

University of Aberdeen
HR Excellence in Research Award Ten-Year Review

Overview

The University of Aberdeen received the HR Excellence in Research Award in December 2010 and retained it in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018. As a condition of our award we are required to undertake a ten-year internal review against the principles set out in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. In February 2020 the University launched its 2040 Strategy. Our purpose is to be 'Open to all' and 'dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others', with an explicit focus on being inclusive, interdisciplinary, international and sustainable. The Concordat aligns closely with these principles, particularly with regard to our commitment to care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our community, to support and develop our staff to achieve their full potential, and to secure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion. It is in this context that we develop and drive our support for our early career researchers. We define this group as those on open-ended but funding-limited contracts, who are employed to undertake research only.

Our ECR population numbers 385 researchers, including Research Assistants at Grade 5, Research Fellows at Grades 6 and 7, and some Senior Research Fellows at Grade 8. The largest group can be found in our School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (200), with others sitting within Biological Sciences, Natural and Computing Sciences, Geosciences, Engineering, and Psychology (157), and smaller numbers in our Arts, Humanities and Social Science disciplines (28). These research staff have access to all whole-staff training and development opportunities, as well as events and programmes tailored to their specific needs.

Over December 2019 and January 2020 Researcher Development and HR undertook a gap analysis with a view to becoming signatories to the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. This incorporated feedback from initial meetings of the Postdoctoral Research Committee (PDRC). The subsequent scheduled consultation with the wider research community was postponed due to Covid-19, with resources being redeployed to support researchers throughout the crisis period. Work in this area is ongoing, in particular through a newly-established Research Culture Task and Finish Group, set up to engage with current sector-wide discussions on this theme and due to report in Spring 2021. Its remit is to identify good practice within the University in supporting a positive research culture, to gather the views of researchers to identify where further work is needed, and to propose a range of measures to address these issues. We were pleased to demonstrate our commitment to supporting research staff by becoming a signatory to the revised Concordat in July 2020 and will map current actions onto the new plan before it is finalised in 2021. We are therefore reporting against the 2008 Concordat for this round of HR Excellence, and the new plan will incorporate actions from our gap analysis which are not reflected in this round of reporting.

As with all institutions the global pandemic has had a significant effect on University operations and this is reflected in the action plan, which notes where priorities have shifted, where activities have been superseded, changed or carried forward and support has been reconfigured. This progress report and accompanying action plan outline our continued progress to date and our plans for the next two years.

Governance

Concordat implementation and the associated plan is overseen by the Vice-Principal (Research) and governed through the Research Policy Committee to which the PDRC reports. The latter is chaired by the Dean for Industrial Engagement in Research & Knowledge Transfer, and includes research staff representatives from all relevant Schools, giving a formal mechanism for postdoctoral researchers to review and develop the plan. The Directorate of People brings together support functions for staff and students including Human Resources, Athena SWAN, and the Careers Service under the leadership of the Director of People, and these functions are also represented on the Postdoctoral Research Committee. It is clerked by the Researcher Development Adviser. The work of the PDRC and the Research Culture group align with our institutional 2040 strategy and, with the Vice-Principal (Research) being a member of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC), this ensures the committee maintains a focus on our research community.

How was the ten-year review undertaken?

Overall responsibility for reviewing and evaluating progress sits with Vice-Principal (Research) working closely with Researcher Development and colleagues in Research and Innovation and HR. For the ten-year review we have reviewed and evidenced progress against our 2018 action plan and developed our two-year action plan for 2020-22. In consultation with our HR Partners, actions were aligned with other University initiatives (e.g. ongoing Covid -related Employee Engagement, Wellbeing, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). The document was reviewed by the PDRC, which recommended a closer focus on the promotions process for research staff, to develop clearer guidance for Research Fellows around promotion from Grade 6 to Grade 7 across disciplines. This will form part of a review to be undertaken by HR in 2021-22, will be embedded in our planning for the new Concordat, and has been included as a forward action under Principle 1. Finally, the report and action plan were approved through the Research Policy Committee and ultimately by our Senior Management Team.

The annual Staff Survey has been delayed due to Covid-19 and will report in February 2020, and we chose not to run CEDARS in 2020 due to a proportion of our research staff being furloughed over the summer. The University instead ran a 'Covid-19 Pulse Survey' in June 2020, to assess the effectiveness of the support provided since March. This has been reflected in the action plan and highlighted below. The Research Culture task and Finish Group will run a survey in early 2021, to gather data to inform its reporting.

Key achievements and progress against Principles 1&2: Recruitment, Selection, Recognition and Value

- Our commitment to staff (and student) wellbeing has been underlined by the appointment of our Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and expansion of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team from 3-8 staff members which includes the establishment of a dedicated Wellbeing Team to coordinate wellbeing activities, events and share national health campaign messages across each campus.
- The UOA instigated a series of support measures to support staff working from home during Covid-19 including enhanced 'Mental Health and Wellbeing' support for all, delivery of office equipment to staff and use of the 'Job Retention Scheme' including for research staff and those whose contracts were coming to an end. Following feedback from the Covid-19 pulse survey a Workload Review Group has stipulated (amongst others) that all online meetings to finish at least five minutes before the scheduled time to allow for a break between meetings, line managers to ensure that everyone takes a proper, uninterrupted, period of annual leave and, unless it suits individual circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities), and there is no expectation that staff will read, send or reply to work emails outside of their working hours.

Key achievements and progress against Principles 3&4: Support and Career Development

- Our Grants Academy has markedly enhanced the quantity and variety of training opportunities available to researchers and the ResearchBites series of bespoke 'learn and lunch' training sessions has been a huge success with 410 attendees attending a total of 26 sessions and our training programme for postdoctoral researchers comprised a series of 13 sessions covering a range of career development themes and was very well received by attendees.
- A two-day visit from the Director of the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange with over 50 participants from the UOA provided an excellent overview of the policy landscape and highlighted opportunities for engaging with the policymaking process. Feedback was 100% positive.
- Whilst Covid-19 restrictions may have caused us to revise or postpone some of our activity we have nevertheless adapted and ensured continuity of support and career development to our researchers. All of our Grants Academy and researcher development training opportunities are offered online which has impacted positively on attendance, instead of a residential Academic Development event in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition we organised a four-week programme comprising a weekly one-hour video supported by learning groups and coaching questions and full programme of events for our UOA -led (ESRC) Festival of Social Science went ahead online in November 2020.
- In addition, during summer of 2020 a group of early career researchers in SMMSN developed a series of monthly online events, to support their colleagues in thinking about career development and wellbeing in the Covid era, and to build closer networks across disciplines. Four events have been held so far, and more are being planned based on an ongoing assessment of ECRs local needs. The group have partnered with the existing University of Aberdeen Institute of Medical Sciences postdoctoral staff network (NVISION) to harness ideas and to extend networking opportunities for early career researchers across the institution, all supported by Researcher Development and academic staff.

Key achievements and progress against Principle 5: Researcher Responsibility

- Our Research Futures Fund supported four career development events organized by research staff, in line with our 2040 strategy. These included a networking event for women in science, and a workshop exploring the intersection of research and gaming which hosted an industry speaker.
- Three Industry Fellowships were competitively awarded to researchers working with industry partners in the UK, Austria, and Myanmar; the resulting work has been impactful including a collaborative academic paper currently in progress. Working with Opportunity North East and its partnership with BioCity we have also offered business ideation sessions to life sciences researchers.
- We have given greater prominence to research integrity within our Research Governance framework and activities including: revisions to our Research Governance Handbook and its constituent policies, refreshing our Research Ethics and Governance module to specifically address research integrity, mandating completion of this module before ethical approval for research projects can be granted.
- A Research Culture Task and Finish Group was established in 2020, with a remit to identify the existing work that has already been undertaken by the University to support a positive research culture, to identify where any gaps exist, and to propose a wider range of measures to address these issues. The work of the group demonstrates the University's commitment to a positive working environment for researchers and support for a positive research culture and is aligned with our work on the new Concordat.

