

1. Introduction and process

Bournemouth University (BU) was awarded the EC HR Excellence in Research award in January 2013. 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 & Professional Practice Committee (URPPC) and meets four times a year. It is chaired by the delegated lead in Research Development and Support (RDS, previously the Research & Knowledge Exchange Office, RKEO), and membership includes at least one academic representative from all Faculties, research staff representatives and colleagues from Human Resources, Research Development and Support, the Doctoral College and Organisational Development.

Within the action plan to 2021, new targets have been set, with activities to increase participation rates. 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 810 academic (research/teaching) staff and of those 62 are research-only. Whilst the latter is modest compared to the sector, BU's institutional strategy aimed to increase this from 40 (in 2014) to c.100. With 62 research staff in post as of January 2019, the ambition remains to exceed such levels by 2021.

BU participated in the CROS and PIRLS surveys in 2017. The response rates were 29% (16 responses out of a target population of 56) for CROS and 29% (62 responses out of a target population of 215) for PIRLS. This compares with 2015 where response rates were: 22% for CROS and 36% for PIRLS.

The current two year evaluation was undertaken by the RCSG in autumn/winter 2018. The action plan was reviewed, achievements noted and an updated action plan produced, outlining our commitments for 2019-21. Researchers' views were taken into account, formally, via the CROS15 and CROS17 data, a meeting held in association with Vitae in April 2018, a focus group meeting with research staff in January 2019 and via feedback from the BU Research Staff Association (RSA). All feedback received was used to review and generate new actions. The BU RSA, since its inception in 2014, has become a key engagement mechanism for the University and its research staff. An RSA recruitment round, to invite new representatives, was initiated in November 2018. Our action plan is a live document - updated quarterly, shared with RCSG and URPPC, with latest version available BU website¹ and Research Blog.²

BU recently launched its strategic plan, BU2025³, which sets out ambitious aspirations and strategic investment plan, particularly in relation to research activity and performance. The vision for BU2025 states that *we are recognised world-wide as a leading university for inspiring learning, advancing knowledge and enriching society through the fusion of education, research and practice*, with the joint purposes of BU being to *inspire learning, advance knowledge, and enrich society*. The 100 themed actions include key research-based activities:

- A focus on developing research leadership to significantly increase research performance
- Academic staff developing substantial research profiles
- A focus on collaboration, interdisciplinary research, and high-performing research teams
- Providing research support that is appropriate for academic staff at different levels and different career stages to help develop their research performance and impact
- Funding our investments by targeting areas for growth in income from research

Alignment of our Research Concordat action plan with BU2025, the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and the pending outcome of the Concordat consultation is in progress. With these strategies and actions coming into alignment, there is the potential to exceed current expectations, with new schemes and initiatives being added to the live action plan prior to the eight year review in 2021.

2. Key achievements and progress against the 2017 action plan (2019 action plan reference in brackets, with 2017 action plan references also given, where amended or applicable)

A. Recruitment and selection

- The Standard Researcher Job Descriptions and Person Specifications have been approved. (2019 – A.1.2a)
- The HR system has enabled accurate identification of research staff and their line managers, with monthly MI packs issued to the Faculties in relation to monitoring contract end dates. (2019 – A.1.0c)

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

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

³ <https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/bu2025-vision-values-strategic-plan/bu2025-strategic-plan>

- The e-Recruitment tender is on track in order to deploy phase one in May 2019. (2019 – A.1.4a)
- A new standard induction checklist has been provided for managers. (2019 – B.2.3d)

B. Recognition and value

- The BU Research Staff Association was established in 2014 to provide research staff with a forum to discuss issues linked to the implementation of the Concordat. This group meets regularly and receives administrative support from the Research Development & Support team. With the establishment of the Early Career Network in 2018, there are opportunities for research-only staff to collaborate with ECRs. (2019 – B.2.1d, B.2.1e and C.3.2a)
- The Concordat is specifically mentioned in the FRPPC Terms of Reference, with research staff reps invited to FRPPC meetings. (2019 – GEN2)
- In 2018, £25k was made available via our Acorn Scheme to support ECR research projects. Six awards of up to £5k were made with 19 smaller awards of £1k. Award holders are offered ongoing support to submit applications and encouraged to share their research with their peers, through the ECRN, for example. (2019 – C.4.11)
- Through the RSCG, all faculties have confirmed they provide equal access to BU funding for external staff development. This has been further supported by the provision of the A-Z guide. (2019 – B.2.1f and D.5.5.c)

