

## HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

### PROGRESS REPORT- FOUR YEAR EVALUATION AND REVIEW

#### 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The University of Aberdeen received the HR Excellence in Research Award in December 2010 and retained it in 2012. As a condition of our award we are required to undertake a four-year external review of progress against the principles set out in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the detailed actions set out in our Concordat Implementation Plan. This external review in 2014 has provided us with an important milestone at which to review and evaluate the distance travelled in the past four years. We acknowledge progress and success over this time, outlined below, but do not take this for granted. Rather, we are building on achievements, by developing robust and sustainable ongoing support for research staff. Since 2010 we have made significant progress and can report a number of positive achievements including:

- Centre for Academic Development - established 2013
- Award of an RCUK Catalyst Grant 2012
- Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award 2012
- CLSM Fellowship Scheme
- Coaching and Mentoring programmes
- Researcher Development Programme for staff and students
- Public Engagement with Research Unit - established 2012, sustained 2014
- Enhanced Peer Review for funding proposals

These and others are described below in more detail within the context of the guiding principles of the Concordat. We have also identified key areas in which we can improve to ensure that the University of Aberdeen continues to lead in this field.

We have robust policies and practices across the University to ensure that research staff are treated fairly and supported in their career progression. In addition we have excellent support for research staff within Colleges and across Professional Services. We have however identified areas in which we can enhance our progress, namely:

- To frame the breadth of support in a more structured matrix that captures expectations and competencies across roles and career stages. This will also enable any gaps in provision to be identified and addressed in a systematic way.
- To ensure that researchers' engagement in their own career development is undertaken in a more structured way.
- To ensure processes and best practices around funding and fellowship applications are reviewed and refined so that our researchers are equipped to deliver research excellence with impact.
- To develop a mechanism through which best practice within Schools and Colleges can be shared across the institution, making more use of central advisory boards.

#### GOVERNANCE

Concordat implementation and the researcher development strategy is overseen by the Vice-Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange (VP R&KE), through the Researcher Development Advisory Group (RDAG) and subsequent reporting to appropriate committees (Committee for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Staffing and Development Committee). The RDAG provides a forum for the discussion of issues relating to research staff and takes responsibility for implementation of the researcher development strategy.

The University's [Research and Knowledge Exchange \(2013-2015\) Strategy](#) outlines how it supports implementation of the principles of the Concordat through provision of career development support for staff across the entire academic life-cycle from postgraduate student to senior researchers. It also outlines how staff are enabled to achieve their personal ambitions, and how the institution is well placed to expand its research capacity and reputation.

The University of Aberdeen is entering a consultation period for the development of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020 which will embrace the principles of the concordat not least in supporting and developing our people.

## **2 THE REVIEW PROCESS**

### **2.1 HOW THE INTERNAL REVIEW WAS UNDERTAKEN**

Internal evaluation of the HR Excellence process is embedded within normal business and progress against the action plan is reviewed regularly and updates provided to appropriate committees. The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) had overall responsibility for the review process working closely with Human Resources (HR) and the Equality and Diversity team within Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG). The progress was undertaken, in consultations with key stakeholders across the University (Public Engagement with Research, Research & Innovation, Careers Service, academic colleagues and research staff).

The CAD recently undertook a significant consultation exercise with the purpose of ensuring the centre is best placed to meet the needs of the research and teaching community. The consultation explored the following main areas:

- To explore development needs of staff (including PGRs) involved in teaching, supporting teaching and research in order to be supported in fulfilling their potential and in the requirements of their role.
- To identify expertise across the institution which could be used to share and promote good practice in all areas

The consultation exercise involved staff (including academic staff, teaching fellows, research-only staff, administrative staff and PhD students) and used various channels including focus groups, committee responses, College Executive committees and individual interviews to elicit information.

The findings of the consultation were mapped to the current action plan and have been used to inform the actions moving forward. The findings are incorporated into this review as appropriate. One of the key findings of this exercise was the need to establish a more streamlined approach to planning and delivery of development activities such that the wealth of support available across the University is promoted in a more accessible manner. Discussions as to how this can be taken forward and how this can be incorporated into our strategic planning process and the development of a structured competencies and development matrix are ongoing.

### **2.2 HOW RESEARCHERS' VIEWS WERE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT**

The views of researchers have been sought and incorporated in a number of ways including the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) 2013 data, through the consultation process detailed above, through the RDAG which includes College Directors of Research and HR and through and through continued networking with research staff in the Colleges and with the newly established Research Staff Association (RSA).

### **2.3 HOW THE REVIEW LINKS WITH EXISTING QUALITY ASSURANCE AND OTHER MONITORING MECHANISMS**

This review has been shaped with significant input from key stakeholders and will be reviewed by the University Management Group. This review and the ongoing evaluation can inform monitoring and QA information for other reviews including the new Strategic Plan, the draft 'People' strategy paper, Athena SWAN action plans and the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR).

## **3 PROGRESS AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST THE CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN**

Full details are provided in the updated evidence and action plan below. This next section provides a summary of progress since 2010 against the principles of the Concordat.

## **PRINCIPLES 1 AND 2: RECRUITMENT & SELECTION AND RECOGNITION AND VALUE**

The overarching vision of the University (2011-2015) is the pursuit of excellence, through supporting and developing researchers at all stages of their career. As we move to developing a new Strategic Plan (2015-2020) the focus remains on research excellence, people and achieving potential. The ethos of the HR Excellence in Research award and the actions going forward will help shape the development of the plan and the objectives.

Since 2010 all staff have been employed on open-ended contracts (unless the term of appointment is less than 9 months). Policies and practices to support the avoidance of redundancy policy continues to be reviewed and updated with two dedicated redeployment coordinators working within HR. A new [redemption vacancy website](#) is available for staff identified at risk of redundancy. Only 31% of individuals placed at risk of redundancy for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 October 2014 were made redundant. 60% were redeployed though either a continuation of their current role or finding a new position within the University. The remaining 9% left through resignation or a Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) transfer to another organisation.

Ensuring staff are equipped and supported in the recruitment and selection processes, all staff are required to undertake a mandatory eLearning module on equality and diversity. The University recently piloted training in unconscious bias and are in the process of developing a model to rollout to staff involved in decision making.

