

## **1. Introduction and process**

Bournemouth University (BU) was awarded the EC HR Excellence in Research award in January 2013 in recognition of our achievements so far and our on-going commitment 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 (and more often if required). It is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation (PVCRI), and membership includes academic representatives, research staff representatives and senior colleagues from Human Resources (HR), the Research and Knowledge Exchange Office (RKEO), and Organisational Development (OD).

It is important to note that we whilst our action plan predominantly focuses on research staff we have chosen to apply it, where appropriate, to all academic and research staff. This is to reflect our institutional strategy of 'fusion' whereby research, education and professional practice are linked, with research being an integral part of the other two activities. All of our academic contracts and workload models have a research element. We have approximately 620 academic staff and 55 research staff in post. Whilst the latter remains modest compared to the sector, the number has grown significantly (by 175%) since we undertook our original gap analysis in 2012 and we are on track to meet our target of having 65 research staff by 2018. Our institutional strategy views research staff as key to boosting research culture and enhancing the resilience and sustainability to research activity.

The four year evaluation was undertaken by the RCSG in autumn 2016. The action plan was reviewed, achievements noted and an updated action plan produced, outlining our commitments for 2017-21. Researchers' views were taken into account via the CROS15 data (BU response rate was 22% (national average was 28%)), our 2016 internal research staff survey (response rate was 47%), focus groups held in autumn 2016, and feedback via the BU Research Staff Association (RSA). Research managers' and leaders' views were taken into account via the PIRLS15 data (BU response rate was 36% (national average was 25%)), the 2014 internal line managers' survey (response rate 29%) and focus groups held in autumn 2016. Feedback was provided from Executive Deans and Deputy Deans. 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 website<sup>1</sup> and the BU Research Blog.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Key achievements and progress against the original action plan and two year review action plan (2015-17 action plan references, linked to the Concordat principles, are provided in brackets<sup>3</sup>)**

The University is pleased with the progress made to date, the key achievements of which are summarised below with full details in the 2015-17 action plan. Work during this time has focused on four priorities:

- Giving research staff a valued voice and enhancing their visibility internally and externally;
- Providing research staff with greater job stability;
- Improvements to the policies, procedures and support for research staff and research leaders/managers;
- Raising awareness of the importance of diversity and equality.

One major action that has been unavoidably delayed has been the review of the conditions of employment for research staff. This is part of a large organisational initiative which is being implemented in stages, commencing with lecturing staff and, most recently, hourly paid lecturers. Work has already commenced on creating standardised job descriptions for research staff. These have been reviewed by the RCSG and HR and are due to be discussed at the next RCSG meeting in 2017. Undertaking this review is the main request for change that has been voiced by BU research staff and, as such, there is an appetite to address this soon in 2017. Once approved at the University leadership level, the standardised job descriptions will form the basis for the broader exercise to consider contractual terms and conditions. The aim is to complete the research staff exercise in 2017 – this is later than planned but progress has been impacted by the earlier stages of the wider project.

<sup>1</sup> <https://research.bournemouth.ac.uk/research-environment/research-concordat/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://blogs.bournemouth.ac.uk/research/researcher-toolbox/researcher-development/>

<sup>3</sup> The first letter of the action references relates to the relevant principle in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers as follows: A = Principle 1 (recruitment and selection), B = Principle 2 (recognition and value), C = Principles 3 and 4 (support and career development), D = Principle 5 (researchers' responsibilities), E = Principle 6 (diversity and equality), F = Principle 7 (implementation and review).

