network

The Teaching Fellows’ Network continues to grow across the University, enabling a collaborative approach to supporting and promoting quality learning and teaching. The network met monthly in 2012/13; topics included: ‘a Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE) overview of enterprise in education’, ‘HEA grant funding opportunities’ ‘lecturing & presenting with more confidence and less anxiety’ ‘Bringing graduate attributes to life project update’.

2.3 Annual Teaching Fellows’ Event

The theme for this year’s Annual Teaching Fellows’ Event was Assessment and Feedback. The event was held in May 2013 and was supported by funding from the current QAA Enhancement Theme, ‘Developing and Supporting the Curriculum’. The keynote presentation, Exams Make My Hands Sore, was delivered by Nora Mogey, Institute for Academic Development, University of Edinburgh. Teaching Fellows from across the three Colleges were encouraged to share their practice in this area by submitting a proposal for a short 15 minute swap shop and/or a poster display. The event provided a platform to focus on emerging trends and issues relating to assessment and feedback, and helped to promote the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise. The event was well attended by over 50 Teaching Fellows along with School and College Directors of Teaching.

2.4 Enhancing Feedback Website

An Enhancing Feedback website for institutional use was launched in October 2011 by the Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching and the President of the Aberdeen University Students’ Association. The website
was developed by the former Centre for Learning & Teaching in consultation with the Centre’s Advisory Group and the Students’ Association. It can be found at [www.abdn.ac.uk/feedback](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/feedback). Students also have access to this site through their Virtual Learning Environment, ‘MyAberdeen’.

### 2.5 Institution-wide dissemination of good practice

University-wide distribution lists continue to be used to promote events. However, emphasis is placed on promoting events of particular note via College Directors of Teaching and Learning, School Directors of Teaching and Assistant College Registrars. Following the launch of StaffNet this year, this is a further channel of communication that is being used to promote and publicise Centre events.

During April-May 2014 a series of focus groups were held with academic staff, administrative staff and postgraduate students in order to discuss with them how the new Centre might best communicate with the University community. One of the key outcomes of these meetings was that, not surprisingly, email communications are easily missed given generally high traffic levels, and that the Centre might usefully investigate alternative modes of communication. School Administrative Officers were keen to work with the Centre as a network of strategically-placed individuals who could direct and highlight important and potentially useful materials directly to groups and individuals within Schools. The Centre is already utilising this new communication channel to good effect, and will continue to so do.

### 3. Centre for Academic Development

The channels outlined below are used by the Centre for Academic Development to identify and disseminate good practice.

#### 3.1 Professional Development Events

The Centre for Academic Development has provided an extensive range of cross-institution, College and School (see Section 4), and non-College specific workshops aimed at disseminating good practice to staff. Further details are provided in Appendix B.

#### 3.2 The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP)

The biannual Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme, co-ordinated by the Centre for Academic Development, provides funding to support individuals who wish to introduce a new initiative, or evaluate existing work in a new way, in their teaching programmes. In a departure from previous years’ LTEP Programmes, this year saw one, larger tranche of funding used to support staff who were interested in developing mathematics skills as part of their curricula, this having been identified as a key area for further development in various disciplines. Funding, from the Institutional Enhancement Theme allocation, was provided to three projects (£1400 each) in order to support a student over the summer period to work up a series of discipline-specific maths resources as follows:

Prof. Randell Stephenson & Dr David Healy (Geosciences): *Maths Support Project*
Drs Steve Tucker, Derryck Shewan & Alison Jenkinson (School of Medical Sciences): *Improving patient safety using an on-line training package for the calculation of drug doses*
Dr Paul Bishop & Dr David Sutherland (Psychology): *Enhancing Numeracy in Level 1 Psychology students*

In addition, a similar amount of funding was awarded to Drs Steven Tucker and Heather Wallace (Schools of Medical Sciences / Medicine & Dentistry) to fund their project entitled “Supporting the acquisition of pharmacokinetic principles through the use of mathematically-based spread sheet models”.