In February 2014 a [new annual review](#) process was introduced through a working group consisting of representatives from all categories of staff and areas within the University and representation from all the Campus Trades Unions. The new process takes into account annual career aspirations and provides the opportunity to link with the separate promotion procedures as well as providing an opportunity to set objectives and receive feedback. The University is closely monitoring the impact of the new appraisal system and will evaluate the process, this will also be factored into CROS and PIRLS survey questions in 2015. We are confident the new process will improve uptake and we will report on its effectiveness in due course. Alongside the review of appraisal the University undertook a review of promotion criteria of which the purpose was to ensure transparency and that the broad range of activities undertaken by research staff (e.g. Commercialisation, Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement, industry related activities) are properly recognised in the promotion process. There was a 27% increase in the number of research fellows promoted in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13.

The University continues to review induction processes and, building on feedback from survey data, new induction programmes are in place and an online Research Staff Induction module developed by researcher development and the RSA has been launched on the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE). So far CROS data suggests engagement with, and usefulness of, induction programmes is unchanged since 2010.

Researcher Development is embedded within the Research and Knowledge Exchange strategy (2013-2015) and is identified against specific targets relating to support and development of staff and students and infrastructure.

## **PRINCIPLES 3 AND 4: SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

In February 2013 the CAD was created by bringing together the Centre for Learning & Teaching (Directorate of Academic Affairs) and the Researcher Development Unit (Human Resources). The Centre supports strategic priorities in teaching, learning and researcher development and provides a sustainable and integrated environment for staff and students seeking to develop their teaching, learning and research practice.

Information and development activities for research staff continues to be provided across the University and through coordination between the CAD and HR. The CAD offers an extensive programme of support and development activities for research-staff including workshops, online resources, individual consultations and formal accredited training. A new Researcher Development module, launched in 2014, has been incorporated into the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice.

Principal Investigators (PIs) are critical to the success of our strategy and we continue to deliver PI Development programmes for new or aspiring PIs and for experienced PIs. We have taken steps to update and refine the HR modules within these to incorporate the key elements of policy and strategy relating to the

recruitment and development of researchers. An [online handbook](#) is also available to offer guidance and good practice for PIs, managers and supervisors.

A coaching programme, accredited by the Institute for Leadership and Management (ILM) was introduced in April 2014 to develop internal coaching capacity to support coaching for University staff, including researchers and academics, to support individuals to take control of their own career development and to support the development of their teams. The programme has been extended to Professional Services staff in HR and in CAD such that we are also equipped to enhance personal and professional development. Since April we have 11 active coaches working with 20 staff.

A working group to review probation procedures for research staff has also been established. An ILM accredited mentoring course has also been introduced to support the launch of new probation procedures (June 2015) in which it will be mandatory for all staff on probation to have a mentor. Since mentoring schemes were introduced in 2009, we have over 50 established mentoring partnerships across the University.

Awarded in 2012, the Research Councils UK Catalyst Award for researcher engagement and development continues to shape our strategy and provision for researcher development. Our approach develops a relationship with the researcher community from induction, through skills development, to practical experience and tangible evidence for career progression. This approach has provided several hundred opportunities for researchers to gain valuable skills and to engage wider publics with their research. More detail is provided in the evidence and action plan which accompanies this report. In 2014 the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) has been sustained and expanded to further close working with researchers to embed engagement into funding applications and on Knowledge Exchange strategies and activities. Since the award in 2012, the PERU team have secured in excess of £250,000 in external funding to support engagement activities and career development.

Since the introduction of a managed fellowship scheme in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine in 2012, which provides bespoke mentoring for early career researchers intending to apply for independent funding, we can report a 10% increase successful applications between 2012 and 2013 (when the scheme was in full effect). The College has also strengthened the internal peer review process (peer review is in place in each of the College) to ensure applications of the highest quality are submitted.

The institution continues to identify innovative ways to engage researchers through social media, targeted newsletters and ezines and through a recently established Research Staff Association (June 2014).

#### **PRINCIPLE 5: RESEARCHER RESPONSIBILITY**

The strategy for researcher engagement and development, championed through the Catalyst Award, places the responsibility with the researcher through empowerment and provision of multi-level opportunities and initiatives to enhance progression. [The Researcher-led Initiative](#) (RLI) fund was established in 2013 to support and encourage researchers to devise, organise and deliver University wide activities with a career development focus. The RLI is closely coupled to the [Public Engagement Enabling fund](#) whereby researchers can apply for funds to deliver events or to develop partnerships or networks to enhance research activity and outputs. The [Principal's Prize for Public Engagement](#) was launched in 2013 to recognise individuals who have made an outstanding contribution in the field of research-led public engagement. The University also offers seed funding for junior academics and for the development of [interdisciplinary networks or projects](#) and [mobility awards](#) for early career researchers to gain valuable research experience.

#### **PRINCIPLE 6: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

The environment we create for our researchers is crucial and our ongoing strategic priority remains to improve the stability of employment and equity of treatment of our researchers. Equality and diversity is highlighted through initiatives such as the recruitment of a Vice-Principal with responsibility for [Equality and Diversity strategy](#), robust communication and consultation methods, [online training](#) (mandatory), a launch of the senior Female Network group (2012), [LGBT and disability networks](#) and an ongoing commitment to the [Athena SWAN charter](#) (including the recruitment of two dedicated Athena SWAN coordinators). Full details of progress and

initiatives can be found online. We have also engaged with the Vitae 'Every Researcher Counts' materials and have informed both PI development and supervisor training programmes. 89% of research staff felt the University was committed to equality and diversity 90 % felt fairly treated at work and 64% were satisfied with their work-life balance.

#### **PRINCIPLE 7: IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

The process of implementing the Concordat and the review of progress is encompassed within the HR Excellence in Research process and associated evaluation mechanisms such as Athena SWAN and through the reporting requirements of HR, CAD and the RDAG.

The creation of the CAD has been instrumental in establishing a sustainable and accessible environment for researcher development. We continue to commit to taking part in CROS and PIRLS and endeavour to take steps to improve the feedback loop to researchers relating the findings.

#### **CHALLENGES**

Encouraging researchers to pro-actively engage in their development can sometimes be a challenge; however we are confident that the development of a more structured approach to development provision and its management will enhance researcher engagement to build on the significant improvements in the last five years. We will continue to work with researchers, to place the responsibility with them and to offer channels through which to take the lead in identifying and implementing initiatives.