Key achievements and progress against Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

- The School of Psychology was our first academic School to be awarded an Athena Swan Silver Award in October 2020 and all of our other Schools now hold an Athena SWAN Bronze award. We have maintained our institutional Bronze Award.
- We have become signatories to the Race Equality Charter and Advance HE Declaration on race. We have also established a Race Equality Strategy Group co-chaired by the VP (Education) and the Head of SMMSN and a Race Equality Network for staff and students. To mark 2020 Black History Month we hosted a programme of events, blogs, podcasts and talks which provided opportunities to engage our community with this celebration.

Key achievements and progress against Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- The Postdoctoral Research Committee was established in the summer of 2019 and has met three times since its first meeting in November. It provides a formal mechanism for feedback from research staff to be incorporated into our forward planning and facilitates interdisciplinary networking and community-building amongst research staff. The committee identified priority areas for action and these have developed over the course of 2020.

Activities beyond 2020: Principles 1&2: Recruitment, Selection, Recognition and Value

- Building on the work of our restructured Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team we will strive to maintain our Healthy Working Lives Silver Award and work towards our application for Gold by seeking to better target our wellbeing campaigns at key pressure points of the year and launch a new 5-year Wellbeing Strategy which will include a focus on Mental Health.
- We will continue to promote inclusivity in all we do and continue our focus on Race Equality working with Advance HE to develop a Race Equality Strategy with a view to applying for Race Equality Charter recognition.
- Our work to support our researchers achieve their potential will include an in depth review of our promotions process and our annual review process in line with the revised Concordat.
- Following lessons learned during Covid-19 we will be launching a Homeworking Policy to increase flexibility of the workplace, flexibility of the working day for those with caring commitments and to increase the support available to staff who are working from home

Activities beyond 2020: Principles 3&4: Support and Career Development

- Building on the increased flexibility offered by online Researcher Development workshops and, aligning with the soon-to-be launched Homeworking Policy referred to above, we will continue to develop online training opportunities even when a return to in-person provision is permitted.
- To further support skills development and industry engagement a series of 'bridging the gap' training videos targeted towards Early Career Researchers will be launched. To support our new and early career staff we will investigate how we can enhance support our probationary staff and will introduce new guidance and training to support Schools identify and encourage potential internal (particularly female and other underrepresented) candidates for jobs.

Activities beyond 2020: Principle 5: Researcher Responsibility

- The UOA is committed to Open Research and to support this commitment our recently established Scholarly Communications Group will oversee awareness raising training sessions on open access, open data and open research. Complementing this work our Open Science Working Group Network Leads will recruit a group of Open Research Champions to act as points of contact within Schools and we will support these champions to undertake a certification course to equip them for this work.
- We will launch an online Research Integrity Training Course for all research active staff (and PGR students) and for professional service staff with a role in supporting research. This will be a mandatory course for all ECRs as part of their induction programme and existing staff will be expected to complete it within two years of launch.
- Aligning with our 2040 Strategic Plan commitments to enhance interdisciplinarity we will re-focus the 'Conversations On' networking events to be more challenge-led in response to more specific, national and global themes brought to us external partners.
- As a recent signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) we will be developing an implementation plan and guidance for staff.

Activities beyond 2020: Principle 6: Equality & Diversity

- Following the School of Psychology's Silver Athena Swan award, we will seek build on this success by developing a protocol to support further Schools to apply for a Silver award incorporating lessons learned and feedback from the

Athena Swan Panel to support Schools applying for Silver Award.

- As Covid-19 continues to impact upon our day to day activities we will monitor whether the disruptions from Covid-19 disproportionately impact on specific groups of researchers and seek to address any inequalities.

Activities beyond 2020: Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- Forward actions associated with this principle will be developed as part of our work on the revised Concordat, to which we became signatories in July 2020. It will include the formation of the Concordat Steering Group, formal consultation with Schools and relevant professional services, and the development of our new action plan which will include actions from the gap analysis already undertaken.

HR Excellence in Research: Ten Year Review

Review of progress against 2018 actions, 2018-2020

A. Actions Related to Recruitment & Selection and Recognition & Value (Concordat Principles 1 & 2)

Principle 1. Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research. Principle 2. 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.

The table below provides evidence against specific focus areas for Principles 1&2 highlighted in the 10-year review.		
2018 Actions	Action and Lead	2020 Progress
Recruitment and Selection: Continue to review and enhance recruitment and selection practices for employees (research staff) and employers including:		
<p>A series of Wellbeing events will be held 4-8 March 2019, incorporating Around the World in Many Faiths Day, Mental Health Day, and International Women's Day.</p> <p>Success measure: 80% positive feedback from attendees</p>	<p>Action A1</p> <p>HR Specialist Services / Wellbeing Team</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The UOA held an Inclusion Week in March 2019 incorporating Around the World in Many Faiths Day, International Women's Day and a variety of sessions were delivered supporting mental health including mindfulness workshops. in partnership with Campus Trades Unions, staff equality networks and the Aberdeen University Student Association. Approximately 500 members of our community participated.</p> <p>Feedback: Many events, including the Many Faith's day were drop in without formal attendance or evaluation. Anecdotal feedback was overwhelmingly positive. 100% of the feedback received for the Mindfulness sessions and International Women's Day fell under the 'satisfied' and 'most satisfied' categories.</p> <p>Additional Activity:</p> <p>Mental Health Day 2020 on 10 October was marked via a series of online events that was mainly delivered to staff (and students) via Facebook, Instagram and our Wellbeing pages. We also have a Mental Health First Aid Network with around 300 staff members throughout different directories. Information can be found here: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/wellbeing-portal/workplace-wellbeing-11651.php#panel11659</p> <p>Our International Women's Day is now an annual event with the 2020 celebration the most successful UOA International Women's Day to date with an increase in attendance of over 100% on 2019 and</p>

		<p>88% of all respondents indicated that they were very likely to attend again in future. The 2021 event is likely to be online.</p> <p>We recently appointed a Head of Health, Safety and Wellbeing. This appointment has led to several enhancements in our institutional approach to the wellbeing of our staff (and students) including a Mental Health and Wellbeing Working Group which meets quarterly and is overseen by the Head of Health Safety and Wellbeing and the Head of Student Experience, a designated Wellbeing team (established September 2019) and the creation of our <u>Wellbeing</u> pages. Our commitment to challenge stigma and raise awareness about mental health amongst our staff has included recruiting and training volunteer Mental Health Champions (MHC) and Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA). MHC's raise awareness in their teams, departments and schools about initiatives and events and provide signposting to MHFA's who provide supportive listening and signposting. Three of our MHFAs are early career researchers.</p> <p>Our mentoring scheme for staff was re-launched in 2019-20 with new training and support (including refreshed virtual training sessions, a mentee information pack and a network of mentoring champions across schools and directorates) in place to support staff. We have over 200 mentors registered and 70 active mentoring partnerships currently live; 13 ECRs act as mentors and 36 ECRs are currently mentees. Feedback to date suggests that staff have found having a mentor outside of their normal school or directorate an empowering resource to help them develop.</p>
<p>Evaluate the role of probationary mentors; develop and implement Action Plans (e.g. including training of probationary mentors).</p> <p>Success measure: Action plans developed and successfully implemented. Evaluation undertaken and evidence of recommendations/actions taken forward.</p>	<p>Action A2 HR</p>	<p>Revised action now moved to forward actions (Principal 3 & 4)</p> <p>Data from School surveys in 2018 -19 reveal that only 48% (16) of women and 57% (22) of men found their probationary mentor useful and so further investigation is required to bring forward recommendations to enhance the support provided to probationary staff.</p>
<p>Unconscious bias training will be open to all staff, and mandatory for those involved in recruitment and promotions. Certificates of attendance will be issued.</p> <p>Success measure: 100% of staff involved in recruitment and promotions will have undertaken the training, and 40% of all staff.</p>	<p>Action A3 HR Specialist Services</p>	<p>Training ongoing; evaluation on hold</p> <p>Training is mandatory for all involved in recruitment and promotions.</p> <p>Unconscious bias awareness sessions were delivered to all Schools and Professional Service areas as part of the 2019 Inclusion Week. Sessions were voluntary with approx. 17-20% attendance. Formal feedback evaluations were overwhelmingly positive but quantitative analysis is not available as the completed proforma are in UOA buildings and, due to Covid restrictions, currently inaccessible. A full evaluation will be actioned in due course when restrictions are lifted.</p>
<p>A new Employee Benefits platform will be implemented from early 2019.</p>	<p>Action A4 HR Reward Team</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Launched in spring 2019 UoA Rewards offers a range of discounts on a range of goods and services</p>

