



HR Excellence in Research Award

4-year Review Report

July 2019

Context

Institutions that hold the HR Excellence in Research Award are required to undertake an evaluation every four years to summarise their progress against their published Concordat action plans, whilst forward planning into their forthcoming action plans. This report provides a summary of key achievements against the Action plans from 2015 and 2017. A gap analysis undertaken in 2019 (https://docs.gre.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1663172/Gap-Analysis-July-2019.pdf) has informed the future action plan (2019-21)

https://docs.gre.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1663177/HR-Excellence-in-Research-Action-Plan-July-2019.pdf).

The University's Strategic Plan (2012-2017) and its successor University Strategic Plan II (2017-2022) <https://docs.gre.ac.uk/rep/vco/strategic-plan> has at its core, clear aims to ensure the University's objectives to "enhance science and society through inspiring research and enterprise", and "supporting and developing our staff". Central to this is the development of a distinct career pathway in research through the university's Academic Framework in 2017-18, and the creation of a Research and Enterprise Training Institute (RETI) in 2017, to shape the career development of all researchers within the University from postgraduate through to early, mid and established researchers.

Internal evaluation

Previously, overall responsibility for the University's engagement, implementation and compliance of the Concordat rested with the Early Career Researcher Steering Group (ECRSG), a body that enjoyed full support from the Vice-Chancellor's (Management) Group (VCG). The composition of ECRSG was drawn from lead researchers within the academic departments, research managers within the university and key researchers, assisted by Early Career Researcher (ECR) Ambassadors within each of the four Faculties. It did not have a substantial ECR membership, and therefore was felt to be too disconnected from the ECR community, so has been disbanded and replaced with a PGR ECR Forum, comprising two postgraduate research students (PGRs) and two ECRs from each Faculty, staff members from RETI who oversee the training provision for the university staff and students and PGR student journey management. The PGR ECR Forum was established in 2017-18 and with its initial meeting in 2017-18 followed by three meetings in 2018-19. The Forum is chaired by the Head of RETI, and reports directly to the Research and Enterprise Committee (R&EC), and thence, Academic Council. Thus, the voice of the ECR community has been greatly enhanced.

RETI is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the action plans of the HR Excellence in Research Awards and has produced this four-year review. Towards the evaluation for this review, besides discussions at the PGR ECR Forum, RETI has consulted with the University's R&EC, Development Partners group (comprising of Human Resources HR, Greenwich Learning and Teaching GLT, RETI), and academic and research staff through RETI roadshows at departmental meetings for

each faculty, facilitated sessions and face-to-face meetings with researchers to identify issues and areas of good practice.

Key achievements and progress

The University has improved the environment and support structures for all staff, many of which impact on the researcher community, both directly and indirectly. These include a clear expression of what being an academic at the University of Greenwich entails and the support available to deliver that role. These are embodied in policies such as the Balanced Academic Workload (BAW), the Academic Career Pathways (ACP) and ultimately, the “values” and “behaviours” we strive to promote. BAW is the university’s management tool which is intended to support researchers for managing their workload. BAW supports and informs the annual appraisal process for academics so they can plan for and deliver the requirements of their role, whilst maintaining their well-being and progressing their career goals, embodying the university’s values and behaviours. Furthermore, the university has produced a Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021) Code of Practice Code which sets out our management approaches to the REF2021 exercise such as staff identification for the REF submission to ensure equality and fairness for staff.

Staff at any career stage can call upon support from a variety of sources, ranging from advice and mentoring at Departmental and Faculty level, through the many University-wide activities provided by the newly created University’s Staff Development hub (<https://www.gre.ac.uk/staff-development>), Greenwich Learning and Teaching (GLT) and in the context of research, the Research and Enterprise Training Institute (RETI), which was launched in December 2017 (<https://www.gre.ac.uk/about-us/news/articles/2017/a3974-reti-launch>).

Based on the two-year reviews of the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2015 and 2017, the identified gaps have been addressed over time and the progress on these is outlined as given below. Full details of progress against the original action plans are provided in the University of Greenwich Implementation Reviews.

PRINCIPLE 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research

Approval of policy and guidance on fixed term contracts has been provided by HR. The rigour within the process of recruiting research staff has been significantly enhanced after the implementation of the e-Recruitment system in 2014. The Academic Framework of the university has developed three distinct academic career pathways in 2017-18: research, learning and scholarship, and enterprise. Clear guidelines have been provided by HR for recruitment and promotion of staff on the research pathway. The university has appointed Research Fellows supported by internal and external funding to improve the research culture and provide growth for our researchers. Through these appointments, ECRs have had the opportunity to be first supervisors for PGRs, as well as be part of research teams for the running of research projects. Since its establishment in 2017-18, and through inviting ideas on existing gaps from researchers, RETI has developed and delivered a range of training towards the development of skills for research staff. This training provision is reviewed regularly to streamline the existing programme and provide additional training as identified through RETI’s consultations with researchers.