C. Support and career development

- The intranet pages, 'Researchers at BU', outline the development opportunities for research staff and careers guidance. These pages provide guidance for those managing and supporting researches. The A-Z guide to development opportunities was produced in consultation with the RSA. BU2025 Action 61 requires the continued investment in integrated and comprehensive induction, role and career development and support for staff from all parts of BU. (2019 – A.1.2a)
- Within the RKEDF, specific workshops are highlighted as suitable for those at the start of their research career, via 'situation statements' which personalise the user experience. (2019 – C.3.9d and D.5.5.a)
- In spring 2018, a three level career pathway (ECRs, Mid-Career: New to Research, and Mid-Career: Research Leaders) was launched. These have been evaluated and will take place annually until 2021. Separate provision was made for the Professoriate, with future provision in development, in consultation with them. (2019 – D.5.5b)
- According to CROS17, completed appraisals had fallen to 44% (7). Following consideration via the RSCG, actions are in place to improve communication with new starters and their supervisors and in the systematic recording of appraisal uptake. (2019 – C.3.9.a, C.4.11 and F.7.2b)
- Public engagement is a vital part of being a researcher at BU and we provide the opportunity for all researchers to engage with the public including the annual BU Festival of Learning. In 2017/18, 71 members of staff (including PGRs took part in centrally organised PE activities), with over 10,000 attendees. The new RDS Engagement Officer will work closely with the Doctoral College to ensure our doctoral students are supported to undertake public engagement. (2019 – C.3.3.d)
- BU supported 10 ECRs to attend the 2018 ESRC Festival of Research Methods. Funding will be made available annually to enable our ECRs to attend research methods events/conferences. (2019 – C.4.11)
- Evidencing the value of the RKEDF is being undertaken through case studies (at least two per faculty) and focus groups (three times per year). Attendance records, post-event questionnaires, tracking research activity post-event and interaction with RDS staff, further evidence value. (2019 – B.2.6c)

D. Researchers' responsibilities

- The Code of Good Research Practice has been updated to strengthen research integrity (updated October 2018 and January 2019). The gap analysis highlighted the need for a Research Integrity Framework (pulling together research integrity policies); this will be actioned in 2019. (2019 – D.5.1a)

E. Diversity and equality

- The family leave policy has been reviewed with significantly enhancements to our maternity, adoption and paternity/partner leave benefits. We have improved the accessibility of the information available on the Staff Intranet on Supporting Family and Work-Life Balance. (2019 – E.6.4)
- An institutional re-accreditation submission for the Athena Swan Bronze award was made in November 2018. BU's Media Production department was awarded the Bronze award in 2018. (2019 – E.6.3e)
- The 'Respect at BU' video was launched and is updated annually. (2019 – E.9.6)

F. Implementation and review

- CROS and PIRLS were run for the first time in 2013 and repeated in 2015 and 2017. (2019 – D.5.5a)

3. Next steps and two year action plan (January 2019 – January 2021) (2021 action plan reference in brackets)

The action plan will continue to be implemented under the oversight of URPPC, 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, supported by a forum within the ECRN Community within BU's VLE, Brightspace, and other promotional mechanisms. (2021 – GEN1)

A. Recruitment and selection

- Ensuring that procedures are compliant with Brexit-related legislative changes. (2021 – A.1.2b)
- Monitoring fixed-term contracts and supporting staff (e.g. the BU Bridging Fund. (2021 – A.1.3a and B.2.4a)
- With the launch of BU2025, the related Workforce plan has been approved with related plans in development within each faculty to be informed by actions to address any workforce issues, such as succession planning, talent management, performance, recruitment, demographical issues, external factors, etc. Work is underway to relaunch workforce planning at BU in order to commence the creation of Faculty plans during 2018-19. (2021 – B2.4a and b)

B. Recognition and value

- To resource and promote the RSA, to ensure it meets regularly and that views are shared with URPPC and RCSG. (2021 – B.2.1b, B.2.1c, C.4.13a and b)
- 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. (2021 – B.2.3a and B.2.3b)
- To promote the university-wide bridging fund policy with procedures monitored to ensure fairness and consistency for research staff between grants/contracts, with an emphasis on addressing the gender balance. (2021 – B.2.4a)

C. Support and career development

- As developed within BU2025, to investigate providing specialist advice to research staff and to improve support provided to line managers of research staff. (2021 – B.2.6a and b, C.4.11 and D5.5.b)
- Develop the BU Mentor Network, using SUMAC. (2021 – 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. (2021 – C.3.9a)
- To provide opportunities for public engagement, evidencing that this is being undertaken across BU. (2021 – C.3.3d).
- To continue to develop the RKEDF provision based on feedback and monitoring. (2021 – C.3.9d and C.4.11)
- To promote the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. (2021 – D.5.1a and b)
- BU subscribes to Epigeum's Ethics courses, updated by the external supplier. (2021 – D.5.3a)

D. Researchers' responsibilities

- To finalise the updated Commercialisation and IP policy. (2021 – D.5.2a)
- To continue to embed the new ethics governance structure, including raising awareness of the importance of research ethics across the University, enhanced by the appointment of a Clinical Governance Advisor in RDS. Workshops targeting research governance are forthcoming alongside externally provided content. (2021 – D.5.3)

E. Diversity and equality

- Following a survey in 2018, a submission to the Race Equality Charter is planned for July 2019. (2021 – E.6.3b)
- The **Respect at BU** video will be promoted to target groups. (2021 – E.6.9)
- All departments at BU to have achieved an Athena SWAN award (at least bronze) by 2025. (2021 – E.6.3a)

F. Implementation and review

- To run CROS and PIRLS again in 2019, with increased participation. (2021 – C.3.9.c and F.7.2b)
- To provide briefing notes regarding the Concordat at least annually. (2021 – F.7.1b)

4. Broad success indicators

Our success will be measured in terms of timely achievement of the actions set out in the action plan (2019-21). 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 2019 when compared with previous years.
- Progress towards Athena Swan silver departmental awards.
- Increased participation in training and development sessions for academic and research staff, with positive feedback/suggestions for improvement implemented.
- Increased engagement by researchers in public engagement activities, including the BU Festival of Learning.