In the last year ongoing LTEP projects from previous years have been supported and where appropriate, their findings have been disseminated through the Centre’s website, College newsletters and the Annual Learning and Teaching Symposium. Further details are available from [http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cad/good-practice/ltep/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cad/good-practice/ltep/).
3.3 Centre for Academic Development Website

The Centre’s website now features over one hundred ‘Spotlight on Good Practice’ articles, including those identified through the review of External Examiners’ Reports, Internal Teaching Reviews and the College Excellence in Teaching Awards. Symposium presentations and posters from Annual Best Practice Fairs are also available from the site, which can be found at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cad/good-practice/spotlight/. Of particular interest this year is the addition of recorded interviews with academic staff, providing a more varied format for the Spotlights. This approach was noted in last year’s Report as an area for development, and having begun this, further experimentation will take place over the coming year to generate further alternative formats for the Spotlights. Where possible, work will continue to be undertaken to identify examples highlighted by PSRB reviews. Where appropriate, these will be followed up and disseminated as ‘Spotlights of Good Practice’ by the Centre.

3.4 Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

3.4.1 MyAberdeen / eLearning Student Survey

A survey on MyAberdeen, the University’s Virtual Learning Environment, was carried out from 8th to 20th May 2012, to gather students’ experiences of MyAberdeen and their views on how it could be further developed to enhance the student experience. There were 1653 responses to the survey, which was distributed to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, representing a 12.4% response rate. A report on the survey was discussed at the MyAberdeen Steering Group on 20th August 2012 and subsequently distributed around College Teaching and Learning Committees for information. A number of valuable suggestions were made by students regarding how they would like to see MyAberdeen develop. This led to a number of changes to MyAberdeen:

1. User interface changes to MyAberdeen: particularly new Library, Careers, News & Events and Help tabs
2. Integration of Services within MyAberdeen: particularly TurnitinUK, Questionmark Perception, Blackboard Collaborate Web Conferencing and Voice Tools
3. Support for mobile devices to access MyAberdeen: including the development of the iAberdeen app.

3.4.2 Upgrade of Questionmark Perception, the University’s dedicated eAssessment system

Questionmark Perception (QMP) is an assessment management system that enables staff to author, schedule, deliver, and report on surveys, quizzes, tests and exams. It is used for complex quizzes / tests, adaptive quizzes / tests or locked down summative assessments. The system was upgraded to version 5.4 in January 2013. The upgrade was a major undertaking involving re-platforming the latest version of the software on new hardware and re-designed architecture.

3.4.3 Online delivery

The University currently offers a number of programmes at a distance, primarily in the Schools of Education and Engineering. There are further opportunities for the University to launch distance learning programmes in high market demand areas such as Business, Law, Oil and Gas related programmes. However, in order to do so, a clear strategy on how this can be achieved and the resource required, needs to be outlined. The Centre for Academic Development supported the formation and management of a short-term working group, the Online Delivery Group, to oversee this. The group is chaired by the Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching with representation from relevant Schools, SRAS, IT Services and the Centre for Academic Development.
3.4.4 WebPA pilot AY 2012-13

WebPA is an open-source application which enables students to peer assess other students’ work. This type of peer assessment is not supported currently by the tools available in MyAberdeen as the peer assessment tools in MyAberdeen are focused on enabling students to assess other students’ work, not their contribution to group work. During AY2012-2013, the University piloted WebPA in Engineering, Computing Science and Chemistry. In August 2013 the MyAberdeen Steering Group approved the recommendation for WebPA to be hosted in-house for the AY 2013-14, enabling those that piloted it in AY 2012-13 to continue.

3.4.5 ACHIEVE Graduate Attributes

The ACHIEVE curricular and co-curricular resources site (located under ‘Organisations’ in MyAberdeen), is the shared responsibility of the Centre for Academic Development and the Careers Service. After careful review of the use of the ACHIEVE materials, and recognising the need to use them in support of the new Personal Tutors’ scheme, it has been agreed to replatform ACHIEVE on a website within the central student webpages in order to simplify navigation, with work commencing on this during AY 2013-14.

Allied to the direct development of Graduate Attributes, the Centre has for the past two years hosted two summer internships as part of the Aberdeen Internship Programme. These posts have been valuable in supporting both the elearning team and in helping to analyse the data emerging from the annual Internal Student Survey. Staff in the Centre have also supported the incorporation of Graduate Attributes in the wider Aberdeen Internship Programme through lunchtime workshops to support the development of students’ posters and presentations.

