

1. Introduction and process

Bournemouth University (BU) was awarded the EC HR Excellence in Research award in January 2013 in recognition of the achievements so far and the on-going commitments to align policy and practice to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the European Charter for Researchers. Following our award we established a Research Concordat Steering Group (RCSG) to steer our Concordat-related work, make decisions in relation to relevant activities and monitor progress made with achieving the objectives in our action plan. The RCSG reports into the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (URKEC) and meets four times a year. It is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation (PVCRI), and membership includes at least one academic representative from all Faculties, research staff representatives and senior colleagues from Human Resources, Research and Knowledge Exchange Office, and Organisational Development.

We took part in the CROS and PIRLS surveys for the first time in 2013 and undertook internal surveys with research staff and their line managers in 2014.¹ Response rates were: 69% for CROS (national average was 25%), 16% for PIRLS (national average was 19%), 32% for the internal research staff survey and 29% for the internal line managers' survey. It is important to note that we have chosen to apply our action plan to all academic and research staff at BU. This is to reflect our cohesive culture of fusion whereby research, education and professional practice are linked, with research being an integral part of the other two activities. We have approximately 600 academic staff and 40 research staff in post. Whilst the latter is currently modest compared to the sector, BU's institutional strategy aims to increase this to c.100 by 2018 and sees research staff as key to boosting our research culture and enhancing the resilience and sustainability to our research activity.

The two year evaluation was undertaken by the RCSG in autumn 2014. The action plan was reviewed, achievements noted and an updated action plan produced, outlining our commitments for 2015-17. Researchers' views were taken into account via the CROS13 data and the internal research staff survey undertaken in September 2014. Feedback from the first BU Research Staff Association (RSA) meeting in October 2014 has been used to generate new actions. We see the BU RSA as having the potential to become a key engagement mechanism for the University and its research staff. Our action plan is a live document and is updated quarterly and shared with RCSG and URKEC. The latest version of the action plan is available on the Concordat pages of the BU website² and the BU Research Blog.³

2. Key achievements and progress against the original action plan (*original 2012 action plan reference in brackets*)

A. Recruitment and selection

- Publication of BU's first Code of Practice for the Recruitment and Development of Research Staff in October 2014 (*action 1.0a*).
- Our new HR system has enabled us to more accurately identify research staff and their line managers (*action 1.0b*).
- The 'Working for BU' part of our website has been developed and now included videos from staff active in research (*action 1.2b*).
- Recruitment procedures and training now include advice on interview panel diversity (*action 1.4c*).
- Awareness of the Concordat and BU's action plan amongst research staff has increased from 10% in 2012 to 46% in 2014 (*no specific action reference*).

B. Recognition and value

- We established the BU Research Staff Association in 2014 to provide research staff with a forum to discuss issues linked to the implementation of the Concordat (*action 2.1*).
- A review of all casual and fixed-term contracts was undertaken and amendments are being made to the appointment documentation and procedure to ensure appropriate usage and monitoring of these contracts (*action 2.2*).
- To discourage the number of short-term casual contracts used for research staff we are piloting a non-fEC cost model for contract research and consultancy work (*action 2.2*).

C. Support and career development

- BU launched a new pay progression, promotion and career framework for academic staff in autumn 2014 after significant engagement and consultation with staff and trade union representatives (*action 2.6*).

¹ Bournemouth University runs a biannual staff survey, however, this does not provide data on research staff or their line managers as discrete groups, hence we run these additional surveys.

² <https://research.bournemouth.ac.uk/research-environment/research-concordat/>

³ <http://blogs.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/researcher-toolbox/researcher-development/>

- BU designed and launched a development programme in September 2013 based on Vitae's Researcher Development Framework (c. 30 researchers attended the launch event) (*action 3.1a*).
- Induction processes and resources have been updated and the 'New to BU' webpages now include a specific section on support available to researchers (*action 3.6b*).
- The Concordat, accompanied with the relevant Vitae briefing document, our action plan and the BU Code of Practice for the Recruitment and Development of Research Staff is now sent to all new research staff and their line managers when they join BU (*action 3.6a*).
- The majority of research staff now have an annual appraisal (CROS 2013 data indicates that 85% had undertaken an appraisal within the last two years and of those who had not most were still on probation). 57% of respondents to our research staff survey in 2014 had a personal and professional development plan in place, 43% had a long-term career development plan in place and 57% were mentored (*action 3.9*).
- We have initiated a pilot for external mentoring arrangements with a small group of researchers in 2014-15 (*action 3.8*).
- We see public engagement as a vital part of being a researcher at BU and we have created a number of mechanisms to provide the opportunity for all researchers to engage the public in a variety of contexts. In 2014, for example, we facilitated participation at major public events (including the science tents at Glastonbury Festival and Bestival), encouraged all researchers to lead an event as part of our annual Festival of Learning and encouraged direct engagement with the local community through the Festival of Learning On-Tour events (*priority C.3.3, no specific action reference*).
- We launched an Employee Assistance Programme in 2013 to all staff that offers free and confidential access to advice, information and support on a range of topics, including the opportunity to have an annual career management and guidance session (*priority C.3.4, no specific action reference*).
- A dedicated researcher development section has been added to the BU Research Blog (*action 2.1*).

