HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH: UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE FOUR YEAR REVIEW REPORT

The University of Strathclyde was awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award in September 2011. Recipients of this award are required to undertake an external evaluation every four years. This report summarises progress against the 2011 and 2013 HR Excellence in Research Action Plans.

A) Background and Internal Review

The University of Strathclyde is a leading International Technological University with strong links to a number of industrial partners. The University has over 400 members of research staff that sit within four faculties: Engineering, Science, Humanities & Social Sciences, and the Strathclyde Business School. From 2011-2015 our Strategic Aims were Renowned Research, Outstanding Teaching, Exemplary Knowledge Exchange, Thriving International Profile and Operational Excellence making these central to our activities. Following extensive consultation in 2013 five University Values were identified that define Strathclyde: *People Oriented, Bold, Innovative, Collaborative, Ambitious*

Researcher Development, to date, has been provided by two professional services units: the Researcher Development Programme (RDP) within Research and Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES) and the Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU), within the HR Directorate. The Researcher Development Programme (RDP) provides a broad range of activities for research staff and PhD students. OSDU provides staff development across the University, with two researcher development programmes: the accredited Strathclyde Programme in Academic Practice, Researcher Development and Knowledge Exchange* (SPARK; see Case study: SPARK) and the Strathclyde Programme in Research and Leadership (SPIRAL). From September 2015 OSDU will take over all research staff development activities, with RDP focusing solely on PhD students.

How the internal review was undertaken
From November 2014 to May 2015, OSDU led a review of progress against the 2011 and 2013 action plans. A short life working group, chaired by the Deputy HR Director, was set up to oversee and support this review with representatives selected from OSDU, RKES, HR and the Equality & Diversity Unit, as well as research and academic staff from the four Faculties. Stakeholders were consulted on the progress of activities and the preparation of the 2015-17 Action Plan and four year strategy.

The findings from the 2011, 2013 and 2015 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) also heavily informed the 2 year and 4 year reviews, future actions and four year strategy.

The report on the 2011 and 2013 action plans and the future 2015-17 Action Plan were reviewed by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) at its meeting in May and Staff Committee in June 2015. Since 2011, six monthly reports on progress against the current action plan have been submitted to the Researcher Development Group (RDG), which itself reports to RKEC and the University Staff Committee, as part of usual business.

How Researchers views were taken into account
Research Staff views have been taken into account via a number of avenues. 'Researcher Forums' (led by OSDU and RDP) have taken place over the past four years providing regular opportunities to consult with researchers about the University's implementation of the Concordat and to highlight future actions. Members of research staff also sit on the HR Excellence working group and formed part of the consultation during this review.

A Researcher Development Strategy 2015-18 has been jointly developed between OSDU and RDP to facilitate closer alignment of the RDP, SPARK and SPIRAL with the University's Strategic themes. This has been drawn up following an extensive consultation process with the research community, forming the core of our researcher development activities over the next three years and heavily influencing our future HR Excellence actions.

An Athena Swan Sub-Group on 'Retention, Career Development and Promotion' has also conducted focus groups throughout the University seeking the views of research staff as part of the consultation for the Athena SWAN 2014-2017 action plan. Together with the working group members these consultations have been critical to informing this review and future actions.

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* Formerly Advanced Academic Studies (AAS)

B) Key achievements and progress against original action plan (2011) and two year review (2013)

More detailed information can be found in the Updated 2013-2015 action plan.

Principles 1 & 2 (Recruitment & Selection; Recognition and Value)

1. Guidance for the recruitment and selection of research staff has been developed and is available through the University website. CROS results are very positive with 90% of 2015 respondents having received a job description, a healthy increase from 42% in 2011. Similar trends are seen in those receiving details of the qualifications, specialist research and transferable/management skills required. PIRLS responses also show an increase in the confidence of those recruiting and selecting group members from 68% being fully confident in these processes in 2011 to 80% in 2015.

2. HR systems and processes have been the focus of a substantial project to allow the HR team to be more proactive in the management of fixed-term contracts, ensuring earlier conversations take place around ending contracts and that employees are placed on the redeployment register in good time (see Case study: Fixed Term Contract Review).