#### **STRATEGY AND SUCCESS MEASURES BEYOND 2014**

The University is in consultation to develop the new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020. The ambitions, principles and objectives emerging from the plan will focus our strategies moving forward. We have updated our action plan highlighting areas in which we will continue good practice respecting that the themes emerging from the plan inform future HR Excellence plans.

The full updated action plan can be viewed below and a brief summary of strategy and actions is provided here.

#### **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PRINCIPLES 1 & 2: RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, RECOGNITION AND VALUE**

The University has an ongoing commitment to recognition and reward and to transparency around recruitment and progression. Strategies moving forward will focus on attracting and retaining the best researchers to deliver research excellence. Specific actions will include:

- Review and evaluate new annual review and probation processes.
- Review advertising through Euraxess portal.
- Continue to review policies and practices relating to recruitment and redeployment.
- Ongoing commitment to recruitment and annual review training for staff.

#### **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PRINCIPLES 3 & 4: CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

We have an ongoing commitment to personal and professional development for staff and this is one of the pillars of the new strategic plan. Specific actions will include:

Development of a skills and competencies matrix (underpinned by development opportunities).

- Enhance one to one support for researchers through expansion of coaching and mentoring in partnership with HR.
- Review and enhance professional development programme for research staff.
- We will continue to offer PI Leadership Development programmes in each of the Colleges in partnership with HR and to expand their scope to Early and Mid-Career Researcher development Programmes and succession planning.
- Embedding engagement and development in research funding and fellowship applications.

#### **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PRINCIPLE 5: RESEARCHER RESPONSIBILITY**

We are committed to improving engagement with research staff and seek to implement innovative ways in which to enable researchers to take more of a leading role. Specific actions will include:

- Enhance engagement with Research staff association around professional development.
- Implement strategies to improve response rates in benchmarking surveys.
- Review and improve communications (including webpages) of the CAD to make the breadth of opportunities and support more accessible.
- Innovation around ways to add value to development workshops building on the learning from the RCUK Catalyst project.

#### **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PRINCIPLE 6: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Equality and Diversity remains a priority for the University in the emerging strategic plan. Review of policy and practice is embedded within core business. Specific areas for continued good practice include:

- Continue to review and progress policies and practices relating to equality and diversity, reward and recognition.
- Continue to support submissions to Athena SWAN.
- Implement and embed the Equality Outcomes and Action Plan.

#### **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PRINCIPLE 7: IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

Implementation, evaluation and review are embedded within core business of teams working in and around these agendas e.g. HR Excellence, Athena SWAN, and Equality Outcomes. Progress against action plans will be reviewed by the RDAG and other appropriate groups/committees in consultation with research staff, in particular through our enhanced activities with the Research Staff Association.

- Continued commitment to CROS and PIRLS.
- Enhanced engagement with Research Staff Associations in relation to benchmarking, evaluation and review.

#### **SUCCESS INDICATORS**

Progress will be measured against the actions set out in the action plan and monitored through the RDAG. More broadly our success indicators will include:

- Improved CROS/PIRLS data including response rates and in specific questions relating to recognition and value
- Increased uptake in annual review
- Athena SWAN Awards
- KPIs set out in new strategic plan and in underpinning operational plans
- Improved redeployment and retention figures relating to probation and induction processes.



This document provided evidence and current and ongoing practice related to the guiding principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and identifies new actions for 2015-20.

**Principle 1. Recruitment and Selection: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.**

**Current and Ongoing Practice**

The [current](#) (2010-2015) and emerging (2015-2020) strategic plans and [Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy](#) (2013-2015) clearly state our commitment to research excellence. Our vision is to provide a world class culture and environment that enables our students and researchers to create and use knowledge that makes a difference, wherever that knowledge is applied.

The University strives to attract and retain world class scholars who enhance the quality and breadth of its research portfolio and who add to its research culture. This includes attracting first class, ambitious researchers at an early stage of their career as well as senior professors with a track record of leading and delivering excellent research. Many of our current achievements result from our previous success in deploying this policy.

**Recruitment and Selection:** The University of Aberdeen has a clear and transparent recruitment process for research staff. [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#) is underpinned by the Recruitment and Selection Guidelines which support staff involved in recruitment processes by providing information relating to good practice in recruitment and selection.

Since 2010 all staff have been employed on open-ended contracts (unless the term of appointment is less than 9 months).

Clear guidance relating to role descriptors and job adverts is provided by HR. All staff involved in interview panels are required to undertake training in recruitment and selection. Policies and practices relating to recruitment of staff can be found on the University staff pages ([here](#)).

It is mandatory for all staff to undertake an [eLearning module](#) on equality and diversity. HR continues to promote diversity on all academic job posts.

In 2014 (October) significant changes were made in the organisational structure of HR such that an [HR Employment Services](#) team has been established to act as a single first point of contact for all enquiries relating to the recruitment of staff.

**Redeployment:** Policies and practices to support the avoidance of redundancy policy continue to be reviewed and updated with dedicated redeployment coordinators working within HR.

A new [redeployment vacancy website](#) is available for staff identified at risk of redundancy. Redeployment vacancies are listed on the online recruitment system and all vacancies must be advertised to redeployment candidates for a period of 2 weeks prior to internal/external advert.

31% of individuals placed at risk of redundancy for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 October 2014 were made redundant. 60% were redeployed through either a continuation of their current role or finding a new position within the University. The remaining 9% left through resignation or a Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) transfer to another organisation.

**Induction:** Induction for new staff is offered at institutional, College and local levels however perceived usefulness of induction had decreased slightly between 2011 and 2013 (CROS data: 35% in 2013 compared to 40% in 2011). Colleges and HR have undertaken a review of induction and have improved provision. All new staff are invited to a University wide [induction](#) (content under review), the date of which is included in contract letters. HR are in the process of developing a new online institutional induction which we will monitor through future institutional staff surveys and through CROS and PIRLS.

Researcher Development consulted with research-only staff to determine why interest in research staff induction had decreased. One of the findings was that this type of information was useful at different times across the life cycle of a research post and engagement would be greater if this was

accessible at all times online rather than at set times per year. This prompted development of the online research staff induction materials (developed in consultation with research staff) available on our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE; launched October 2014, accessed 30 times since November).