3.4.6 Graduate Attributes Evaluation Longitudinal Study

The longitudinal study to evaluate graduate attribute awareness and development which began in 2010/11 continued in AY2012/13 with an online survey opened to all undergraduate students. The data from this year’s survey include responses from the final cohort of students to complete their studies in the non-reformed curriculum. The study will conclude data collection in the current session as the initial respondents are now entering their final year of study.

3.4.7 Institutional Student Survey (ISS)

The Centre again co-ordinated the Institutional Student Survey, with all non-final year undergraduate students invited to respond to questions analogous to the National Student Survey (NSS). A total of 2855 students (34%) responded, and the data were analysed along with the responses from the NSS. Through the University’s Student Intern Scheme an Excel Dashboard was developed to enable comparison of students’ opinions from both surveys across Schools and Colleges, and between years of study.

3.4.8 “You Said, We did”

The Centre has co-ordinated feedback to students of actions undertaken in response to various student surveys from across the institution. Headline actions and links to reports from the Library, IT Services, Student Affairs, the Centre for Academic Development, and enhancements to learning and teaching are now reported to all students via MyAberdeen.

3.4.9 HEA-Funded ‘Bringing Graduate Attributes to Life’ Project

Staff from the Centre, together with the Careers Service, submitted a bid in April 2012 to the Higher Education Academy under their Teaching Development Grant scheme. This was successful, and a funded
Project Officer joined the Centre for Learning & Teaching in December 2012. Using video-recorded interviews with students, employers and academics, the Project demonstrates how the University of Aberdeen’s Graduate Attributes are being interpreted and applied in practice, in effect translating them from high level statements into practical learning experiences at the discipline level. The outcomes from this project are being disseminated widely across the University as one part of the support materials for the new Personal Tutor scheme. A UK-wide dissemination series is being finalised for November 2013, with regional events planned for Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

3.4.10 Academic Skills Development: Maths

With the appointment of an Academic Skills Adviser (Maths), the Student Learning Service now offers numeracy development for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students to complement the well-established literacy development service.

As a result of this new post, the Scottish Maths and Stats Network met on 28th June 2013 at the University of Aberdeen. The theme of the meeting was ‘Curriculum for Excellence and the impact of the changes in Scottish secondary education on math support in universities’. The guest speaker was David Bowers, chair of the Sigma Network.

3.4.11 Academic Skills Workshops, In-Course Sessions and Individual Advice Sessions

The open programme of workshops for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, offered by the SLS, began in 2012-13 with induction sessions on Preparing for Your First Semester, Time Management and Note-Taking. Studying in the UK was offered for non-home students. The full programme of 94 workshops (1 hour / 1.5 hours), which included contributions from the Counselling Service, was attended by 764 UG and PGT students (Appendix C). Timetabled in-course teaching of academic skills, which focused on Generic Skills (including Presentation Skills), Academic Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism, was provided at UG (15 hours) and PGT (34 hours) levels, across all three Colleges. Individual Study Advice Sessions (281 hours) on Academic Skills, Academic Writing and Maths Skills were held with UG and PGT students. A small number of PGR students came for individual Academic Writing advice, by request of their supervisors. In addition, students with dyslexia, dyscalculia and other specific learning differences came for specialist individual Study Advice Sessions (146 hours).

3.4.12 Feedback Logs

The online Feedback Log, which is built, used and shared through the portfolio application in MyAberdeen, offers students a means to keep track of feedback received in all their courses, to decide how to act upon advice and recommendations, and to keep note of how they do this. Discussion of the Feedback Logs will be included in the Personal Tutor scheme, launched in AY2013-14.

4. Accredited provision and professional development

4.1 Higher Education Academy Accredited Programmes

4.1.1 Postgraduate Certificates in Higher Education Learning & Teaching, Medical Education and eLearning

Internal and external examples of good practice are routinely disseminated during all three of the above Programmes. The suite of formal programmes offered by the Centre has grown this year with the addition of the PG Certificate in elearning. This ran as a pilot with two staff who had completed the PG Certificate in H.E. Learning & Teaching, and feedback has been positive. Staff who undertake the Centre’s formal Programmes comment positively on the opportunities to hear about good practice in other disciplines. By the end of AY 2012-13 23 members of staff had completed the first 30 credit
module, five had completed the full PG Certificate in HE Learning & Teaching; and six had completed the full PG Certificate Medical Education from the previous year at this point.