We are pleased with progress to date in all other actions, the highlights of which are:

***Giving research staff a valued voice and enhancing their visibility internally and externally:***

- The [BU Research Staff Association](#) (RSA) was launched in autumn 2014 to provide research staff with a forum to discuss issues linked to the implementation of the Concordat. The two RSA chairs enhanced the format in 2016 by incorporating wider engagement activities, such as establishing the RSA as an informal network to share learning/experiences as well as including discussions and presentations on key topics (for example, research ethics) (*action B.2.1b*). Approximately one third of research staff attend each meeting. A dedicated webpage for the RSA is in operation as are researcher development webpages (*action B.2.1c*).
- The formal membership of URKEC, which reports into Senate, has included a research staff representative as an established member since 2013. This person is responsible for representing BU research staff at the Committee meetings (*action C.4.13b*). The RCSG now has a standing agenda item at URKEC (*action F.7.1c*).
- Further work to embed the ownership of the implementation of the Concordat and action plan at local level is in progress. Since 2015 the Faculty RKE Committees have been responsible for ensuring compliance with all national concordats, as well as for this committee and the Faculty Research Degrees Committee to each have a research staff representative included in the voting membership (*actions C.4.13a and F.7.1c*).
- BU took part in the national Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) in 2013 and again in 2015 (BU's 2015 response rates were CROS - 22% and PIRLS - 36%). In 2016 RCSG decided to run an internal research staff survey as our CROS15 response rate was low and not representative, achieving a much improved 47% response rate. All of the survey results have been shared with RCSG, URKEC, DDESG, Faculty RKE Committees, etc. and used to inform the action plan (*action F.7.2*).
- We see public engagement as a vital part of being a researcher at BU and have created an increasing number of mechanisms to provide the opportunity for all researchers to engage the public in a variety of contexts. Academic/research staff and PGRs have been supported to undertake public engagement and the proportion taking part has increased over the past four years<sup>4</sup>. Key public engagement activities have included participation at major public events (such as the science tents at Glastonbury Festival and Bestival), sessions at the annual BU Festival of Learning and supporting the Festival of Learning On Tour events, sessions run as part of our monthly Café Scientifique series, as well as internal talks for BU staff and students (*actions C.3.3b, C.3.3c and C.3.3d*).

***Providing research staff with greater job stability:***

- A review of all casual and fixed-term contracts was undertaken and amendments have been made to the documentation and procedures to ensure their appropriate usage. This includes the implementation of new procedural documentation, including guidance for recruiting project staff, in 2016 (*action A.1.3*). The proportion of BU research staff on fixed-term contracts has remained relatively static (64% in 2012, 68% in 2014 and 67% in 2016, against a national average of 74%), alongside substantial growth in our externally-funded research projects (increase in income of 56% from 2011-12 to 2015-16). Between 2013 and 2016, seven research staff had fixed-term contracts changed to permanent, two research staff were redeployed within BU at the end of their fixed-term contracts, and 16 were promoted to academic posts. We continue to monitor fixed-term contracts to ensure appropriate usage.
- The [BU Bridging Fund Scheme](#) was launched in mid-2015. It permits the temporary employment, in certain circumstances, of researchers between, and at the end of, fixed-term contracts at BU for whom no other source of funding is yet available (*action B.2.4*). The scheme has been well received. Three awards have been made so far and feedback from research staff indicates there are several applications in development.
- The mandatory recruitment and selection training has been updated to include reference to giving due consideration to the wider skill set of researchers including transferable skills and attributes. The aim is to ensure that researchers are given the best opportunity to advance their career (*action A.1.4b*). Between 2013 and 2016, 16 research staff were promoted to academic posts at BU.

***Improvements to the policies, procedures and support for research staff and research leaders/managers:***

- Publication of BU's first [Code of Practice for the Recruitment and Development of Research Staff](#) in autumn 2014 (*action A.1.0a*). This is sent to all new research staff and their line managers as part of their induction.
- Induction processes and resources have been significantly improved. The '[New to BU](#)' webpages now include a specific section on support available to researchers.
- There are now three compulsory induction events for new staff, including the RKE Induction to which all new academic and research staff are invited. All new research staff and their managers receive information about the Concordat, RSA, etc. soon after joining BU (*actions C.3.6a and C.3.6b*).