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

RETI has provided support to researchers on several areas, such as undertaking and managing research projects, managing research budgets, participation in the Research Excellence Framework

REF. New training needs have been identified by carrying out a gap analysis by RETI through consultations with researchers across the university, inviting ideas from researchers, as well as through the PGR ECR Forum meetings. The training has been provided through a blended approach of face-to-face and online provision. Researchers have been further supported by HR, such as through mentoring and coaching, as well as through programmes on women's leadership development, such as the Aurora programme which initially ran in 2014-15 and followed up with a recent running in 2018-19. Staff appraisal process has been streamlined and guidance has been provided by HR through staff briefings and online. The allocation of workloads to research staff is the responsibility of line managers and guided by the BAW model. As a matter arising from the PGR ECR Forum, the R&EC has proposed a university policy on ECR's research and BAW allocation which is being considered for university approval.

PRINCIPLE 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment

The university's researcher's development programme is in line with the Vitae's Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and familiarisation with the RDF is a mandatory part of the local induction for academic staff. HR provides training on leadership and wellbeing through the university's Staff Development and Wellbeing hubs. Introduction to researcher specific information is also provided three times a year at the university's New Employee Welcome and Introduction (NEWI) programme which was launched in 2012. Since its establishment, RETI has participated at all NEWI events to provide support to our newly recruited staff. RETI has also provided training to researchers on planning, developing and demonstrating impact of their research to society.

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

Research staff skills needs have been discussed at the Development partners group meetings. Through these discussions, RETI, HR and Education Development Unit (EDU)/GLT have provided training to complement the training provided by different areas of the university. For example, leadership training is offered both by HR and RETI with the focus of each training complementing the other. The EDU has provided a regular programme of events towards a PGCert in HE for staff. A new Senior Researchers Forum has been established in 2018-19 which has had its first meeting. The future strategy of the Forum also includes providing support to ECRs in their future development. Support to researchers when they return to work after a planned or unplanned absence is provided through Faculties, HR and Occupational Health.

In terms of researchers' recognition for their work at the university, previous examples include the ECR Communicator awards, ECR Excellence awards, and more recently a range of awards at university events: the RETI launch event in 2017, Research and Enterprise Awards and Celebration Day in 2018, where researchers have participated through poster competitions and presented research talks.

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

Researchers are encouraged to attend training and networking sessions provided by RETI to enhance their research skills and collaborations towards the development of future research projects. Training is also provided on areas of PGR supervision, as well as preparation to conduct PGR examinations. Further staff development training is provided by HR to include aspects such as managing diversity, data protection as essential training and linked with staff appraisals.

PRINCIPLE 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers

Equality and diversity are included in all job descriptions as a core responsibility of every member of staff. The university provides a suite of essential training for staff, and its completion is monitored through the staff appraisal process. The university has developed an EDI Strategy (2019-212) to provide guidance and training to staff. Furthermore, there are a number of diversity networks and groups in the university, such as LGBT, BAME, Women, Faith to support all staff.

PRINCIPLE 7: The sector and stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK
CROS and PIRLS surveys have been carried out in previous years and their results have helped inform the support and training offered to our research staff. Recently, regular reviews have been undertaken by RETI on research support aspects arising from the PGR ECR Forum, and aligning our training provision with Vitae's Researchers Development Framework.

Future strategy

An outcome of the gap analysis carried out in 2019 informed the July 2019 Action Plan, and the following areas have been identified as our future strategy:

- providing new training to our staff where ECRs will be encouraged to attend sessions such as project management, ethics, time management, coping with stress, conference presentations, 3MT Thesis, careers outside academia
- monitor and review our researcher's development programme aligned to the findings of the Independent Review of the Concordat published in 2019 through existing and new areas of support
- support researchers through existing and new university mentoring and coaching schemes
- support researchers through a return to work policy
- Run CROS and PIRLS in the next round
- Monitor areas identified in the 2019 Action Plan (Principles 1-7) systematically towards successful outcomes leading to future recommendations

Abbreviations

BAW: Balanced Academic Workload
CROS: Careers in Research Online Survey
3MT: 3 Minute Thesis
BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
ECR/s: Early Career Researcher/s
ECRSG: Early Career Researcher Steering Group
EDI: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EDU: Education Development Unit
GLT: Greenwich Learning and Teaching
HR: Human Resources
LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
NEWI: New Employee Welcome and Introduction
PGRs: Postgraduate Research students
PIRLS: Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey
RDF: Researcher Development Framework
R&EC: Research and Enterprise Committee
REF: Research Excellence Framework
RETI: Research and Enterprise Training Institute
UoG: University of Greenwich
VCG: Vice-Chancellor's Group