In response to rising demand, parallel strands of the first course were delivered from January 2013 across three sites: Old Aberdeen, Foresterhill and Raigmore Hospital (Inverness). This has proven popular with staff, and the Centre will continue to work closely with academic staff from CLSM to ensure coverage outwith Old Aberdeen in order to enhance the flexibility of the Programmes for staff.

4.1.2 The Learning & Teaching at the University of Aberdeen Two Day Course

This course, aimed at new probationary lecturers (for whom this is mandatory) and teaching fellows is offered twice yearly in September and January and is a pre-requisite for staff who undertake any of the PG Certificate Programmes (although it is not externally accredited in itself). A range of academic staff from across the University are involved in delivering specific elements, and whilst the course provides a good example of partnership working between Centre and academic staff, it remains an issue to attract academic staff to present given competing workload pressures. The course ran in September 2012 and January 2013, with a total of 40 staff attending from the Colleges as follows:

September 2012: 14 attendees (6 x CASS, 5 x CLSM, 2 x CoPS and 1 x non-college)
January 2013: 26 attendees (10 x CASS, 14 x CLSM, 2 x CoPS)

4.1.3 Teaching Programme for Postgraduate Students and Early Career Researchers

Since its introduction in 2010, this short, eight week programme has proven to be extremely popular and well-attended. During AY 2012-2013, due to increased demand an additional Programme was run, increasing the iterations to three (August 2012, February 2013 and May 2013). A total of 67 students have enrolled on the Programmes in total, 55 of whom successfully completed and 53 of whom qualified for recognition as Associate Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). At the end of 2011-12, in response to student evaluation, the course was reviewed and restructured to incorporate four interactive workshops and to make better use of MyAberdeen. As with the PG Certificate suite, opportunities to disseminate good practice are embedded throughout the course.

5. College and School Activities

Colleges and Schools continue to identify good practice through a variety of channels. This year a separate report on the specific activities taking place within Colleges and Schools will be produced and disseminated

6. External Identification and Dissemination Channels

6.1 Engagement with QAA Enhancement Themes

The University continues to engage actively with the QAA Enhancement Themes, and the current Enhancement Theme has now entered its third year with the Institutional Team continuing to meet four times per year under the convenership of Dr Kath Shennan. The Team co-ordinated activities and oversaw the use of funds made available by the QAA to support these. Activities within the University under this theme included two rounds of project grants under the LTEP scheme (see section 3.2), financial support for the Annual Teaching & Learning Symposium, and funding for posters created by students to illustrate the Graduate Attributes which they have developed through the Institution’s Internship Programme. This year the University submitted a further three case studies to the QAA:

1. S6@Uni: A Schools University Partnership to Meet the Challenges of Curriculum for Excellence
2. I-SEE: Individualised self-assessment to enhance employability in postgraduate students
3. Academic & Employer Perceptions’ of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes (includes multimedia and is discipline-specific)

More information can be found at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cad/good-practice/et/

6.2 Conference Attendance

Members of staff have attended a range of conferences this year, aimed at both disseminating our own practice and learning from other institutions. It is recognised that staff from across the entire University are presenting and discussing ideas at many conferences and meetings, and to list all of these would not be possible. However, to highlight one major ‘dissemination’-themed event, nine members of staff from the University presented six posters and two presentations at the 2013 QAA Enhancement themes conference. http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cad/good-practice/et/dsc/enhancement-themes-conference/

6.3 Engagement with the Higher Education Academy

The annual institutional visit by the HEA’s Senior Adviser for Scotland took place on 16th January 2013. He met with College Directors of Learning & Teaching, the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching, Academic Registrar and staff from the Centre for Academic Development.