<p>Success measure: Data will show at least a 20% increase in engagement from staff versus the old platform.</p>		<p>and provides access to our counselling service provided by Care First with a 24-hour telephone counselling service face-to-face counselling sessions and an online portal and app.</p> <p>Data from the first full year of usage (October 2019-September 2020) shows an increase of 22.7% logins to the new platform compared with the old benefits system. 45 members of staff have contacted Care First in the first year of operation. BUPA participation rates increased from 3 members in January 2018 to 43 in September 2020.</p>						
<p>Operate the full staff survey once every 2 years with a commitment to increase response rates and improve on measures of staff wellbeing and engagement</p> <p>Success measure: 5-10% improvement in responses to survey questions related to staff morale and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Action A5</p> <p>HR Specialist Services</p>	<p>Delayed - now moved to forward actions (Principal 1&2)</p> <p>The bi-annual Staff Survey 2020 was delayed from summer 2020 to November 2020 to maximise participation. Capita Survey and Research have been engaged to undertake Staff Survey 2020 to enable benchmarking against other Higher Education Institutions, to provide flexibility to support increased response rate (staff can complete the survey electronically, by paper copy or via a freephone number with Capita staff) and to reassure staff regarding the confidentiality of the data collected . All options for completion ensure complete anonymity.</p> <p>Additional Activity:</p> <p>In June 2020 UOA carried out a pulse survey to ascertain staff feedback on the institutional response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to identify areas where additional support could be provided. The results were considered in a number of forums, including the Senior Management Team, the Campus Planning Group, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee and meetings with the Campus Trade Unions. Feedback revealed that most respondents felt supported by the Institution, were happy about the support received by colleagues, and recognised the flexibility provided by the Institution to staff to help them in managing their work and caring responsibilities.</p> <p>A significant improvement on participation rates in respect of previous staff surveys occurred:</p> <p>Staff Survey Participation Rates:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>– 1271 responses</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>– 1274 responses</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020 Covid-19</td> <td>– 1446 responses – increase of 13.5%.</td> </tr> </table> <p>13.8% of respondents were in research-based academic roles, 15.8% were in fixed-term contracts. No statistically significant scores were noticeable for research staff or for fixed / open contract staff.</p> <p>Staff surveys carried out before 2020 asked staff to signify whether they were in an Academic or Academic Related role. The job categories for staff were expanded for the Covid-19 pulse survey to Academic (Teaching & Research) or Academic (Research). The 2020 Staff Survey will extend this categorization further as follows: Academic (Teaching & Research), Academic (Research), Academic (Research Assistant/Research Fellow). This will enable the UOA to breakdown the results more efficiently leading to a better understanding of issues which may only be applicable to specific groups of employees.</p>	2016	– 1271 responses	2018	– 1274 responses	2020 Covid-19	– 1446 responses – increase of 13.5%.
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		<p>Additional activity: Principle 2 – Covid-19</p> <p>The UOA recognised the immediate and projected impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on staff and students and swiftly took the steps below to ensure appropriate support was provided in line with the Scottish Government guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving staff and students to ‘off-campus’ earlier than the official lockdown, ensuring appropriate support for homeworking and studying; • Development of ‘Homeworking guidance’ including support available; • Enhanced ‘Mental Health and Wellbeing’ support for staff and students; • Delivery of office equipment to staff to improve homeworking; • Ongoing support to those remaining on campus because of the nature of their role; • Use of the ‘Job Retention Scheme’ including for research staff where COVID-19 had a demonstrable impact on the work to be delivered and the funder permitted a no cost extension to enable the contracts to be extended. This enabled some short term extensions to be issued to staff who had been impacted whose contracts were coming to an end; 58 ECRs were furloughed.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and extension of a hardship fund for those whose contracts could not be extended; 8 ECRs were supported via the hardship fund • Regular communication from SMT to keep staff and students apprised of the situation and plans; • Undertaking equality impact assessments as appropriate • Work flexibility for those with (child)caring commitments and adjustments in workload; • ‘Return to Campus guidance’ and support including completion of Personal Risk Assessments and the Covid-Age Questionnaire; • Continuation of events virtually wherever possible. <p>To assess the effectiveness of the support provided a ‘Covid-19 Pulse Survey’ (Action A5 above).</p> <p>In response to the feedback received, the University established a ‘Workload Review Group’ which agreed the following immediate actions. These were communicated by SMT to the University’s community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line managers to ensure that everyone takes a proper, uninterrupted, period of annual leave; • Unless it suits individual circumstances (e.g caring responsibilities), there is no expectation that staff will read, send or reply to work emails outside of their working hours or at weekends. Steps should also be taken to reduce the volume of emails; • The requirement, frequency and length of meetings should be kept under constant review by all. Teams meetings should finish at least five minutes before the scheduled time to allow for a break between meetings; • Local arrangements in Schools and Directorates to keep times of the week free of meetings was

		<p>encouraged;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tapering (not freezing) the incremental progression and reinstating promotions and regrading procedures. <p>Further actions will be put in place where required. Key themes arising from the pulse survey are being incorporated as questions in the Staff Survey being launched in November 2020 to obtain further feedback.</p>
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B. Actions Related to Support and Career Development (Concordat Principles 3 & 4)

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

<p>The wider context for the work on Principles 3&4 is drawn from our institutional Strategic Plan 2015-2020 and companion strategies for People, Research and Knowledge Exchange, Athena SWAN and Teaching and Learning. The remit of the Strategic Plan includes creating an environment and culture where there is an expectation of research excellence and where researchers can thrive.</p> <p>The table below provides evidence against specific focus areas for Principles 3&4 highlighted in the 10-year review.</p>		
2018 Actions	Lead	2020 Progress
<p>Researcher Inductions will be run in October, February and June, including talks from the Vice Principal Research and Knowledge Exchange, Researcher Development, and Grants Academy, to welcome new researchers, highlight University training provision, and situate them in the UK research landscape.</p> <p>Success measure: 80% positive feedback from attendees</p>	<p>Action B1</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Induction Lunches ran in person in October and February (10 attendees in total). These were hosted by the Research Deans, with talks from the Grants Academy Business Development Officers on their services, including bid development and submission; the Research Policy Team, on REF and Open Access; and Researcher Development on the new Concordat, the Postdoctoral Research Committee and available training opportunities. This was repeated online in June, hosted by the VP Research, who welcomed 23 new researchers who were recruited as part of the University's 2040 strategy. Many of them had not yet been able to relocate to Aberdeen due to Covid, were attending from across Europe and further afield, and very much appreciated the chance to 'meet' colleagues and learn about the University. Feedback was 100% positive. These sessions will continue to run in 2021 and beyond.</p>
<p>Plan and implement a PI training programme for SMMSN and use this experience to approach other Schools to discuss their provision.</p> <p>Success measure: 80% of SMMSN participants find the training to be 'useful' or 'very useful'.</p>	<p>Action B2</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>In May 2019 27 ECRs (10 male and 17 female), including 11 Research Fellows, from the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition attended a residential Academic Development event. The theme was Sustainability, focusing on how to bring career success under your control, supporting your values, and strategic reputation enhancement. Sessions covered: Career Aims and Aspirations, The Current Context, Strategic Career Management, Regaining Control, Being Enterprising, Your</p>