Each of the Academic Colleges has reviewed induction programmes and have made steps to extend reach of College and local inductions. New University Staffnet and College web pages have made this information more accessible.

**Probation:** A review of [probation](#) has been undertaken and a new process for research active staff will be launched in March 2015. The new process will make it mandatory for research staff on probation to be allocated a mentor.

**Promotion:** The University has an agreed and well established [promotion](#) procedure for all staff. The process and supporting documents are freely available on the HR web pages. The process is launched by the Senior Vice-Principal who delivers a series of information sessions across the Schools and disciplines each year.

A review of promotion, chaired by the Senior Vice-Principal, took place in 2013, with the purpose of ensuring transparency and that the broad range of activities undertaken by research staff (e.g. Commercialisation, Knowledge Exchange, Public Engagement, industry related activities) are properly recognised in the promotion process. The changes were communicated to staff through meetings chaired by the Senior VP and in digital communications. There was a 27% increase in the number of research fellows promoted in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13.

**Pay Grades:** The university uses agreed role descriptors (national role profiles) and has a standard job evaluation system (HERA, recognised UK wide). Pay structures adhere to the framework agreed as part of the new Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES). Payment within the framework is dependent on specific roles, performance and experience.

### **Principle 1. Recruitment and Selection: Future Focus and Actions**

Strategic objectives relating to recruitment and retention of staff, promoting excellence. **LEAD: HR**

HR will continue to provide information online for current and potential staff members in a clear and transparent manner. **LEAD: HR**

HR will continue to promote diversity on all academic job posts in liaison with the E&D and Athena SWAN teams, reporting in 2015 at the end of the current Athena SWAN award. **LEAD: HR and VP Development (Equality & Diversity)**

Launch of new probation process for research active staff (Spring 2015). **LEAD: HR**

Review advertising on Euraxess resource and how we can benefit from it. **LEAD: HR and Research & Innovation**

HR will continue to provide online recruitment training and monitor adherence to policy. **LEAD: HR**

Review practices relating to promotion of HR Excellence in Research Award to recruiters e.g. Euraxess. **LEAD: HR and Centre for Academic Development (CAD).**

Improve the provision of management information relating to research so as to better support research staff. **LEAD: HR**

**Principle 2. Recognition and Value: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's Human Resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.**

#### **Current and Ongoing Practice**

Current and emerging 'People' and 'Research' strategies of our new strategic plan identify the values and support necessary to support and develop world class researchers at all levels across the University. These principles form the basis of management of staff across the University, regardless of position or level.

All staff have access to the same benefits package (redundancy/redeployment policies, pensions, employee advantages, childcare, holidays, discounts etc.), and there is no differentiation for fixed term or funding limited activity contracts.

**Annual Review:** The University has a clear commitment to [annual review](#) (formerly appraisal) with all staff expected to review their career development (at least annually) and aspirations and development requirements to meet specific objectives.

In February 2014 a new annual review process was introduced through a working group consisting of representatives from all categories of staff and areas within the University and representation from all the Campus Trades Unions. The new processes explicitly includes the need to discuss (at least annually) a researchers career, their aspirations, and what development is required to enable the individual to progress as well as providing an opportunity to set objectives and receive feedback.

The University is closely monitoring the impact of the new appraisal system; this will be factored into CROS and PIRLS surveys 2015 and through an evaluation process. We are confident the new process will improve uptake and we will report on its effectiveness in due course. Since 2010 engagement has been consistent with the UK national average, around 70% (CROS and PIRLS data), however through the improved process we strive to report significantly improved engagement, aspiring towards 100% return. Annual review training offered across the University to support implementation of the new process. We should also note that Annual Review process will take until the summer of 2015 to complete as different timescales are operating in different areas to reflect workload patterns so we are only partly through the process.

**Principal Investigator Leadership Development:** Bespoke Principal Investigators (PI) development programmes promote excellence in leadership and

management for PIs and emphasise the University's commitment to the Concordat. These programmes are designed to support new and aspiring and also experienced PIs to ensure that they are equipped to reach their full potential by enhancing their understanding of the University environment. The programme outlines their roles and responsibilities, raising awareness of the support available within the University and developing their people management, leadership and project management skills. It also provides support on 'Managing your own research career and that of your team', which includes how to get the best out of annual review, how to develop researchers and the value of developing the transferrable skills of your team(s). We continue to develop leadership and management competencies within PI Development programmes, coordinated through the CAD and HR. Programmes are targeted towards junior and senior PIs within Colleges. The programmes have been enhanced through the Every Researcher Counts resources that have been used to inform equality and diversity development activities. Since their introduction in 2007, we have delivered over 15 programmes to 264 PIs across the University.

The Researcher Development webpages (introduced in 2012) currently host the [Management Skills Handbook](#), developed to support PIs and research managers (updated in 2012). A working group will be convened in late 2014/early 2015 with the purpose of establishing a coordinated approach to training and development activities. The handbook will be hosted on the most appropriate pages within our staff intranet.

**Supervisor Training:** Supervisor training is coordinated jointly between the Colleges and the CAD. Each of the Colleges have agreed to implement a more structured approach to supervisor training to deliver a three part training programme focusing on monitoring & progression; supporting PhD writers and examining research projects. This has been piloted the College of Arts and Social sciences to a cohort of 30 supervisors (note: the first workshop on progression and monitoring is well established in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine (CLSM) and has been used as a model of best practice).

Both PI and Supervisor training emphasise the importance of supporting and developing more junior researchers, the new annual review process provides a structure to facilitate such conversations and to identify development needs.

**Redeployment and Promotion:** As detailed above in principle 1, the University is committed to ensuring all staff are treated fairly and policies and procedures relating to probation, redeployment, recruitment, promotion and retention. Policies and practices relating to these are available online.

**Framework of Academic Expectations:** In October 2011, the University launched the Framework of Academic Expectations which provides an additional mechanism by which managers and academic staff can engage in constructive dialogue about overall levels of contribution and the support and development that is required to enhance academic achievements. As the new strategic plan develops, a reinvigorated Framework will be

developed that will be underpinned by a development programmes and opportunities across different levels of staff.