It is encouraging to note that the total number of HEA Fellows and Associate Fellows reported over this year currently stands 104 Associate Fellows and 104 Fellows. Together this represents 12.9% of the total number of academic staff at the University holding Academy recognition, an increase from 7.93% last year, and 5.49% in 2010-11. Whilst not every individual recognised by the HEA has completed a taught component, the majority of this increase can be attributed to the ongoing provision of the University’s suite of PG Cert HE Learning & Teaching Programmes and the increasingly popular Teaching Programme for PGRs and Early Career Researchers.

We look forward to the annual visit by new HEA Partnership Manager, Dr Janet De Wilde, which is scheduled for November 7th 2013.

6.4 Formal Networks

Across the University, Centre staff continue to represent the Institution and exchange good practice through external channels. Centre staff membership includes:

- Member of Planning Group, Heads of Educational Development Group
- Institutional Primary Contact, Higher Education Academy
- Membership, Staff & Educational Development Association
- Membership, Association for Learning Technology
- Membership, Heads of eLearning
- Membership, Scottish Blackboard Users’ Group
- Membership, Scottish Effective Learning Advisers
- Country consultant, HEA Bioscience Subject Centre
- Membership, SHEEF (Scottish Higher Education Employability Forum)
- Membership, Steering Group for the SFC-funded project ‘Third Sector Internship Scotland’
- QAA Enhancement Theme Developing and Supporting the Curriculum (attended by Dr Kath Shennan)

Dr Darren Comber
Centre for Academic Development
October 2013
APPENDIX A: RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT – Evaluation report 2012-13

In 2012, investment in Researcher Development was approved, in light of the end of external ring-fenced RCUK funding, to deliver the targets in the Researcher Development Strategy and to critically ensure compliance with the requirements and expectations of key funders including the Research Councils UK and the Scottish Funding Council.

In March 2012, the Researcher Development Unit became part of the Centre for Academic Development. The focus of the centre is to enhance personal and professional development of staff and students across the University in teaching, learning and in research. The Centre brings together the Researcher Development Unit and the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

This report sets out the strategy and objectives of Researcher Development for 2013-2015 and provides a summary of progress made since September 2012, key achievements, successes and statistical evidence of impact from the programme.

Background
The last 12 months have been a significant year of enhancement and progression for the RDU with provision tailored to meet the needs of rapidly changing UK and EC research, funding and employability agendas.

Priority areas for 2012-13 were:

- Researcher Engagement and Development (RED) - a progressive approach to researcher’s personal, professional and career development. This approach, championed through the RCUK Catalyst project, is providing a sector leading model of researcher engagement and development whereby skills training is underpinned by real life evidencing and experiential opportunities through a range of internal and external channels.
- Contribute to institutional strategies relating to research and knowledge exchange and postgraduate research
- Institutional measures of esteem relating to policies and practices relating to support for our researcher community – HR Excellence Award
- Increase breadth and number of opportunities for researchers to engage with professional development
- Embed researcher development within research grants and doctoral training centre applications

Stakeholder Engagement
The Researcher Development Unit, reporting to the Vice Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange, works with a range of collaborators internal and external to the University to ensure provision meets the need of our primary stakeholders. We work within and across the Academic Colleges, Graduate schools, central administrative centres (including Public Engagement with Research, Research & Innovation, Careers, Public Affairs, External Affairs, Human Resources, Registry, Policy, Planning and Governance) and a range of external partners including Vitae, RCUK and the NCCPE.

Notable successes

Researcher Engagement and Development (RED)
Over the past 18 months, Researcher Development at the University has been transformed through implementation of a skills through practice approach. At the heart of this approach lies researcher progression that evolves with their career path. This approach, supported by the RCUK Catalyst scheme, is championed by joint working between Research Development and Public Engagement with Research, and delivers real benefit to researchers whilst enabling us to share best practice across a range of local
and national partners. Pervading the RED strategy is the principle of progression, applied to the researcher career journey, but also to pathways from professional development to channels through which to evidence specific skill sets. The importance of meaningful professional developments is vital in increasingly competitive academic and wider employment sectors. The, sector leading, RED, skills through practice approach, enhances the career development of our research staff and students through innovative public engagement.

This novel and sector leading approach has been recognised nationally and has been shortlisted in the Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers in the Times Higher Education Awards 2013.

The next step in this process is to extend RED beyond Public Engagement to other sectors including enterprise, teaching, industry and policy makers, through close working with key administrative sections and external partners.