		<p>Career Development Action Plan, and a panel discussion with senior colleagues.</p> <p>Due to Covid-19 this course was adapted in 2020 to a four-week programme on Thriving Through Change. Comprising a weekly one-hour video supported by learning groups and coaching questions, the programme aimed to support participants to handle uncertainty and think about change in a way which allows them to take advantage of opportunities and feel more in control. Fourteen participants signed up to the course, including two Research Fellows. Verbal feedback was sought at the last session and was all positive. One participant emailed to say that 'I thoroughly enjoyed it and found it impressively well-tailored to our current situation. You evidently appreciate the (diverse) realities of academic life and I found your videos and question prompts particularly helpful to think about how (realistically) we can help ourselves and our colleagues and families manage and even thrive through COVID 19 and other times of uncertainty and change'.</p>
<p>Record and monitor feedback on the effectiveness of the 'development plan template' used by staff development as part of the leadership course; survey attendees of leadership courses, one year after completion to evaluate how they have applied their skills into workplace. Data from the survey to be reported to Head of HR Specialist Services.</p> <p>Success measure: Feedback from the survey will show that at least 75% of each leadership course found the use of this template 'useful or very useful' for planning steps in their career progression.</p>	<p>Action B3</p> <p>HR Specialist Services</p>	<p>Action superseded by a restructuring and refocusing of the HR team delivering Leadership training. There are no current plans to revisit this action.</p> <p>Additional activity:</p> <p>In the past 18-months the ILM-accredited Moving into Management and Middle Management programmes have been re-structured in regard to delivery method and content. Both are now fully available online. The Moving into Management programme has been re-focused on coaching and supporting individuals within teams with the Middle Management programmes having a greater emphasis on strategic management and stress and conflict management.</p> <p>Numbers of participants have increased markedly since the restructure from 30 to 75 (150%) on the previous 18-month period, 16 of the 75 are ECRs. Feedback of the revamped modules has been overwhelmingly positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much of the theory learnt have you put in to practice? Average 7.69/10 • How likely are you to recommend us to a friend or colleague? Average 7.2 • To what extent were your expectations of the course met? 9.23/10
<p>A programme of lunchtime 'Research Bites' will be run in AY2019/20. Open to all researchers, each workshop will cover an aspect of the grant application cycle (finding funding, ethics, impact etc), with information and contacts within the University.</p> <p>Success measure: 80% positive feedback from attendees.</p>	<p>Action B4</p> <p>Grants Academy/ Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The Research Bites series of bespoke 'learn and lunch' training sessions has delivered a total of 26 sessions to date with 410 attendees, 152 of which were ECRs. Initially face-to-face the sessions have continued online during Covid-19 and this has impacted positively on attendance rates per session. These workshops have been well received with over 80% of feedback rating the sessions Good, Very Good or Excellent with comments including 'It was very helpful and practical information that is highly relevant' and 'It was extremely informative and very well organised'.</p>

<p>Establish a training programme for postdoctoral researchers focused on career development and transferable skills. Going forward, this will be improved through feedback from the workshops and the PDR .</p> <p>Success measure: Feedback on training courses 80% 'good' or 'very good'.</p>	<p>Action B5</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The programme comprised 13 sessions: Business Insights, Career Planning in research, careers beyond research, Public Engagement, Networking, Peer Review, Project Management, Public Engagement and Impact, Publishing, Social Media, Successful Collaborations, Technology and Tools and fellowships. Attendance was lower than had been hoped but feedback (see below) was very positive.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="864 306 1473 833"> <thead> <tr> <th>Course</th> <th>Attendance number</th> <th>% women</th> <th>% of all attendees rating very good or excellent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Business Insights</td> <td>6</td> <td>83</td> <td>83</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Career Planning in Research</td> <td>7</td> <td>71</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Careers Beyond Research</td> <td>2</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Intro to Public Engagement</td> <td>21</td> <td>81</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Networking</td> <td>7</td> <td>42</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Peer Review</td> <td>11</td> <td>54</td> <td>81</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Project Management</td> <td>3</td> <td>67</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Public Engagement and Impact</td> <td>19</td> <td>79</td> <td>94</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Publishing</td> <td>11</td> <td>82</td> <td>74</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Media</td> <td>2</td> <td>50</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Successful Collaborations</td> <td>2</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tech and Tools</td> <td>10</td> <td>40</td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fellowships</td> <td>11</td> <td>66</td> <td>86</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Additional Activity</p> <p>Over the summer of 2020 a group of early career researchers in SMMSN developed a series of monthly online events, to support their colleagues in thinking about career development and wellbeing in the Covid era, and to build closer networks across disciplines. Four events have been held so far, on: the Researcher Development Concordat, Mental Health and Wellbeing, REF for ECRs, and Continuing Professional Development, and more are being planned for the future based on an ongoing assessment of ECRs local needs. The group have partnered with the existing University of Aberdeen Institute of Medical Sciences postdoctoral staff network (NVISION) to harness ideas and to extend networking opportunities for early career researchers across the institution. Colleagues from other areas of the University have also been invited to contribute to events to ensure that accurate information and relevant support have been showcased and made accessible to participants. The ultimate aim is to make the sessions relevant to a larger number of ECRs.</p>	Course	Attendance number	% women	% of all attendees rating very good or excellent	Business Insights	6	83	83	Career Planning in Research	7	71	100	Careers Beyond Research	2	100	100	Intro to Public Engagement	21	81	100	Networking	7	42	100	Peer Review	11	54	81	Project Management	3	67	100	Public Engagement and Impact	19	79	94	Publishing	11	82	74	Social Media	2	50	100	Successful Collaborations	2	100	100	Tech and Tools	10	40	60	Fellowships	11	66	86
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<p>Develop and run a training programme for researchers which equips them with skills and opportunities to engage with business and industry.</p>	<p>Action B6</p> <p>IKE/Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>These sessions were included in our Research Bites Series (Action B4 above) under the theme 'Realising your Research Impact, Now and for the Future'. 23 attendees in total, 92% who completed evaluation</p>																																																								

<p>Success measure: 80% positive feedback from attendees.</p>		<p>forms rated these sessions as Good, Very Good or Excellent.</p> <p>Additional Activity: As part of the ESRC Business Booster, we delivered a series of business engagement workshops '<i>Thinking beyond the box</i>' to support staff who wish to learn more about interacting with non-academic stakeholders, identify how to start building networks and guide staff in methods of best practice towards business engagement. The series of workshops began with a business training workshop for our Social Scientists and researchers in the Humanities and feedback from this workshop informed the remaining workshops for other Schools across the University. 100% of the participants who provided feedback felt the workshops had been useful and delivered at an appropriate level.</p> <p>We appointed a Dean for Industrial Engagement in Research and Knowledge Exchange in 2019-20 who leads on our strategy for industry engagement, providing academic leadership across the University resulting in an enhanced focus on building relationships for longer-term partnerships.</p>
<p>Work with the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange, to host events giving researchers an overview of the policy landscape and highlighting opportunities for engaging with the policymaking process. Two events to be aimed at PhDs and ECRs.</p> <p>Success measure: 80% of participants will report that their knowledge has been improved.</p>	<p>Action B7</p> <p>IKE/Public Affairs/ Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>In January 2020 we hosted a two-day visit from the Director of the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange. As part of this visit two workshops were held for PGR/ECR audiences, one at each of our campuses, with 52 attendees in total. The Director spoke in depth about the policy landscape, the opportunities for researchers to contribute to this, and gave some practical advice on how to engage. He took a wide range of questions across a range of disciplines.</p> <p>Feedback was 100% positive.</p>
<p>Aberdeen will host the PCST (Public Communication of Science & Technology) conference in 2020 giving our researchers a unique opportunity to network and develop skills in issues around science and society, including tackling difficult subjects, talking with the media, exploring issues around ethics and integrity.</p> <p>Success measure: Aberdeen researchers involved in submitting abstracts and /or activities – up to 4% of activities/sessions involving researchers. Increased networks.</p>	<p>Action B8</p> <p>PERU</p>	<p>Postponed and now moved to forward actions (Principal 3&4)</p> <p>Due to Covid-19 the PCST the conference has been rearranged for 25-27 May 2021; at the time of submission the conference will be held in either a blended format or entirely online. Nevertheless, planning for the conference was well underway when lockdown intervened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 members of UOA staff have reviewed abstracts • 10 members of UOA staff, including 2 ECRs, were registered and due to present and/or hosting a roundtable and will do so in 2021; 8 of those 10 staff members of staff were to be funded to attend; this funding will roll forward to 2021 • 6 further members of staff, including 2 ECRs, were registered to attend • 3 additional research active staff are members of the organizing committee and heavily involved in the social and engagement activities • Currently sitting at 2.5% Inc. two public activities) activities/sessions involving researchers <p>Additional Activity:</p>