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<sup>4</sup> It has not been possible to provide accurate numbers for this due to the serendipitous nature of how public engagement opportunities have been created and recorded to date, particularly for PGRs. The development of more robust recording mechanisms and processes is, however, addressed in our 2017-21 action plan (*action C.3.3d*).

- Standardised job descriptions for research staff posts have been drafted and reviewed by the RCSG and HR (*action A.1.2*). These will inform the review of the conditions of employment for research staff planned for 2017.
- We designed and launched a development programme (BRAD) in September 2013 based on Vita's Researcher Development Framework (91 academic/research staff participated in one or more sessions in 2015-16) (*actions C.3.2 and C.3.9b*). The BRAD programme was reviewed and replaced by the RKE Development Framework in autumn 2016 (*action C.4.11*).
- Line managers of research staff are engaging with our leadership development programmes, for example, 28% are currently participating in the Academic Leadership Programme (*actions B.2.3a, B.2.3b and C.3.3a*). Resources to support line managers with the management of research staff are regularly shared (*action B.2.3c*).
- Careers guidance resources specifically for research staff, including case studies for different career pathways, have been produced and made available to all staff (*action C.3.1*).
- The majority of research staff now have an annual appraisal. CROS 2015 data indicates that 50% had undertaken an appraisal within the last two years (25% were not eligible). Of those who had an appraisal, 100% reported the process to have been useful (*action C.3.9a*).
- 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 (*sub-principle D.5.1*).
- We launched a Health and Wellbeing at BU – a Guide for Managers in November 2014 (*sub-principle E.6.8*).

#### **Raising awareness of the importance of diversity and equality:**

- We were awarded the institutional Athena Swan bronze award in October 2015 (*action E.6.3a*).
- The BU Women's Academic Network was established in September 2013 and 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 (*sub-principle E.6.3*).
- During the 2016 focus groups, research staff and line managers spoke positively about the flexible working practices available to them at BU. We launched a Shared Parental Leave Policy in 2015 (*action E.6.4*).
- The Bullying and Harassment Policy has been updated and we published a new Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures in 2015. Dignity and Wellbeing Advisers have been appointed and are undertaking training (*action E.6.9*).
- We have strengthened support for researchers for whom English is a second language (*action E.6.8*).
- Awareness of the Concordat and BU's action plan amongst research staff has increased from 10% in 2012 to 71% in 2015.

### **3. Strategy for the next four years and broad success indicators (2017-21 action plan reference in brackets)**

Our strategy over the next four years is an evolution of our previous strategy and progress achieved. The focus will be on:

- Reviewing and improving the conditions of employment for research staff;
- Further embedding the ownership and implementation of the Concordat and action plan at Faculty level;
- Standardising procedures for research staff, e.g. induction, appraisal and pay progression;
- Further strengthening the documentation and support for research staff and research leaders/managers;
- Further strengthening the voice and visibility of research staff, both internally and externally.

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 and URKEC. Membership of the RCSG will be reviewed in early 2017 to ensure a strong governance structure for steering this next stage of the plan. Success will be measured in terms of the timely achievement of the actions set out in the action plan (2017-21). Where appropriate, quantifiable targets to measure success have been included. Whilst acknowledging the breadth of the plan, we are confident in our ability to deliver the actions.

The main objectives and success measures for the next two years, as specified in our action plan, include:

#### **General**

- To ensure research staff have a valued voice at institutional and Faculty meetings and are involved in relevant decision-making. To continue to resource and promote the RSA and to hold at least one Concordat-themed event per year (aiming for c. 30% of research staff to engage with these) (*actions GEN1, B.2.1d and C.4.13c*).
- To further embed the implementation of the Concordat at Faculty level (*action GEN2, B.2.1d and F.7.1b*).
- To review and strengthen the conditions of employment for research staff by the end of 2017 (to include: job descriptions, pay and grading, career framework, promotion and development, contractual status, etc.) (*action A.1.2a, B.2.1a, B.2.6a, C.3.7*). For this to reflect positively in feedback from research staff via our annual Concordat-themed event and CROS 2019.