Leadership Development
Data collected through focus groups and surveys (CROS/PRES/Postgraduate skills survey) highlighted a growing interest and want for research leadership provision. In 2012/13 we developed 2 new programmes aimed at postgraduate researchers and research staff.

**Doctoral Researchers:** Leadership @ Lunchtime was a series of 4 workshops, focused on developing leadership skills related to their PhD and for opportunities outside of their immediate project. This programme has been the single most popular programme delivered in the 2012/13 wider researcher development programme.

**Research staff:** a 4 workshop leadership programme for emerging leaders was delivered in 2012/13. The programme was designed to support researchers to become effective leaders within a research context by supporting their understanding of behaviours and how these can be consciously modified to enable them to lead in a wide range of research settings more effectively.

**PI Development:** in May 2013 a cross-College PI development event, aimed at senior PIs was delivered at the Tor Na Coille hotel in Banchory. The focus of the event was to build and grow research reputation – through encouraging increased grant capture and growing internal and external reputations. One of the great benefits of the event was the opportunity to network with colleagues from a range of disciplines.

**Key evaluation data**
The Researcher Development Unit has significantly increased its provision for doctoral researchers and research staff. We have also sought to reach researchers in new ways and now actively use social media to highlight activities, good practice and opportunities to researchers. This is also an effective platform to enable interactions between researchers. Key evaluation data are highlighted below.

- 56% increase in number of development courses delivered to staff and students
- 35% of doctoral researchers attending 1 or more RDU opportunity (27% CASS, 41% CLSM, 32% COPS), compared with 22% in 2011/12.
- 1265 doctoral researchers and 438 research staff registered for courses between September 2012 and July 2013, and increase of 23% for doctoral researchers and 25% for research staff
- 93% of courses rated highly or very highly
- 2012/13 we have delivered a total of 180 courses.

**Benchmarking**
Across the UK, HEIs are strongly encouraged to participate in nation survey to enable internal and external benchmarking of individual institution. Researcher development supports the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PRES) whilst the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey (PRES) is supported by Registry. The recent RCUK
statement of expectation relating to Doctoral Training¹ clearly identifies the expectation to collect data through these surveys on a biennial basis.

A full analysis of CROS and PIRLS is underway and institutional reports will be presented to the SMT and relevant committees in October 2013.

Highlights: each of the surveys highlight improvements in the experience and satisfaction levels of staff and students since 2011, some of which in part, is attributable to Researcher Development provision and support.

CROS
The Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) captures the anonymous views and experiences of research staff within the University of Aberdeen. As a benchmarking survey, it provides important information which can help inform decisions relating to institutional strategy and support for the management and development of research staff. Continued participation in CROS offers the opportunity to review regularly the impact and effectiveness of support initiatives and identify areas for further action.

A total of 112 researchers (staff) completed the survey, a response rate of 22.4% which compares with the UK response rate of 26%. 67% of respondents were from CLSM, 23% COPS and 10% CASS which largely reflects the population distribution of researchers within each of the Colleges.

- 87% of respondents agree they have good access to training and development opportunities.
- 44% would like to undertake leadership and management development to assist their career management.
- Over 90% of respondents agree they have not been discriminated against in the work place and that the University is committed to equality and diversity.
- On average, over 60% of respondents agree their contributions are recognised and valued in areas such as, funding, publication, public engagement, supervision of staff and students.

PIRLS
The PIRLS (Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey) gathers the anonymous views and experience of research leaders in UK higher education institutions.

The survey aims to capture activities and attitudes in relation to research leadership, the management of research staff and supervision of postgraduate researchers. It aims to capture respondents' views on the capabilities which make them research leaders and how these capabilities may be developed in research staff as they seek to become the research leaders of the future.

A total of 96 research leaders from the University of Aberdeen completed the PIRLS (21.3%), of which 65% were CLSM, 17.6% CASS and 17.4% COPS. In total, 44% of responders were female.