		<p>The Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) Festival of Social Science (FOSS) provides additional opportunities for UOA academics to develop and hone their skills with public engagement in a variety of different formats across the city. Led by PERU the Aberdeen November 2019 FOSS delivered 13 events covering topics as diverse as food production and security, Scottish Traveler Culture and identity and immigration and attracted just over 1700 members of the public. Building on the success of the 2019 event and with delivery being online due to Covid-19 restrictions, our November 2020 event will cover the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 US Presidential Election and its potential consequences, and populism movements in Africa. Nine members of UOA staff will be amongst those presenting. UOA historically has very few Social Science ECRs and none in 2020, however one ECR did have a presenting role in our 2019 event.</p> <p>We have also continued to engage with Explorathon and are currently amidst our 7th year of participation with Explorathan '20 which is taking place online this year. ECRs account for a respectable proportion of those participating from the UOA staff community with 15 ECRs (25% of all UOA participants) and 10 ECRs (30%) participating in 2019 and 2020 respectively.</p>
<p>Provision of an online module on research integrity that will complement our existing research ethics and governance module.</p> <p>Success Measure: Number of participants undertaking the course in the first instance, expected 50% uptake.</p>	<p>Action B9</p> <p>Research Integrity Working Group</p>	<p>In progress and included in forward actions (principle 5)</p> <p>The Research Policy Committee agreed to purchase an online Research Integrity module developed by a third party. Bespoke developments (e.g. in regard to accessibility and captioning) have been agreed and work towards this was underway supported by the eLearning Team within the Centre for Academic development when the Covid-19 lockdown hit; since then the eLearning Team has had to prioritise resource to support the institution's Blended Learning priorities. Nevertheless, work has progressed and testing of the new module on the UOA VLE will be complete by the end of November 2020 with a view to being live by early in 2021.</p>

C. Actions Related to Researchers' Responsibilities (Concordat Principle 5)

5. Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

<p>The work on Principle 5 is situated within the wider institutional People Strategy with a focus on creating an all-embracing supportive environment across the university community. Further context comes from the University's Employee engagement strategy that aims at building a sense of community among staff and improving feedback from staff.</p> <p>The table below provides evidence against specific focus areas for Principle 5 highlighted in the 6-year review.</p>		
2018 Actions	Lead	2020 Progress
The Aberdeen Research Futures fund will be established, offering funds for research staff	Action C1	Complete

<p>to develop and host career development events which support the University's strategic priorities. Up to four awards will be offered in 2019.</p> <p>Success measure: up to four events which enhance researchers' skills in: interdisciplinary working, network building and industry engagement.</p>	<p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>The Research Futures Fund was established in 2019 to support the career development of postdoctoral researchers at the University of Aberdeen, by providing awards of up to £500 each to fund innovative activities in different categories. Applicants were invited to propose activities in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish, develop or support an interdisciplinary network which crosses School boundaries. • Run a professional development activity or event, which supports the development of leadership, communication, networking, writing, and/or other transferable skills within or across disciplines. • Organise an activity or event which allows participants to explore the potential impact of their research. • Organise an activity or event which allows researchers to engage with industry (defined broadly, as organisations which are not in the public sector). <p>Four projects were funded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interdisciplinary workshop organised between researchers in Zooarchaeology and Ecology; • A networking event in the Ingenious Women series promoting careers for women in science, including talks from invited speakers. • An interdisciplinary workshop organised by researchers in Law, examining natural resources and energy law in Africa and including external stakeholders. • A workshop allowing researchers across disciplines to consider their work in the context of gaming and the games industry. In 2019 Dr William Hepburn (History), Dr Naomi Jacobs (Computing Science) and Dr Samantha Jones (Archaeology) organised a workshop entitled 'Game Development and Research' to discuss how research and gaming can intersect, and to deepen researchers' knowledge and understanding of the games industry. James Chew, Writer and Narrative Designer at Failbetter Games, gave a guest presentation. The twenty participants were then invited to use the techniques they had learned to design their own research-based games. Dr Hepburn has created a prototype scholarly game based on his historical research and is exploring <i>future directions with this. He states that the workshop 'helped me learn how to talk about games to an interdisciplinary audience and sharpened my methodology for running research-led game design workshops. It has also given me a contact in the games industry and some interdisciplinary academic contacts with an interest in games.'</i>
		<p>The use of the Fund was not repeated this year given restrictions and the pull on human resource imposed by Covid-19. The Postdoctoral Research Committee will be asked to consider how to best repurpose the funds for the next round, given that in-person events will be restricted.</p>
<p>Researcher Development will create a suite of 'talking head' videos which will support early career researchers in thinking about the following areas: writing proposals,</p>	<p>Action C2 Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>The videos were completed in April 2020 and made available in November 2020 as part of a reconfiguration of the Researcher Development webpages. Due to Covid there was a delay in making</p>

<p>managing research projects, interdisciplinary research, working with external stakeholders, creating impact. These will be hosted online and used in training courses.</p> <p>Success measure: analytics will show an increase in video views in the year after completion.</p>		<p>these available to researchers, so we cannot comment on metrics at this time.</p>
<p>A series of training workshops for Altmetrics will allow researchers to track online engagement with their work in order to plan publication strategies and evidence public engagement. It will be linked to staff PURE profiles.</p> <p>Success measure: training rated as 'useful' or 'very useful' by 80% of attendees.</p>	<p>Action C3</p> <p>Research Policy team</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>34 Workshops have been provided to date (Altmetric specific 11, General workshops with elements of Altmetrics 23) to introduce attendees to the theory and practice of using the Altmetric Explorer tool. Average attendance at Altmetric specific workshops were 15 per session. Average attendees for the general workshops were between 5 and 10 per session.</p> <p>In addition to these workshops we have adapted staff webpages to provide additional guidance and information, including quick start guides, and added an instructional video to the university Toolkit</p> <p>Verbal feedback from participants was generally positive and usage statistics indicate increasing engagement with the tool since the training events were held. Usage statistics indicate we have 7 registered ECR users and a total of 65 registered users (a 620% increase on registered users in 2018).</p>
<p>Internal communications for Researcher Development will be updated, to increase awareness of our provision and encourage greater engagement by researchers. This will include updated pages on Staffnet, an RD blog, and downloadable information leaflets.</p> <p>Success measure: an improvement of at least 5 percentage points in Staff Survey questions relating to awareness of, opportunities for, and satisfaction with training and development.</p>	<p>Action C4</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>In progress – moved to forward actions</p> <p>Pages on Staffnet are continually updated to reflect new developments. Pre-Covid a regular RD Update email was sent around Schools, to highlight training and development opportunities both internal and external. This was in preference to the blog, following initially low levels of engagement. Following lockdown a 'Postdoc Discussion Group' was established on Teams, providing a more direct route to highlight opportunities and to facilitate networking. A number of ECR events have been held through this medium, on topics chosen by the postdoc community (see action B% for details).</p> <p>The Staff Survey was launched November 2020; progress can be measured once we have the results in February 2021.</p>
<p>Training will be offered to all research-active staff on key aspects of engaging with industry, to build collaborative partnerships. A number of Industry Fellowships, of 1-3 months, will be available for externally-funded researchers, to make further links and develop skills. These will be awarded on a competitive basis.</p>	<p>Action C5</p> <p>IKE/ Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing events throughout the year support training for research-active staff on the key aspects of working with industry.</p> <p>Industry Fellowships were offered and open to all academic disciplines. Three fellowships were awarded (one ECR, two PhD students) working with industry partners in the UK, Austria, and Myanmar and the resulting work has been impactful. The fellowship awarded to our ECR recipient was with an industry</p>