## **Principle 2. Recognition and Value: Future focus and actions**

A short-life working group will be established with the purpose of establishing a more structured matrix for academic and research staff development. This will ensure that all research active staff are enabled to access development opportunities and that our provision is comprehensive and addresses any identified gaps. This group may also consider how best to enable two-way communication relating to annual review outcomes and development needs. **LEAD: VP Research and Knowledge Exchange (to be confirmed as part of strategic planning).**

HR will monitor the uptake of annual review and will evaluate of the new process. CROS and PIRLS 2015 data will provide valuable information relating to the impact of the new process. **LEAD: HR and CAD**

Incorporation of annual review best practice into PI leadership development programmes and in extending PI programmes to encompass development in the breadth of activities that research active academic staff undertake (e.g. teaching, doctoral supervision) **LEAD: CAD and HR**

HR will continue to ensure communication of any changes to policies and/or practices related to recruitment, progression, development etc. **LEAD: HR**

The CAD and HR will continue to work closely together to ensure best practice related to PI and Supervisor development is captured and shared through appropriate fora such as the RDAG and CAD Advisory Boards. **LEAD: CAD, HR and RDAG**

**Principles 3 & 4. Support and Career Development: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment. The importance of researchers personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.**

#### **Current and Ongoing Practice**

**Centre for Academic Development:** The CAD was launched in early 2013 by bringing together the Centre for Learning & Teaching (Directorate of Academic Affairs) and the Researcher Development Unit (Human Resources). The Centre supports strategic priorities in teaching, learning and researcher development and provides a sustainable and integrated environment for staff and students seeking to develop their teaching, learning and research practice.

The CAD develops and delivers an extensive, University-wide programme of development opportunities designed to enhance personal and professional development of postgraduate researchers and research staff through a variety of open and bespoke courses, workshops and individual interventions. The programme is designed to enable and empower researchers to develop their skills and competencies, build their CV in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive global environment. Our training programmes and courses are designed for all our postgraduate researchers and/or research staff. We recognise that not all of our researchers will remain in an academic role. To this end, we coordinate a comprehensive programme of activities to support researchers to deliver societal and economic impact in a global environment - for example in enterprise, entrepreneurship, creativity and commercialisation, teaching and self-management.

The researcher development team, within CAD, delivers 100-150 courses/workshops each year to research staff and postgraduate research students, since 2012 approximately 30% of research staff have engaged in one or more development opportunity per year, an increase of almost 50% compared with 2010.

CAD works closely with the Careers service to deliver bespoke information, support and development workshops specifically for research staff. These include practical CV and interview advice to 'Careers Beyond Academia' and 'Advancing in Academia' workshops. The Careers Service also offer one to one careers advice sessions for research staff as well as students.

All development workshops and opportunities are mapped to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and we promote the RDF to researchers to inform annual review discussions. The Researcher Development Statement continues to inform our support for research staff.

In 2014 the CAD has been working more closely with Colleges, Schools and across institutions to develop more bespoke initiatives to support researchers at an early stage of their career. For example, in 2014 we developed a collaborative project with Universities of Stirling and Edinburgh to support researchers in developing skills and to build evidence for career progression – namely funding evidence. Early career researchers attended a virtual skills collaboration workshops and were then invited to then work together to develop a funding proposal. The winning team ([funeralscapes.abdn.ac.uk](http://funeralscapes.abdn.ac.uk)) was awarded £1000. The team has continued to work together and has since attracted a further £1400 (the 2nd placed team have also continued to work together and has attracted £1000). Initiatives of this nature are deemed to be more effective and have a greater impact on research-only staff than standalone workshop programmes. This approach will be rolled out across our provision for research staff from next academic year.

**Researcher Engagement and Development:** The University is a signatory of the [Manifesto for Public Engagement](#) (December 2011) and adheres to the guiding principles of the [Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research](#). The synergies between the principles of the concordats for development and for public engagement have shaped our strategy for Researcher Engagement and Development. This approach and case studies highlighting the impact on the career development of our researchers have been featured in high profile publications e.g. [RCUK Inspiration to Engage](#).

In 2012, the University was awarded a Research Councils UK Catalysts Award for Researcher Engagement and Development, one of only eight awarded in the UK. This award has facilitated the (sustainable) establishment of a dedicated Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) with three core staff members. The team support researchers across disciplines and career stages with public engagement activities and with embedding stakeholder engagement within funding applications.

The Catalyst strategy for Researcher Engagement and Development embeds a strategy for progressive researcher empowerment whereby the provision of skills and personal development are closely coupled with tangible and real-life opportunities to put skills into practice through public engagement and other channels. This approach develops a relationship with our research community from their induction, through an extensive generic skills programme and follows through to practical experiences.

The success of the progressive strategy for researcher development, as described in the RCUK catalysts application has helped to anchor researcher development and engagement into the research process, an increasingly important pillar of research excellence. This approach has had a significant leverage effect on other areas of activity that support the career development of researchers. For example the PERU led a successful pan-Scotland funding application to the Horizon 2020 European Researchers Night call (€180,000). [Explorathon](#) provided development opportunities for over 300 researchers across Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities. Explorathon will take place again in 2015. In 2013, a successful (£40K)

application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Cultural Engagement Fund enabled two early career researchers to undertake a three month placement in the PERU and CAD to support the University May Festival and to develop resources to support the researchers involved. Building on the experience, and supported by both PE and RD teams, one of the ECRs has successfully applied for an AHRC collaborative skills career development personal award.

The PERU coordinates a year round calendar of activities and events including the [University May Festival](#), [ESRC Festival of Social Science](#), [AHRC Being Human](#), the [UK's largest Café Discussion programme](#), [Pecha Kucha](#) and [National Science and Engineering Week](#), providing over 100 individual opportunities for researchers to engage with. The full range of activities is available on the [PERU webpages](#).

The PERU and CAD jointly facilitate the drive to develop STEM Ambassadors across the University amongst research students and staff, through coordinated training workshops and STEM induction sessions. Based on figures from the STEMNET Contract Holder for the North East of Scotland, in 2010/11 there were 20 University of Aberdeen STEM Ambassadors, rising to 35 in 2011/12 and rising again to 43 in 2012/13, the last reporting period. It should be noted that, despite best efforts, only around half of STEM Ambassadors tick the 'data-sharing with employer' option on their STEM Ambassador forms. Therefore the absolute number of University STEM Ambassadors will be significantly more than reported here. These figures represent a year on year increase of 75% as our Catalyst Strategy took effect in 2012, and subsequently a rise of 23% as our joint training/induction courses continue to attract higher numbers. Given this above, our best estimate is that the University currently has over 100 active STEM Ambassadors from its undergraduate, postgraduate and staff populations.