#### A. Recruitment and selection

- To implement a more robust, transparent and accessible means of identifying current research staff as a cohort by summer 2018 (to include pertinent information for monitoring, such as contract end dates, line managers, etc.) (*action A.1.0c*).
- To continue to review our policy on the use of fixed-term contracts and monitor its implementation (*action A.1.3a*).

#### B. Recognition and value

- To continue to review the breadth of our leadership development provision, ensuring that research leaders and line managers can access programmes and individual coaching support where appropriate (*action B.2.3b and B.2.3d*).
- To improve workforce planning for the proactive management of succession planning and redeployment for research staff by summer 2018 (*action B.2.4b*).

#### C. Support and career development

- To successfully deliver the new RKE Development Framework launched in autumn 2016 (linked to the BU Academic Career Framework and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework) (*actions C.3.2a and C.3.9d*). For at least 50% of research staff to have engaged with the Framework by summer 2018 and for 75% of respondents to CROS and PIRLS 2019 to be satisfied with the support and development received as part of the Framework.
- To continue to increase the proportion of research staff and PGRs who undertake public engagement, aiming for 75% to have engaged with at least two public engagement activities by summer 2018 (*action C.3.3d*).
- To improve the effectiveness of local induction through the provision of events and/or resources tailored specifically to the needs of academic and research staff (success measured via CROS and PIRLS 2017 and 2019) (*action C.3.6c*).
- To implement the BU Mentor Network (*action C.3.8a*).
- To continue to monitor engagement with appraisal, ensuring research staff have annual appraisals and development plans in place. Aiming for 100% of those eligible to have an appraisal by autumn 2018 (*action C.3.9a*).
- To review the Code of Practice for the Employment and Development of Research Staff and procedural guidance on probation, appraisal and pay progression for research staff to ensure it is clear to follow and consistently applied across all Faculties (*action C.3.9d*).
- To deliver training on how to provide careers advice to academic and research staff, aiming for PIRLS 2019 to show an increase in the number of respondents who feel confident in providing advice on careers inside HE (target of 75%) and outside HE (target of 50%) (*action D.5.5b*).

#### D. Researchers' responsibilities

- To further embed the importance of research ethics and integrity into research practice across the University. Aiming for CROS 2017 data to show an increase from 67% to 75% for the proportion of research staff who have heard of the Concordat, and for this to increase to 85% by 2019. Aiming to increase the number of academic/research staff and PGRs who have completed the ethics module to 75% by summer 2017 (*actions D.5.1a, D.5.1b and D.5.3a*).
- To finalise the updated commercialisation and IP policy in 2017 (*action D.5.2a*).
- To produce a simple A-Z document for research staff, signposting them to development opportunities available, by summer 2017 (*action D.5.5c*).

#### E. Diversity and equality

- To make submissions for at least two silver Athena Swan departmental awards by spring 2018 and to reapply for our bronze Athena Swan institutional award under the expanded criteria by spring 2019 (*action E.6.3a*).
- To make a submission for the bronze institutional Race Equality Charter award by spring 2019 (*action E.6.3b*).
- To review family leave policies (*action E.6.4*).
- To evaluate the Dignity and Respect policy and procedures, including the training sessions for the Dignity and Wellbeing Advisers (*action E.6.9*).
- To monitor responses to CROS and PIRLS on equality and diversity, aiming for at least 80% of respondents to each survey to agree that BU is committed to this agenda (*action E.6.1*).

#### F. Implementation and review

- To review the role and purpose of the RCSG (*action F.7.1a*).
- To increase the proportion of academic/research staff who feel integrated into their Faculty, University and disciplinary communities, as measured using the CROS and PIRLS data. In particular, to aim for a greater proportion of research staff to feel integrated into their department's research community (>75%) and BU's research community (>50%) by 2019 (*action F.7.1d*).
- To run CROS and PIRLS in spring 2017, aiming for a response rate of 30% to CROS and 40% to PIRLS (*action F.7.2b*).