3. Our appraisal system has been reviewed and enhanced to ensure learning and development provision is closely aligned with development needs. CROS 2015 results show that 74% of eligible research staff participated in the annual process, more than the 2015 national level (67%).

4. Appraisal training is offered to both reviewers and reviewees, with 2nd level evaluations suggesting reviewers have increased confidence and skill following this training, and they report that reviewees find it an inspiring and positive process.

5. As part of the Strategy to increase Staff Engagement across the University, all staff were consulted to define the University's Values (see section A). A significant percentage of our research staff agreed when surveyed that the organisational values represent their experience at Strathclyde. An increase in research staff engagement in University processes and researcher development is demonstrated by increasing CROS response rates from 18% in 2011, to 25% in 2013 and further to 31% in 2015; the national response rates were 25% (2011), 26% (2013) and 28% (2015).

Principles 3, 4 & 5 (Support and Career Development; Researchers Responsibilities)

Over the last four years, Strathclyde has implemented and/or enhanced a range of activities to support research staff in their career and transferable skills development through both OSDU and RDP. OSDU's general staff development provision, which includes management skills, personal effectiveness and transferable skills, is also available to research staff. Over this time we have seen an increase in research staff engagement with total attendances for all provision increasing from 169 research staff in 2011 to 292 in 2013/14.

1. Within OSDU, three new three Academic Developer posts have been created to lead on Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Teaching and Learning. Within RDP, a Researcher Developer post has been created, all of which highlight the University's continuing and growing commitment to researcher development.

2. CROS 2015 results showed that the researcher development initiatives are having a positive impact: 77% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they are encouraged to take part in personal and career development activities with 88% agree/strongly agree that they are encouraged to take ownership of their own career development. In particular, the University is performing above the national 2015 average in terms of researchers undertaking training in Knowledge Exchange (32% compared to 15% nationally) and Communication and Dissemination (42% compared to 31% nationally).

3. Broad ranging CPD programmes sit within RDP and OSDU (SPIRAL) providing both generic skills and specialised training aligned to the University's strategic aims. Both programmes also offer innovative, longer term experiential development opportunities. For example:

i. Regular 'Challenges' support the processes of writing grants, fellowships and publications, with funding applications and publication submissions being expected outcomes. Following the 2012/13 Publication Challenge, 6 manuscripts were submitted by research staff, of which 4 went on to be successfully published. [2nd] level feedback suggests that the outputs from this Challenge have not only improved their publication records, but also the experience continues to influence their writing strategies.

ii. Several intensive and immersive development opportunities are provided to develop enterprise, entrepreneurial and knowledge exchange skills in partnership with external organisations, such as 2012 THE Award shortlisted 'Strathclyde Enterprise Pathway', Strathclyde Solutions Exchange and 'Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Training'.

iii. Public Engagement is an important aspect of a researcher's skills development. 'Becoming an Engaging Researcher', a series of 6-9 workshops and a 1 day mini-conference 'Engage', which run over three months each year, is a collaboration with Glasgow Science Centre with participants receiving training as well as designing and delivering their own public engagement activities. Feedback for this course is always excellent: *'Excellent day, very inspiring'*, *'an amazing course'*.

4. Funding has been provided for researcher-led initiatives that aim to increase their transferable skills (see Case Study: RE:ACTIVE).

5. Research staff have had the opportunity to gain formal accreditation through the PG Certificate in Advanced Academic Studies, the first in the UK to have a specific Researcher Development pathway; more than 100 members of research staff have taken part each year. From September 2015, four separate Postgraduate Certificates/Diplomas/Masters awards will be available: Researcher Development, Knowledge Exchange, Teaching & Learning, and Academic Practice (see Case Study: SPARK).

6. SPIRAL was developed in 2012 to support a broad range of researcher career stages. This programme is intended to support the strategic ambitions of the University by enhancing and strengthening leadership skills and knowledge, advanced research skills and KE. The engagement and feedback from research staff has surpassed expectation with the number of research staff attendances rising from 41 in 2012/13 to 161 in 2013/14. The SPIRAL programme is designed to support researchers from early career through to senior research level and includes one to one tailored tools, Masterclasses and development for more experienced researchers.