<p>Success measure: This is part of a pilot scheme, and as such will not be measured using SMART targets. It will be reviewed and evaluated at the end of the programme.</p>		<p>partner in bioenergy in Austria titled 'Updating the MiscanFor Model in the commercial environment'. The project allowed the applicant to collect environmental and agronomic data from commercial plantings to update the MiscanFor model developed at the University of Aberdeen and resulted in high impact outputs for the University team as well as the industry partner: https://twitter.com/Terravesta/status/1268200966630903810?s=20 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLuvG9RnAE https://www.terravesta.com/news/benefits-of-miscanthus-new-study/ Additionally, there is a collaborative academic paper in preparation</p> <p>Unfortunately, funding is not available to carry on with this project.</p>
<p>Ideation workshops will be offered to staff and students in the Life Sciences, to increase our pipeline of start-up and spinout opportunities.</p> <p>Success measure: This is part of a pilot scheme, and as such will not be measured using SMART targets. It will be reviewed and evaluated in due course.</p>	<p>Action C6</p> <p>IKE/ Researcher Development</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Due to limited personnel resource in the IKE team, it was not possible to deliver this programme as initially envisaged. Instead, we worked with Opportunity North East (ONE; part of the Aberdeen City Region Deal) to open up training through ONE's partnership with BioCity (https://biocity.co.uk/locations/biocity-glasgow/) which offered ideation sessions to life sciences researchers in September 2020.</p> <p>The MycoBiologics pre-spin out was runner up in the Converge Challenge competition in September 2019 and in July 2020, a spin out company based on IP developed by the UOA and ITI Energy was spun out (iV-Drill Limited). UOA has also sought to support its other spin out companies through the lockdown restrictions through a number of means, for example, spin out companies operating from University buildings were given priority access for labs for their business critical activities.</p> <p>Additional activity: In January 2020 the Wellcome Trust published a report 'What researchers think about the culture they work in', which highlighted the difficulties early career researchers face around job insecurity, overly competitive environments, mental health concerns, and the stifling of creativity in research. In summer 2020 we established a Research Culture Task and Finish Group, with a remit to identify the existing work that has already been undertaken by the University to enhance our research culture, to identify where any gaps exist, and to propose a wider range of measures to address these issues. The group includes an ECR member, who also sits on the PDRC.</p> <p>We have given greater prominence to research integrity within our Research Governance framework and activities. For example, the existing Research Ethics and Governance module has been reviewed and updated to include aspects of research integrity. This module, previously non-compulsory has now been made mandatory for staff (and PGRs) and it is now mandated that no ethical approval for research projects will be given without evidence that this training module has been completed. In addition, the Research Governance Handbook and its constituent policies have been revised to give greater prominence to research integrity where appropriate and research Integrity has been a recurring theme of the lunchtime Research Bites sessions run by our Grants Academy.</p>

		<p>The UOA was one of the first 10 UK universities to join the UK Reproducibility Network, which seeks to understand the factors that contribute to poor research reproducibility and replicability, and develop approaches to counter these, in order to improve the trustworthiness and quality of research. UKRN provides a network and training support for ECRs to engage with their activities.</p> <p>In 2019 a group of postdoctoral researchers established the Open Science Working Group, to promote open research practices and support each other in skills development. Several meetings were held before lockdown, and the group ran an online course for participants to improve their skills in 'R' software. The importance of this researcher-led initiative was recognised by the University, and the group now includes staff from the Library and Digital Research teams. The work of this group has influenced the priorities of the newly-established Research Culture working group.</p>
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D. Actions Relating to Equality and Diversity (Concordat Principle 6)

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

The table below provides evidence against specific focus areas for Principle 6 highlighted in the 10year review		
2018 Actions	Lead	2020Progress
<p>All schools within the university will hold at least an Athena SWAN Bronze award. Success measure: the applications of the last two schools to submit for this award (currently under consideration) will be successful.</p>	<p>Action D1 HR Specialist Services</p>	<p>Complete All Schools now hold Athena SWAN bronze, with the School of Psychology being awarded Silver Award in October 2020. Over 50% of our School Athena Swan teams have ECR representatives on the group, with 2 Schools having an ECR as co-chair of the AS Team. In addition to SAT membership, ECRs have opportunity to feed their views to the institutional Athena Swan Action Group via Athena SWAN surveys done in each School; this feedback is considered within School Action Plans and all Schools' survey results are fed back to the UOA AS Action Group and, where appropriate, to the UoA action plan.</p>
<p>Providing at least one school obtains an Athena SWAN Silver award, the university will take forward plans to apply for a Silver Award. Success measure: Silver Award application submitted</p>	<p>Action D2 HR Specialist Services</p>	<p>In progress The University is currently working towards submitting an application to retain its Bronze status in April 2021, which is an extension to the November 2020 deadline granted in light of Covid-19. An Institutional application at Silver level will be considered in the next couple of years Additional activity: The majority of senior committees within the university have achieved at least a 40/60 per cent female to male ratio, 95% of all recruitment panels are now gender-balanced, and blind review is in place in the promotions process.</p>

<p>The Aurora Development Programme will be promoted through the PDRC.</p> <p>Success measure: 3 applications will be submitted</p>	<p>Action D3</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>In progress</p> <p>We now aim to promote programme through PDRC for the next round. Academic Schools will take responsibility for submitting researchers.</p> <p>The University has undertaken several actions relating to race equality including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed up to the Race Equality Charter (2019) with the commitment to apply for a Bronze accreditation by 2022; • Signed up to the Advance HE Declaration on Race (2020); • The School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (SMMSN) signed up to the BMA Charter (2020); • Established a Race Equality Strategy Group (2020), co-chaired by the VP (Education) and the Head of the SMMSN; • Established a University Race Equality Network for staff and students and in the process of establishing a joint network with the NHS; • Reviewed the online E&D training to include new materials on race/racism. <p>To mark 2020 Black History Month (BHM) the UOA developed a programme of events, blogs, podcasts and talks which provided opportunities to engage our community with this celebration. The programme also included a talk about 'Blackness and Disability' and an event aimed at understanding the reasons why there is under-representation of BAME women in Scottish Politics (with talks from Ahmed-Sheikh, Scotland's first and only female BAME MP, and Fatima Zahra Jojiy, Director of the 50:50 Parliament campaign).</p> <p>Further actions are planned as detailed in our 2020-22 Action Plan (Principle 1&2)</p>
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E. Actions Relating to Monitoring Progress (Concordat Principle 7)

7. 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.

The table below provides evidence against specific focus areas for Principle 7 highlighted in the 10-year review.		
2016 Actions	Lead	2018 Progress
<p>The newly-established Postdoctoral Research Committee will allow feedback from research staff in each School to be incorporated into our forward planning. It will also facilitate interdisciplinary networking and community-building amongst research staff</p>	<p>Action E1</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>The composition of the PDRC is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean for Industrial Engagement in Research & Knowledge Transfer (Chair) (F) • Postdoctoral research staff representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Business School (F) ○ School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (M) ○ Institute of Applied Health Sciences (F)