- On average PIs and research leaders are confident in their abilities regarding research related activities (including developing a research area or programme, research conduct, demonstrating impact).
- 89% had taken part in an appraisal in the last two years. On average, responders felt that staff review was most useful in reviewing personal progress (58% chose “useful”), and least useful in leading to changes in work practices (42% chose “not very useful”).
- PIs and Research leaders were most confident in supervision of research students (87%) and recruitment and selection (77%), and least confident in conditions of employment for research staff (55%) and managing performance (53%).

¹ [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/statementofexpectation.pdf](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/researchcareers/statementofexpectation.pdf)
89% of respondents felt that they had not been discriminated against during their time at the University of Aberdeen, which is higher than the national average.

PRES – preliminary findings

PRES is a biennial survey designed to collect feedback from postgraduate researchers about their experiences of their programme and their development as researchers. Although PhD students constitute about 80% of respondents, the survey is also answered by students taking postgraduate certificates and diplomas. PRES is run by the Higher Education Academy in conjunction with participating institutions. A full analysis of PRES is underway, however a key theme relating to PGRs is around personal development plans – only 20% of students report undertaking a skills audit with supervisors, this will be explored with Heads of Graduate Schools and where possible aligned with ELIR enhancements. Progress and improvement since 2011 cannot be measures through PRES as the question set has been revised by the HEA following consultation with the sector.

A total of 325 postgraduate researchers took part in that University of Aberdeen PRES, (25%, UK average, 41.9%) however such a low response rate makes analysis of the data more difficult.

- 86.8% of researchers agree that their skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during their project.
- 79.2% of postgraduate researchers agree that they are increasingly equipped to manage their own professional development, with 55.6% of postgraduate researchers reporting they are encouraged to take part in professional development activities by their supervisor.
- 83.1% of postdoctoral researchers are satisfied with their research experience at the University of Aberdeen.
- 59.6% of postgraduate researchers state they have not undertaken a skills audit with their supervisor.

HR Excellence in Research

In December 2012, we successfully retained the HR Excellence in Research Award, through preparation of a progress report and a new action plan2 for internal review by a UK panel. The external review process takes place in 2014 by the European Commission, details of the process will be finalised by Vitae in early 2014.

Reflections and Enhancements

Beyond Aberdeen

Demonstration of impact and alignment with national researcher development agenda and direction is enhanced through Aberdeen’s representation on the National Vitae Impact and Evaluation Group (LL), through the Catalyst network (KS and LL on catalyst advisory group which includes the NCCPE and RCUK representation) and the Scottish Vitae hub (BC).

Identification of Strategic needs and Alignment

In order to ensure that Researcher Development remains aligned with institutional strategic priorities and continues to deliver flexible and responsive opportunities to meet the needs of its primary stakeholders, it is essential that the programme is regularly reviewed, through evaluations, surveys and focus groups, the outcomes of which will be used to shape and enhance provision.

Progress against objectives and the programme of activities will continue to be reviewed annually by the Researcher Development Advisory Group to ensure strategic needs are met. Researcher Development activity will be assessed and updated against UK and EU external drivers and policy developments. The University of Aberdeen is in a position to inform direction of travel in key areas such as PE and impact

2 http://abdn.ac.uk/develop/policy-strategy/2-year-review-278.php
through representation on sector wide advisory groups and Researcher Development will ensure this is maximised within CAD and the wider community for institutional benefit.

Researcher Development will continue to take account of issues arising via biennial research surveys; PRES, CROS and PIRLS to inform our practices and ensure continued incremental progress.

**Priority areas for 2013-14**
The Researcher Development Strategy sets out the direction and targets for 2013-15, and is aligned with the second phase of the institutional strategic plan and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy (2013-15). Informed by stakeholder consultation, institutional priorities and sector developments, we have identified the following priority areas for 2013/14.