7. Mentoring@Strathclyde was launched in February 2012 as part of the SPIRAL and is available for researchers at all stages of their careers. A mentoring scheme handbook, dedicated webpages and mentoring workshops provide supporting resources. 31 staff joined the scheme in 2012/13, increasing to 68 in 2013/14. Evaluation results show 89% were satisfied with the matching process 2013/14.

8. In addition to Institution-wide programmes we also work closely with Faculties and Departments to offer tailored development opportunities. For example, OSDU has worked with researchers in the newly opened Technology and Innovation Centre to establish 'The Professional Engineers' Development Programme 2014/15'. This supports Research and Knowledge Exchange Staff working towards gaining Chartered Engineer (CEng) registration through specialised and generic skills training, plus mentoring. CEng registration increases the opportunities for research staff within different career paths.

9. An Institutional Induction specifically for researchers is delivered three times a year. In addition, researcher induction web pages and guidelines are now available online to support those joining the University throughout the year. CROS 2015 showed 53% of respondents found the institution-wide induction process useful/very useful, which is significantly higher than the 2015 national response of 33%. Further work is being undertaken to develop induction processes and events for researchers.

Principle 6 (Diversity & Equality)

1. The University was re-accredited with an Institutional Athena SWAN Bronze award in 2014. The Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering currently holds a Silver award with the Departments of Chemical & Process Engineering, Mathematics & Statistics, Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering, Physics, and the Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences all holding the Bronze awards.

2. A single Equality Outcomes Scheme replaced the Gender, Disability and Race Equality Schemes in 2013. After extensive consultation with staff and students Equality Outcomes for 2013-2017 have been produced. 91% of the CROS 2015 respondents believe that the University has demonstrated a commitment to equality and diversity, an increase from 86% in 2011.

Principle 7 (Implementation & Review)

1. Formal mechanisms are in place for monitoring progress on researcher development activities, the Concordat/HR Excellence in Research and the Athena SWAN action plans through RDG, which reports to RKEC and the University Staff Committee.
2. CROS has run every two years since 2009 (PIRLS since 2011) with increasing numbers taking part every year. The results are reported to RDG and other stakeholders each year and thus inform University strategy.
3. Members of OSDU and RDP take part in a number of national researcher development initiatives and groups, such as the Scotland and Northern Ireland Vitae Hub Steering group, the Scottish Higher Education Researcher Developer group (ScotHERD) and collaborations with other Scottish Universities.

C) Strategy for the next four years (2015-2019)

Principles 1 & 2 (Recruitment & Selection, Recognition & Value)

- To continue to implement, and improve where appropriate, the Policy for the Use of Fixed-Term Contracts.
- To enhance Fixed Term Contract administration following a business process review. Anticipated benefits include greater awareness, guidance and communication during the process for research staff, line managers and Heads of Departments, plus increased administrative efficiency leading to a more robust and transparent system.
- To ensure that research staff are represented consistently across the University.
- The Researcher Development Strategy 2015-2018 and the HR Strategy (HR Activity Plan 2015) build on recognition of the importance of researchers, as set out in the Concordat.

Principles 3, 4 & 5 (Support, Career Development and Researchers' Responsibilities)

- To support research staff development in line with Researcher Development Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2018 and the University's strategic aims: *Internationally Leading Research, World-leading innovation and impact, Global Engagement*
- To implement a cohesive development framework bringing all our provision together and mapping career stages with guidance, recommended accredited and non-accredited development activities.
- To develop and implement long-term evaluation processes for all institutional learning and development interventions for researchers, including online learning.
- Continue to increase Research Staff engagement with SPIRAL and SPARK.

Principle 6 (Diversity & Equality)
- To pursue accreditation for Athena SWAN for all University departments, with all STEM departments to submit for an award by April 2015.

Principle 7 (Implementation and Review)
- RDG/RKEC and Staff Committee receive regular updates on progress on staff related matters including all researcher development activities and action plans.
- Annual Review of SPIRAL and Researcher Development support by Directors of HR and RKES.

D) Success Measures
Our success will be measured in terms of timely achievement of the actions as set out in the Action Plan. In addition, our success measures include the following:
- Evidence of progress/improvement in CROS and PIRLS data when compared with previous years
- Retention of institutional Athena SWAN Bronze and the submission for departmental Athena Swan Awards within all STEM departments
- Increased engagement of events within SPARK and SPIRAL
- Impact of learning and development interventions identified and reported