<p>Success measure: three new strategies driven by research staff to be implemented by Researcher Development and colleagues</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School of Biological Sciences (F) ○ School of Divinity, History and Philosophy (M) ○ Institute of Medical Sciences (M) ○ School of Natural and Computing Sciences (M) ○ School of Geosciences (M) ○ School of Psychology (F) ○ The Rowett Institute (M) ○ School of Engineering (M) ● Researcher Development Adviser (Clerk) (F) ● Head of HR Partners (F) ● Athena SWAN Co-ordinator (F) ● Deputy Head of Careers (F) ● Directors of Research: DHP (M), Psychology (F) <p>Priority areas were identified as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying the research staff population within Schools - PDRC members undertook to make contact with their colleagues and elicit feedback from them on the committee's focus. An important piece of work has emerged around the roles, remits and opportunities for promotion for Research Fellows (currently Grades 6 and 7) across disciplines, and this will be taken forward in our new Concordat planning. <p>Investigate University-wide channels of communication – a Postdoc Discussion Group channel on Teams has been established which allows sharing of information, training opportunities and policy debates.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Engagement with the Wellcome Trust on their Research Culture initiative – this has been taken up through the University's Research Culture group. An ECR member for that group also sits on the PDRC. 4. Undertake work around the drivers of contract types. This was included in the University's gap analysis for the new Concordat. Progression has been paused due to Covid 19.
<p>A Research Staff Conference will be held, which will allow researchers to share experiences, present ideas and hear from experts in academic and non-academic career planning and development.</p> <p>Success measure: all places at the conference will be full.</p>	<p>Action E2 Researcher Development</p>	<p>In lieu of a single conference, we have held a series of monthly 'ECR Sessions' on Teams. The topics have been driven by the postdocs and have included: the Researcher Development Concordat; Covid-19 and Wellbeing; REF for ECRs; Professional Development Planning; and Writing Competitive Fellowship Applications. These sessions regularly attract 20-30 attendees.</p> <p>During Postdoc Appreciation Week five research staff from different disciplines were invited to showcase their research online to the community, to build networks and share ideas across the University. Research Fellows from Biology, Psychology, Medical Sciences, Economics and Health Psychology, and Chemistry each gave 10 minute talks about their overall research question, methodologies and technologies, and major career challenges to date. There were 24 attendees from across the University.</p>

<p>CROS will run in 2019, to incorporate researchers' views on our provision.</p> <p>Success measure: results will form part of the agenda for the first meeting of the PDRC.</p>	<p>Action E3</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>The response rate to CROS was very low. The first meeting of the PDRC therefore focused on establishing lines of communication between the committee members and the Schools they represent.</p>
<p>Researcher Development will align the HR Excellence strategy with the new Athena SWAN plan, due for reporting in 2019.</p> <p>Success measure: HR Excellence reporting in 2020 will include progress made against the 2019 Athena SWAN plan.</p>	<p>Action E4</p> <p>Researcher Development</p>	<p>The impact of the pandemic on the UOA's financial sustainability means that several Athena Swan approved initiatives (e.g. Maternity Cover Fund; Leadership Development programmes) have been paused. They will be reinstated once finances allow.</p> <p>Our HR Excellence 2020-22 Forward Action Plan includes a series of actions that align with the Athena Swan plan and priorities. See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles 3&4: Actions 6, 7 and 9 • Principle 6: Actions 1,3, 4, 5 and 6

HR Excellence in Research: Action Plan - December 2020 – December 2022

Principle 1 & 2				
<p>1. Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.</p> <p>2. 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.</p>				
	ACTION	SUCCESS MEASURE (SMART TARGET)	COMPLETE BY	LEAD
1	Activities towards maintaining our Healthy Working Lives SILVER Award and strive towards our GOLD application to include development of <i>Staff Pressure Points</i> Calendar to better target campaigns efficiently which will be included within an annual Wellbeing Programme; and review and increasing mental health and wellbeing presence on social media including new UOA Staff Facebook page	<p>Pressure Points Calendar and campaign alignment</p> <p>Wellbeing calendar published on UOA website</p> <p>Maintain HWL Silver Award Application for Gold HWL application</p> <p>Increased presence on UOA social media sites, with minimum twice weekly posts regarding mental health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>April 2021</p> <p>Annually in September each year</p> <p>February 2021 and February 2022 respectively</p> <p>January 2021</p>	Wellbeing Team
2	Develop a 5-year Wellness Strategy incorporating Mental Health and launch to staff via Staff ezine.	10% of staff to have accessed Strategy in first 6 months of launch	January 2021	Wellbeing Team
3	Implement mandatory Workplace Race Training as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Face to face leadership training for UMG (Senior Management, Heads of School and Directors of Professional Services) ii. Face to face training for key, front-facing professional service staff whose roles are likely to have to deal with race-related issues iii. Online training for all staff 	<p>For all training programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of staff found the training useful • 80% of staff said the training had challenged them to make one change in their behaviour <p>In addition, for UMG training, that training outcomes would feed into the development of the Race Equality Strategy (see below)</p> <p>75% completion rate for online training completion by Sep 2022.</p>	<p>UMG: May 2021</p> <p>Professional Service Staff: Sep 2021</p> <p>Online to all staff: Sep 2021</p>	HR Specialist Services

4	Work with Advance HE to develop a Race Equality Strategy, associated action plan and communications and engagement plan with a view to applying for Race Equality Charter recognition.	<p>Strategy published</p> <p>Application for Race Equality Charter Bronze award submitted and subsequent achievement thereof</p> <p>Our bi-annual staff survey results will be used to measure culture change and we aim for 80% positive response rates for questions relating to awareness and inclusion.</p> <p>New, specific Race Equality Surveys (for staff and students) will be introduced by the end of the 2020-21 academic year to establish a baseline for results and enable UOA to benchmark itself within the sector. Once these are established more specific measures of success will be developed as part of our work to develop an action plan for the revised Concordat to which we became signatories in July 2020.</p>	<p>Dec 2021 July 2022</p>	Race Equality Strategy Group
5	Complete 4-year review of UOA Public Sector Equality Duty Report and consultation process to develop Equality Outcomes for 2021-2025. The UOA Equality and Diversity Advisor will liaise with the Postdoctoral Committee to ensure ECR views are included in the development of the outcomes.	<p>Report and Equality Outcomes published on UOA website</p> <p>Our bi-annual staff survey results will be used to measure culture change and we aim for 80% positive response rates for questions relating to awareness and inclusion.</p>	<p>April 2021</p> <p>Nov 2022</p>	HR Specialist Services
6	Develop and launch shortlisting guidance as part of the Recruitment & Selection policy to support more equal candidate breakdown in regard to gender and ethnic minority	<p>Review and establish baseline</p> <p>Improvement target of 20% across applications and shortlisted candidates</p>	Dec 2021	HR Partners

7	<p>Undertake an in-depth review of the promotion process for academic roles, to include a review of the academic career tracks, the promotion-assessment criteria for each track, and the associated guidance and submission documentation.</p> <p>Develop and undertake an awareness campaign to enhance understanding of opportunities and available routes for promotion for ECRs using results of the Nov 2020 staff survey to get better feel for what the issues are.</p> <p>This action will inform our planning for the revised Concordat.</p>	<p>New promotions process launched to academic community</p> <p>Increase number of applications for promotion by ECRs by 10%</p>	<p>Dec 2021</p> <p>Feb 2022</p>	HR Reward and Systems team
8	Undertake a review of Annual Review processes in line with revised Concordat.	Actions to be developed and aligned with revised Concordat action plan (See also Principle 7, action 3)	Dec 2021	HR
9	Develop a Health Cash Plan and a Dental Plan	30 employees signing up in the first 18 months to each plan	In place for academic year 2021-22	HR Specialist Services
10	Following lessons learned during Covid-19, launch a Homeworking Policy to increase flexibility of the workplace, flexibility of the working day for those with caring commitments and to increase the support available to staff who are working from home.	80% of respondents to School, department and institutional surveys and other feedback mechanisms agree that UOA provides a suitably flexible work environment for them	November 2022	HR Partners
11	Implement new bi-annual Staff Survey in November with external provider, Capita, supported by a comprehensive communication plan to encourage staff engagement	Success Measure: 2020 Survey – aiming for at least 50% response rate Nov 2020	Launch November 2020; Analysis by February 2021	HR Specialist Services

Principle 3 & 4

3. 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.
4. The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

No.	ACTION	SUCCESS MEASURE (SMART TARGET)	COMPLETE BY	LEAD
1	Develop and launch a new ILM Project Management Programme	15 attendees in year 1 80% positive feedback from attendees	December 2020	HR