The PERU have been instrumental in securing Institutional Strategic Support Funds for the University which directly link to career development initiatives in specific research areas surrounded by quality public engagement and impact.

**Teaching:** The CAD supports teaching development across all levels of researcher (including postgraduate research students) through workshops and development programmes accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). A newly introduced Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice was introduced in 2014 and includes a module on 'Building a Successful Research Career' for delivery in 2015. We also offer a teaching programme for postgraduate research students and research staff. The [Principles in Learning and Teaching for Higher Education Programme](#) is designed specifically for those who are new to teaching, and who may have little or no previous experience. The Programme is externally accredited by the Higher Education Academy.

A [teaching continuing professional development framework](#) has been developed which recognised excellence in teaching and learning activities and

enables multiple routes to recognition by the Higher Education Academy. The framework is flexible to enable users to follow a structured development programme or to accrue evidence of independent learning. This framework will align with the skills and competencies matrix and will inform its development. The framework will map to our academic (research and teaching) role levels, such that opportunities become easily identifiable for students and staff regardless of their level.

**Staff Development** The [Staff Development](#) team within HR continues to develop and offer leadership and management support through externally accredited development programmes, mentoring and coaching and bespoke support across Colleges and within schools. An extensive training programme includes Heads of School programmes, team development, support for annual review, generic skills, coordination of mediation training and licensed development tools (including Belbin, Myers Briggs and Hay Emotional Intelligence)

**Human Resources:** deliver an extensive training and development programme across the institution to support staff in recruitment, selection, probation, management and to provide advice on policies and procedures. Workshops include: Recruitment Techniques and Advertising, Investigatory Officer Training, Absence Management for Managers and HR Policy Updates.

**Coaching:** A coaching module, accredited by the Institute for Leadership and Management, in collaboration with the University of St Andrews was launched in 2014. The intention was to develop internal coaching capacity to support coaching for University staff, including researchers and academics, to support individuals to take control of their own career development and to support the development of their teams. The project builds a coaching network across the collaboration in Scotland. Since the launch of the programme 11 coaches have been trained and over 20 staff are receiving coaching (of which 15 are research active staff).

In late 2014 (November) a cohort (12) of HR partners and CAD staff undertook coaching training to ensure that as professional services we are better equipped to support staff inclusive of research and academic. HR and CAD will offer coaching as staff development to individuals, working together to ensure the best fit. Coaching provision compliments the extensive mentoring programmes available across the institution.

**Mentoring:** HR Staff Development coordinates a significant [mentoring programme](#) within each of the Colleges (and across Professional Services). All research staff are encouraged to have a mentor and is mandatory under the new probation process launching in 2015. Since its introduction in 2009, we have over 50 active mentor/mentee partnerships. A new ILM accredited mentoring training programme has been introduced and will be offered to support new mentors, in particular when new probation process is launched in Spring 2015.

**College of Life Sciences and Medicine Fellowship Scheme:** The College of Life Sciences (CLSM) has introduced a managed process to support researchers working towards independent fellowships. The application process for researchers is supported by mentoring through the CV building phase, helping develop an understanding of how projects are designed and developed to the final well-polished application. Since the introduction of this process in 2013 we can report a 10% increase in success rate compared to 2012. In brief ECRs are asked to submit their CV, abstract and schemes they wish to target; these are reviewed by the traffic light interview panel (consisting of senior academics), and discussed with the ECR. Written feedback is provided to the ECRs. Where a green light to apply is given, a mentor and peer-reviewers are appointed (note that the panel treats each targeted scheme separately, so one ECR could green, yellow or red for each they are targeting scheme individually). Since the Traffic Light Interview process has been implemented more ECRs are invited for interviews by the Funders.

The scheme will continue as part of normal business and will be regularly monitored. A similar process is being developed in the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS), for testing in Spring 2015 and implementation in 2015/16.

**Peer Review:** Each of the Colleges has an internal peer review process for funding applications. These processes are under review to make them more stringent to ensure that proposals are of the highest possible quality for submission. We are also seeking to share practice across schools and colleges relating to shadowing of the grant writing process by junior researchers and mentoring them through their own grants with a view to embedding it as part of the fellowship scheme described above.

**Enterprise:** We are in the process of seeking approval for a joint post between CAD and the Careers Service to work more closely with employer (academic and non-academic) to understand more fully how best to support researchers seeking to move beyond the Academy.

**Websites:** all development opportunities available to research staff are advertised across several webpages, including Researcher Development, CAD, HR, IT, College and Staffnet pages. Whilst this accessible by research staff we are working together to streamline the information available and to host it in a single page within the staff intranet.

**IT Training:** The [Training and Documentation](#) Team provide an extensive suite of development courses, workshops and self-study guides for all staff.

**Practice sharing:** The University of Aberdeen is involved in a number of collaborations with other Scottish Universities, through Research Pools (Scottish Universities Physics Alliance, SUPA), as well as working alongside them in Scotland-wide networks such as Universities Scotland and ScotHERD (Scottish Higher Education Researcher Developers). These networks typically involve information sharing of best practice. PERU and CAD

work closely with SUPA to deliver skills training sessions related to public engagement and linked directly to outreach activities – in 2014, 15 SUPA researchers delivered the launch event (Speed Science) at the Glasgow Science Festival.

PERU and CAD are committed to sharing the learning from the Catalyst project and contribute to practice sharing events across the sector (e.g. Association for Research Managers and Administrators, ARMA; Vitae and Engage).

We have demonstrated commitment to the UK Researcher Development Agenda through membership of Vitae from 2015.