D. Researchers' responsibilities

- The BU Code of Good Practice in Research was reviewed and significantly updated in 2014. This clearly sets out guiding principles and researchers' responsibilities to ensure the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in the conduct of research. It has been broadened to include topics such as research data management, public engagement and open access (*action 5.1*).
- We have significantly strengthened support for research ethics. The Research Ethics Code of Practice was updated in 2013 and sets out researchers' responsibilities with regard to good ethical practice in the conduct of research. It is now a mandatory requirement for all research/academic staff and PGRs to complete an online ethics module when they join the University (91% of all academic/research staff have completed the module as at October 2014). All staff and students (UG and PG) undertaking research also have to complete an online ethics checklist prior to research taking place. Anything considered above minimal risk is referred to one of two subject-specific ethics panels (*action 5.3*).
- A number of successful KE development events have been held for researchers. A new KTP development scheme was launched in autumn 2014 and 10 staff were part of the first cohort (*action 5.2*).

E. Diversity and equality

- A Women's Academic Network was established in September 2013. The Network has been active in organising a series of events open to all staff across BU. It has also undertaken research into women's experiences in academia (*priority E.6.3, no specific action reference*).
- The Bullying and Harassment Policy has been updated and a new Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures will be published early in 2015 (*action 6.9*).
- We have strengthened support for researchers for whom English is a second language (*action E.6.8*).
- We are preparing a submission for the Athena Swan institutional bronze award for the April 2015 submission date (*action E.6.3*).
- We launched a Health and Wellbeing at BU – a Guide for Managers in November 2014 (*priority E.6.8, no specific action reference*).

F. Implementation and review

- The formal membership of URKEC, which reports into Senate, has included a research staff representative since January 2013. This person is responsible for representing BU research staff at the Committee meetings (*action 7.1a*).
- An update from the RCSG is a standing agenda item at URKEC (*action 7.2b*).
- CROS and PIRLS were run for the first time in 2013 (*action 7.2a*).

3. Next steps and two year action plan (January 2015 – January 2017) (2015-17 action plan reference in brackets)

The action plan will continue to be implemented under the leadership of the PVCRI with support from key stakeholders within the University via the RCSG. The key objectives for the next two years specified in our action plan include:

General

- To hold an annual Concordat-themed event open to research staff and their line managers to talk about the action plan and generate feedback and future ideas (*action GEN1*).
- To undertake phase 2 of the Academic Career Framework project to review the career framework for research staff, to include job descriptions, person specifications, pay and grading, contractual status, promotion and development opportunities (*actions A.1.2, B.2.1a, B.2.6a, C.3.7*).

A. Recruitment and selection

- To review our policy on the use of fixed-term contracts and monitor its implementation (*action A.1.3*).
- To ensure compliance with requirements for interview panels to reflect diversity and experience/expertise (*action A.1.4a*).

B. Recognition and value

- To resource and promote the RSA, to ensure it meets regularly and that views are shared with URKEC and RCSG (*actions B.2.1b, B.2.1c, C.4.13b*).
- To continue to review the breadth of our leadership development provision, ensuring that research leaders and line managers are able to access relevant programmes and individual coaching support where appropriate (*action B.2.3a, B.2.3b, B.2.3c*).
- To produce a university-wide bridging fund policy and procedures to ensure fairness and consistency for research staff between grants/contracts (*action B.2.4*).

C. Support and career development

- To liaise with BU's Careers and Employability Service to investigate providing specialist advice to research staff and to improve support provided to line managers of research staff. To ensure these opportunities are promoted sufficiently (*action C.3.1*).
- To review and strengthen the implementation of the Vitae RDF for staff and PGRs, including provision for line managers of researchers. To explore how research staff could be involved in the delivery of some of the sessions (*action C.3.2*).
- To continue to improve the effectiveness of central induction through the provision of events and/or resources tailored specifically to the needs of academic and research staff (*action C.3.6a, C.3.6b*).
- To deliver the new Foundation Programme in Coaching and Mentoring Practice (FPCMP) and BU Mentor Network (*action C.3.8a*).
- To continue to improve the accuracy of monitoring of engagement with appraisal, seeking to ensure that all staff, irrespective of role, are appraised effectively (*action C.3.9a*).

D. Researchers' responsibilities

- To finalise the updated commercialisation and IP policy (*action D.5.2*).
- To continue to embed the new ethics governance structure, including raising awareness of the importance of research ethics across the University (*action D.5.3*).

E. Diversity and equality

- To make a submission for a bronze institutional Athena Swan award (*action E.6.3a*).
- To review the diversity data for the REF 2014 preparation and submission (*action E.6.3b*).
- To launch Dignity and Wellbeing Advisers to act as a support to staff (*action E.6.9*).

F. Implementation and review

- To run CROS and PIRLS in spring 2015 (*action F.7.2*).

4. Broad success indicators

Our success will be measured in terms of timely achievement of the actions set out in the action plan (2015-17). In addition, we will take into account the following success measures:

- Evidence of participation in and improved results from CROS, PIRLS and our internal surveys in 2015 when compared with previous years.
- Achievement of the Athena Swan institutional bronze award in 2015 and progress towards future submissions for silver departmental awards.
- Increased participation in training and development sessions for academic and research staff, with positive feedback/suggestions for improvement implemented.
- Increased engagement from researchers with public engagement activities, particularly the annual Festival of Learning.