2	Introduce a series of 'bridging the gap' training videos targeted towards Early Career Researchers to aid in their skills development around engaging with industry to complement the virtual and on-campus activities and guidance already on offer. The themes cover the 'how' and 'why' of working with industry and how to establish networks and build relationships and will be available to staff to access in a self-directed learning style. These will be rolled out Q4 2020 and a plan to evaluate this trial will be developed.	70% use of available seats over trial period with 50% completion by registrants	These will be rolled out Q4 2020.	IKE
3	Host the PCST (Public Communication of Science & Technology) conference in 2021 (delayed from 2020 due to Covid-19; delivery will be fully online) to afford our researchers a unique opportunity to showcase their work and develop skills in issues around science and society, including tackling difficult subjects, talking with the media, exploring issues around ethics and integrity.	Aberdeen researchers involved in submitting abstracts and /or activities – up to 4% of activities/sessions involving UOA researchers.	May 2021	PERU/CPD
4	Building on the increased flexibility offered by online Researcher Development workshops, engagement with this provision will be significantly increased from the in-person workshops held before lockdown.	100% increase in attendance across workshops, while maintaining 80% positive feedback from attendees.	Dec 2021	Researcher Development Team
5	Re-design a series of cross-school interdisciplinary PI Training Events with contributions from across Professional Service Directorates	80% positive feedback from attendees	Dec 2021	Grants Academy
6	Investigate why men on research only contracts are more likely to leave profession compared to women in STEMM, AHSSBL areas via focus groups and exit interviews with employees preparing to leave conducted.	Report to EDIC and action plan approved Proportion of men to women leaving the progression has decreased.	December 2022	HR
7	Introduce a robust process, guidelines, training and details of underrepresented groups for job roles to support Heads of Schools and departments to identify potential internal female candidates for jobs	Increase in internal female candidates applying for promoted posts by 8%.	December 2022	HR

8	Develop and include a feedback questionnaire for probationary staff to gather feedback with a view to bringing forward and actioning recommendations to enhance the support provided to probationary staff during their 3-year probationary period.	Using feedback prepare enhanced guidelines for probation process 80% of new probationers are happy with the probation mentoring received	Dec 2021 Dec 2022	HR Partners
9	To minimize bias during the promotion process and increase awareness amongst staff of the UOAs commitment to a transparent and fair promotion process, Unconscious Bias Observers will sit on all promotion panels	Athena Swan survey results 80% of respondents agree they feel the promotion process is fair and transparent.	Rolled out in academic Year 2021-22; analysis complete Dec 2022	HR Specialist Services

Principle 5

5. Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

No.	ACTION	SUCCESS MEASURE (SMART TARGET)	COMPLETE BY	LEAD
1	Review best practice and develop a mentoring approach to support ECR applicants for Research Fellowships	All schools to have developed a supportive approach to mentoring fellowship applicants and a commitment to sharing best practice. Feedback will be elicited from participants and the impact on success rates will be monitored	September 2021	Grants Academy and School Directors of Research
2	Applying to Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) for funding for Aberdeen to lead a European Researchers Night in autumn 2021 (date to be confirmed subject to Covid-19 restrictions) to provide opportunities for researchers to develop engagement skills	Application submitted and funding awarded. At least 1/3 of UOA Staff Engagement is ECRs	January 2021 Autumn 2021	IKE/PERU

3	Enhance the current provision of online information sessions providing training and raising awareness of the newly established Scholarly Communications services. Includes open access, open data and open research. We will continue to work with other teams such as Digital Research to reach the widest audience and provide a joined-up service. Intention is to add to the program in 2021 taking account of feedback from the academic community to offer an enhanced programme of training that meets the needs of researchers.	80% positive feedback from participants	December 2021	Scholarly Communications
4	The Open Science Working Group Network Leads will recruit and train a group of Open Research Champions, to act as points of contact within Schools and to promote and support Open Research practices. The Open Access champions will provide support to researchers in the form of training, networking sessions and opportunities for discussion with peers. They will use news and social media channels, staff meetings to promote events and relevant news including from external sources. The Champions will undergo a three-module certification course to equip them for this work.	Three Champions to be trained and successfully complete their certification. 80% positive feedback from participants at Open Champion-organized training sessions	December 2022	Library/Scholarly Comms
5	Launch a new online Research Integrity Training Course (6 modules) and associated communication and engagement plan for all research active staff (and PGR students) and for professional service staff with a role in supporting research.	Completion rate of 75% for ECRs within one year of launch	Launched to staff by February 2021	Research Policy & Strategy Team
6	Re-focus the 'Conversations On' networking events to be more challenge-led in response to more specific, national and global themes brought to us external partners. E.g. the NHS have asked for an event to focus on best ways to address demand for NHS services in light of Covid-19. ECRs are involved in all stages of a 'Conversations On' event and are encouraged to actively participate in discussions.	Identify challenges and hold three Conversations On events involving external partners based on the challenges An evaluation of the discussions on each topic will be undertaken at appropriate stages	December 2022	Grants Academy
7	Extend the 'Research Bites' series of lunchtime training for 2020-21 to include topics that provide training on general skills and a focus on themes related to Research Data (GDPR, Altmetrics, Open Access, Open Data, Open Research and Data Management and Digital Support) and Knowledge Exchange, Industry Impact and Public Engagement.	80% positive feedback from attendees	September 2021	Grants Academy

8	Implementation of San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). Awareness amongst researchers would be raised via various channels: events, training, University-wide communications and cascades through research groups and committees and revisions to recruitment and promotion policies with regard to academic appointments	80% positive feedback from attendees University approval of revised DORA-compliant policies	December 2021	Research Policy & Strategy Team and Library
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Principle 6

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

No.	ACTION	SUCCESS MEASURE (SMART TARGET)	COMPLETE BY	LEAD
1	Following the School of Psychology's Silver award, develop a protocol incorporating lessons learned and feedback from the Athena Swan Panel to support Schools applying for Silver Award.	Protocol in place (including guidance, support and dates for internal mock panels) to support Schools; 3 Schools to submit for silver	February 2021 December 2022	HR Specialist Services
2	The move to online training provision and the increased flexibility this has offered staff has resulted in increased attendance at online training courses compared with their on-campus counterparts; all researcher development training will continue to have an online option when a full return to campus is permitted which aligns with our commitment to inclusivity (e.g. for research active staff with additional caring responsibilities) as outline in our 2040 strategy	All Researcher development training will be available online. 80% positive feedback from attendees	Ongoing	Researcher Development Team
3	Launch an in-house Leadership programme for early career staff, initially to women and then to other underrepresented groups	30 women attending in first year of operation 80% positive feedback from attendees	December 2022	HR specialist Services
4	Monitor whether the disruptions from Covid-19 disproportionately impact on specific groups of researchers (e.g. gender/part time working) by analysis of applications, awards patterns and submission of manuscripts for publication as indicators.	Report to EDIC to develop an action plan to address any inequalities identified	Twice per year	R&I

5	Establish a team of trained Parental Mentors in support of staff returning from parental leave and promote the Parental Mentor Scheme	<p>Team established</p> <p>100% of people going on parental leave are aware of this support available on their return</p> <p>75% of people using parental mentoring have found it useful/very useful</p>	<p>February 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>November 2022</p>	HR Specialist Services
6	<p>The UOA participated in a Scottish wide research project on Gender Based Violence (GBV), facilitated by the University of Strathclyde and linked to the ESHE Toolkit. As a part of the project we carried out surveys and focus groups aimed at exploring GBV issues experienced by staff and students. This consultation enabled identification of key priority areas for the GBV working group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new, comprehensive policy and accompanying procedures supporting the statement of commitment • Develop awareness training for staff and students and highlight sources of support. 	<p>Publication of new UOA GBV Policy and Procedures</p> <p>Work with AMOSHE to develop training programme; 80% positive evaluation from participants</p>	<p>April 21</p> <p>June 2021</p> <p>Dec 21</p>	HR Partners

Principle 7

7. 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.

No.	ACTION	SUCCESS MEASURE (SMART TARGET)	COMPLETE BY	LEAD
1	Complete Equality Impact Assessment for REF 21 for consideration by SMT and develop recommendations for next assessment period	<p>Complete and submit Equality Impact Assessment to funding councils and publication to UoA by the required deadline</p> <p>Disseminate to 12 Schools and develop set of recommendations</p> <p>Actions to be finalised and agreed by end of 2021</p>	<p>July 2021</p> <p>Dec 2021</p>	Research Policy & Strategy Team