#### **Principles 3 & 4. Support and Career Development: Future Focus and Actions**

Development of the University strategy for 2015-2020 will identify a number of new actions for the teams involved in the HR Excellence in Research process. These will be incorporated as concrete actions on publication of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

We will establish a working group, chaired by a senior academic (VP Research & KE tbc), to develop a structured skills and competencies matrix which will be underpinned by the development programmes provided across the University by Professional Services. (March 2015). **LEAD: VP Research and Knowledge Exchange (tbc)**

Full evaluation of new annual review process, its effectiveness and how development objectives link with training providers will be conducted by HR and CROS and PIRLS 2015 data will be available to inform this. **LEAD: HR (May 2015)**

HR will continue to deliver annual review training across the academic Colleges and will be incorporated into PI development programmes. **LEAD: HR (Ongoing)**

We will continue to review and amend webpages to reflect the activities and support provided by the CAD and to ensure that it links efficiently with other training and development providers. **LEAD: CAD (March 2015)**

We will review and enhance professional development programme for research staff **LEAD: CAD (ongoing)**

PERU will identify robust mechanisms to ensure that co-research activities are embedded within research funding applications that will in turn impact on research staff career development. **LEAD: PERU (end 2016)**

Working with HR we will review PI Development programmes to extend them to encompass development in the breadth of activities early and mid-career researchers undertake (e.g. teaching, doctoral supervision). **LEAD: HR & CAD**

Learning from REF: The Colleges are delivering a series of REF roundup workshops, from which we will be able to identify potential opportunities for researchers that have been identified locally and across the institution. **LEAD: Colleges**

We will seek to implement a model, with defined metrics, for evaluation and impact of development activities in order to report on progress of development strategies, Concordat implementation and linked to the Framework for Academic Expectations. **LEAD: CAD, HR and VP Research & KE (end 2016).**

Develop and implement a managed scheme for fellowship applications within the College of Arts and Social Sciences. **LEAD: CASS (End 2016).**

**Principle 5. Researcher Responsibility: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development.**

**Current and Ongoing Practice**

We have an institutional [policy](#) to support the career development of researchers which entitles research staff to 3 development days per year. Research staff are made aware of the policy through research staff online induction and on the staffnet pages.

The University offers an extensive range of activities and opportunities for research staff to engage in their personal, professional and career development (as described against principles 3 & 4). We recognise however the importance of empowering researchers to drive their own development and have put in place initiatives that enables research staff to do so (described below).

**Researcher-led Initiative Fund:** The Researcher-led initiatives (RLI) fund was introduced in 2013 and the funding is intended to support activities that are planned and managed independently by researchers (students and research staff). The RLI is closely coupled to the Public Engagement Enabling fund (launched in 2013). Since the RLI launch we have awarded over £10,000 to a range of different projects (12 in total) including attending and organising training summer schools, research symposia and mid-career research collaboration workshops.

**Researcher Engagement and Development:** As describes above the strategy for researcher engagement and development couples training to opportunities provided by the PERU for researchers across the University. The PERU also offers an [enabling fund](#) support research-led public engagement projects organised by staff and researchers of the University of Aberdeen. Researchers can apply for modest awards of up to £500 to support a public engagement project, deliver events or to develop partnerships or networks to enhance research activity and outputs. Since its launch in 2013, 10 different projects have been funded. Both funds are cross linked and applications which clearly cross reference each other are welcomed.

**Research Staff Association:** The CLSM Research Staff Association (RSA) was established in 2014 and the CAD has worked closely with them to establish the governance structure to ensure it is a sustainable venture. In late 2014, the RDAG agreed to support the association with funding for a series of career development activities. The RSA has been consulted on this action plan and in the creation of induction materials. The RSA also have a presence within the induction resource. CAD and the RSA are working to develop a series of workshops focusing on careers beyond the academy for 2015.

**Ethics:** Researchers employed at the University of Aberdeen are expected to conduct their research responsibly and to seek approval as appropriate. The University provides [clear guidance](#) on research governance, conduct and ethics and all research staff are issued with the [Research Governance Handbook](#). The Advisory Group for Research Ethics and Governance is chaired by the Vice Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange and is responsible for ethics training in collaboration with CAD. All researchers (staff and students) are expected to undertake ethics training.

**PURE:** The University's Research Information System PURE stores information about research activities such as research outputs (publications), professional activities and awards, outreach and knowledge exchange. It also displays data relating to research activity held in other University systems; e.g. Research Grant information from the Research Grants database. All research active staff are encouraged to record research outputs and associated activities in PURE. We are working closely with the Vice-Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange to establish PURE as a repository for professional development activities. In 2015 PURE access will be extended to postdocs and postgraduate researchers which will support them in recording research and research related activities (other than publications) and achievements, in preparation of CVs.

**Mentoring:** As detailed in principles 3 & 4 we have a well-established mentoring scheme that is available to all research staff and is a fundamental criteria of the CLSM Fellowship scheme. We have recently have entered into a pilot with an online mentoring system which we will test in early 2015. This mentoring management system will enable us to extend the reach and type of mentoring schemes we offer. We are investigating the potential for a teaching fellow mentoring scheme and a research-only staff specific scheme.

**Enterprise:** As detailed in principles 3 & 4 we are in the process of recruiting an enterprise officer to specifically identify and develop opportunities and resources to support enterprise and employability.

#### **Principle 5. Researcher Responsibility: Future Focus and Actions**

We will identify and implement strategies to improve the response rate to CROS and PIRLS surveys. This will include initiatives such as maximising the leverage offered by other initiatives to enhance responses and to showcase more effectively how the feedback has been taken on board. **LEAD: CAD (March-May 2015)**

We will seek to enhance the work of the RSA and indeed to extend its reach. By 2016 we hope to have identified further support structures for the

sustainability of the RSA and to have established more initiatives. **LEAD: CAD and RSA (Ongoing, review in 2016).**

The CAD will work to streamline communications such that we can highlight all of the provision offered by CAD as a whole rather than create divides between research and teaching. This is also true for our provision as we will seek to identify synergies across programmes. **LEAD: CAD (March 2015).**

We will review website information and consolidate duplicated information relating the CAD and to improve the user function **LEAD: CAD (March 2015)**

The RDAG will continue to review its membership and remit annually. **LEAD: RDAG**

We will pilot, review and evaluate the mentoring management software. **LEAD: HR Staff Development and CAD (end 2015).**

**Principle 6. Diversity and Equality: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.**

**Current and Ongoing Practice**

Currently equality and diversity is embedded at the University of Aberdeen through:

- E&D Policies and practices
- Athena SWAN Action Plan
- Equality Outcomes
- REF Guidelines and Code of Practice

The University has developed a body of Equality and Diversity Policies and Schemes and Action Plans including flexible working practice, disability (including dyslexia), equal pay, leave, religion and how the University is meeting requirements of equalities legislation. The policies can be viewed on our staffnet website [here](#) and [here](#).