- Flexible delivery to meet needs of diverse audiences
- Formal recognition of professional development activities through accreditation of development programmes and activities
- Strategic target that >80% of researchers to receive professional dev intervention during their doctorate.
- Opportunities to evidence skills developed through researcher development, by extending the RED approach into enterprise and entrepreneurship and schools engagement.
Appendix B: Professional development events supporting teaching 2012-13

The Centre for Academic Development has provided an extensive range of cross-institutional, College, School and non-College specific workshops aimed at disseminating good practice to staff. Over the past year the Centre has offered:

**General (Open to all staff)**

Graduates Attributes x 1  
Copyright in Learning and Teaching x 3  
Presenting with Prezi in Learning and Teaching x 2  
10 Ideas for Making your Lectures Interactive x 1  
Teaching in the Scottish Higher Education system x 2  
Recording Lectures x 1  
Invigilating Exams Training x 4  
Small Group Teaching x 2  
Peer Assessment Workshop x 1

**MyAberdeen**

Creating Tests and Surveys (x5)  
Designing & Building Organisations (x2)  
Drop-in session: Getting started with your 'rolled-over' course areas (x10)  
ePortfolios (x1)  
Group Work in MyAberdeen (x5)  
Introduction to MyAberdeen (x30)  
Managing the Grade Centre (x8)  
Online Assignment Submission (x4)  
Reviewing Student Performance (x4)  
Tools for Reflection & Collaboration (x5)  
Using TurnitinUK (x8)  
eLearning one-to-one sessions and School-specific training (x10)
Appendix C: Academic Skills Workshops 2012-13

The Student Learning Service has provided a wide range of academic skills development workshops and activities for students at different levels over the past year. These events are listed below.

Basic Presentation Skills x 1 (UG)
Critical Thinking & Reading - Arts & Social Sciences x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Critical Thinking & Reading for Scientists x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Critical Thinking & Writing - Arts & Social Sciences x 1 (TPG)
Enhancing Your PowerPoint x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Essay I: Structure - Arts & Social Sciences x 4 (2 UG/2 TPG)
Essay II: Editing - Arts & Social Sciences x 4 (2 UG/2 TPG)
Essays for Scientists x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Exam Techniques: Essay-based Exams - Arts & Social Sciences x 3 (1 UG/2 TPG)
Exam Techniques: Essay & Short Answer Exams – Sciences x 4 (2 UG/2 TPG)
Improving Your Writing Skills: Paraphrasing - Arts & Social Sciences x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Memory Tricks x 3 (1 UG/1 TPG & 1 combined UG/TPG)
Mind Maps x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Note-taking x 4 (2 UG/2 TPG)
Planning to Make the Most of Your First Semester x 2 (1 UG/2 TPG)
Presenting A Paper x 1 (TPG)
Revision Strategies: Essay and Short Answer Exams – Sciences x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Revision Strategies: Essay-based Exams - Arts & Social Sciences x 3 (2 UG/1 TPG)
Stress & Relaxation x 1 (UG & TPG)
Studying in the UK x 4 (2 UG/2 TPG)
Time Management x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Tutorial & Seminar Skills x 2 (1 UG/1 TPG)
Appendix D: Researcher Development Workshops & Courses 2012-13

Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities
Literature Searching and Databases
Managing References
Basic Statistics
Nvivo Training
Intellectual Independence and Intellectual Risk
Creativity in Research
Creating Creativity for Enterprise

Personal Effectiveness
Career Planning
Advancing in Academia
Career Planning
Broadening Horizons
Planning Your Professional Development
Time management
Objective Setting and Action Planning
PhD Essentials
Researcher Development Induction
Finishing up and moving on
Transitions Programme
Research Staff Induction

Research Governance and Organisation
Grant Writing masterclasses
Managing Successful Research Projects
Certificate in Applied Project Management
Ethics Training

Engagement, Influence and Impact
Leadership Programme for Early Career Researchers
Leadership@lunchtime
Leadership Styles
Negotiating and Influencing Styles
Dealing with Difficult Situations
Enterprising Researchers Programme
Impact Programme
Engaging Researchers: Science Communication and STEM Ambassador Induction
Engaging Researchers: Videocasting your Research
Engaging Researchers: Talking with the Media
Engaging Researchers: Pathways to Policy
Engaging Researchers: Pathways to Knowledge Exchange
Engaging Researchers: Social Media and your Professional Development
Managing your Supervisor
Exceptional Conference Presentations
Maximising your Impact at Conferences through Networking
Why Communicate?
Poster Presentations: Storyboarding
Communications Level 1: Presentation Skills
Communications Level 2: Presenting with Impact
Communications Level 2: Teaching and Facilitation
Communications Level 3: Engagement and Impact
Communications Level 3: Coaching and Mentoring
Building Successful Research Collaborations