All University staff are treated equally regardless of funding source. All have access to the same benefits package (redundancy/ redeployment policies, pensions, childcare, holidays, discounts etc.), and there is no differentiation for research staff, whether on open-ended, activity limited or fixed term contracts.

Schools (and Professional Services) have the discretion to make local decisions around flexibility in the work place. In addition, the University has a range of policies in place to formally support flexibility in the workplace, such as adoption leave, flexible working, maternity and paternity leave, and parental leave amongst others. These policies are all available to view [online](#).

All staff are required (mandatory) to Equality and diversity [e-training](#) to support recruitment and selection is available across the institution.

The University has in place comprehensive action plans underpinning our [Equality Outcomes](#) that impact across the University Community. Each action step is mapped against protected characteristics and measured for impact.

**Athena SWAN:** The University achieved an Athena SWAN institutional Bronze Award in 2012 (due for review in April 2015). The [Athena SWAN Bronze Action Plan](#) covers particular activities focusing on the progression of women in STEM but has wider application across the researcher community. Our action plan covers 2013-2016. The University has recruited of two dedicated Athena SWAN coordinators.

The University's [Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy](#) has been mapped with these Equality Outcomes to ensure actions are met.

The University's Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Outcome Agreement embeds equality and diversity into our activities supporting progress in increasing the diversity of the research base.

For the Research Excellence Framework (REF), all panellists were trained in equality and diversity, and fully aware of the special circumstances processes, provisions and approach. The [REF code of practice](#) clearly outlined equality measures and expectations for embedding equality and diversity in units of assessment.

The University is also a Stonewall Scotland Diversity Champion.

A Vice-Principal for Development with responsibility for Equality and Diversity was appointed in 2013 and chairs the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group. The remit of this group is to provide advice on all matters of policy development and implementation, and to assist in the promotion of a culture where equality and diversity are recognised as contributing to the strength of the University. The Group comprises representatives from across the University.

PI Development programmes are evaluated at every session and amendments made as appropriate. Sessions delivered in 2013 and 2014 have incorporated learning from Every Researcher Counts materials into them in sessions designed to develop management and leadership skills of which equality and diversity is a core element.

Unconscious bias training had also been piloted in 2014 and discussions are ongoing to identify the best model for roll out to managers across the University.

#### **Principle 6. Diversity and Equality: Future Focus and Actions**

HR will oversee any policy changes and ensure that they are communicated effectively to staff when required. As policy is updated it will be published on the website, replacing previous policy. **LEAD: HR**

HR will increase the number of College and School based information sessions for staff. **LEAD: HR**

Implement, embed and evaluate the Equality Outcomes and Action plan. **LEAD: PPG**

The Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity and the Vice-Principal for Development will work closely with the University community to review progress and identify areas for action/improvement in accordance with action plans. **LEAD: VP Development (Equality and Diversity)**

We will continue to engage with initiatives that support the equality and diversity agenda for example International Women's Day. **LEAD: PPG**

We will continue to support Academic units and Colleges in submission of Athena SWAN plans. Within the University, the institutional Bronze Award is reviewed in April 2015. Selected schools across the University will also apply for awards in 2015: School of Medicine (Silver; April 2015), School of Psychology (Bronze; April 2015), and School of Engineering (Bronze; April 2015). **LEAD: VP Development (Equality and Diversity)**

Develop a strategy for extending training in unconscious bias to managers across the University. **LEAD: VP Development (Equality and Diversity) (by end 2015)**

**Principle 7. Implementation and Review: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.**

#### **Current and Ongoing Practice**

Through maintenance of the HR Excellence Award, regular monitoring, review and feedback of ongoing activities, we can clearly demonstrate commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

**Governance:** The Researcher Development Advisory Group (RDAG), established in 2010 (formerly Concordat monitoring Group) meets regularly within the academic year to discuss and approve matters relating to researcher development. The RDAG is chaired by the Vice-Principal for Research and Knowledge exchange and has a remit to support research staff and students across the life span of an academic career. The RDAG approves the Researcher Development Strategy, associated activities and concordat implementation.

The newly created CAD has its own Advisory and Management Boards which closely link with the RDAG to ensure a coordinated approach to decision making related to research staff.

**CROS and PIRLS:** The university is committed to taking part in CROS and PIRLS surveys biennially. The University took part in CROS and PIRLS in 2011 and 2013. The data was reported to the University Management Group, the Committee for Research Impact and Knowledge Exchange, the Researcher Development Advisory Group. Findings were also communicated to research staff via eZines and on the website. Data presented in the survey reports has also been made available to inform ongoing reviews (annual review, researcher development and Investors in People for example) across the University where appropriate. The response rates for the surveys has increased with each year and is in line with the UK Average (23% in 2013, UK average 27%) however, we are committed to improving the response rate significantly in 2015 and 2017 and are working on the best way in which to do this.

There are obvious linkages between CROS and PIRLS and our institutional staff surveys and other national agendas (Athena SWAN Charter) and organisational development procedures (e.g. ELIR, Investors in People, Healthy working Lives). Consistent communication is essential to ensure progress and to share best practice across the institution.

The University is represented on the Vitae Impact and Evaluation Group which focuses on the evaluation of the professional development of

researchers and research careers and has a remit to provide expertise and leadership to the higher education sector on evaluation of researcher development and to inform the strategy and practice of Vitae evaluation-related activities.

#### **Principle 7. Implementation and Review: Future focus and actions**

Development of the people strategy for 2015-2020 will identify a number of new actions for the teams involved in the HR Excellence in Research process. These will be incorporated as concrete actions on publication of the Strategic Plan 2015-2020.

We will continue to benchmark against best practice through local and national surveys. We will endeavour to work more closely with research staff on the inclusion of questions in CROS. **LEAD: CAD and HR**

We will seek to find efficiencies in reporting and interpretation of survey data across the University committees and to the community. **LEAD: CAD and HR**

CAD will continue to lead on the HR Excellence in Research review in 2015-2020; progress, review and implementation will be monitored through the RDAG. **LEAD: CAD, HR, RDAG**