

## HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

### Bangor University Four Year Evaluation and Review – 2016

#### 1 Introduction

Bangor University achieved its first HR Excellence in Research Award that recognised the University's commitment to supporting its researchers in 2012 and has continued to develop its provision in this area and this is noted in University's Strategic Plan 2015-2020. The Strategy notes that the University "aims to deliver an environment where the research community has the best opportunity to thrive at all levels". In order to achieve that aim the University's Strategy and the University's HR Strategy explicitly states its commitment to applying the principles of the Concordat in the University.

#### 2 The Review Process

The University has made considerable progress in this area since the original Gap Analysis in 2012. The four year external review allowed us to again consider the University's progress against the objectives included in the University's Research Concordat Action Plan with the University's Researcher Development and Concordat Group (RDCG) and identify key areas for further development in the context of the University's new Strategic Plan. Although progress towards the Research Concordat Action Plan is seen as a continuous process in the University, the HR Excellence in Research Award reviews do provide the opportunity for the University to reflect, identify further areas to develop and recognise progress to date.

*The RDCG was responsible for overseeing this review process and the review included:*

- Running the CROS and PIRLS surveys in 2015 to evaluate progress against the 2013 results.
- Consultation with researchers was undertaken by the Deputy Director HR (Development) and the relevant College representative of the RDCG visiting each of the Schools and Institutes in the University between October 2015 and January 2016. The aim of the meetings was to discuss progress in this area and exploring further ideas to support researchers in the University. 80% of the Schools and Institutes were consulted through specific meetings with academic staff. These meetings were very useful to raise awareness of the Concordat Principles and to explore staff ideas on how to further improve the University's support for researchers.
- All the University's concordat research staff were invited to a focus group to discuss how best to support this group of staff. This focus group was held in December 2015.
- A focus group was also arranged with researchers in Wrexham who, because of their location away from Bangor, sometimes cannot access the same level of support as staff in Bangor. Therefore it was important to consult this group to consider their needs in any future developments.
- The results of the CROS and PIRLS survey and the feedback from the consultation with the Schools were discussed by the RDCG and the PVC Research and Director of Research to provide input into the development of the next Researcher Development and Research Concordat Action Plan
- UCU were consulted for their views and ideas regarding the Action Plan.
- There has also been collaboration in the Equality section of the Plan with the University's Athena SWAN Steering Group.
- The 4 year evaluation and review was shared with key stakeholders for further consultation and comment. This consultation included: The Research Strategy Task Group (which is Chaired by the PVC Research and includes all the Directors of Research in the Colleges) the HR Task Group, the Director of Research and the Research and Enterprise Office, the Deans of the Colleges and the Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

#### 3 Key Achievements

##### Principle 1 – Recruitment and Selection

- The development of an electronic recruitment process during the period have enabled improved review and evaluation of our recruitment process.

- Training for all staff who take part in the recruitment and selection process has been provided since June 2014 and mandatory for Chairs of Panels and to date 34 PI's have attended this training. Also, customised training has been provided for three Schools for PI's and Professors.
- Following the implementation of an electronic recruitment process in 2014 the system evaluates the response of new staff to the University's recruitment process. The Candidate Experience Survey is monitored every 6 months by HR and to date positive feedback regarding the process has been received no difference in the level of experience has been noted between researchers and other staff groups.
- Free childcare is now provided in the University's crèche for individuals who are attending an interview and need a childcare service.

### **Principle 2 - Recognition and Value**

- The University's efforts during this period have concentrated on increasing participation by all staff in the Performance Development Review (PDR) Scheme. HR record that now up to 74% of Bangor University's staff received a PDR in 2015.
- Performance Development Review documentation has been updated for academic staff to better reflect the range of responsibilities of the academic role.
- A survey examining staff response to the PDR in terms of their own experience and the process was held and this will further inform developments to improve the PDR process for research staff. The survey result noted that 68% of academic and research staff had found the PDR useful.
- For staff on fixed term contracts a revised electronic process has been introduced during the period to improve matching within the redeployment process.
- Following the revision of the senior academic promotion criteria and process an annual presentation by the PVC Research, PVC Teaching and Learning and the Director of HR has been held to explain the University's expectations and the promotion process. Approximately 50 members of staff have attended this event each year.
- Bangor University now rewards its most innovative academics at the University's annual Impact & Innovation Awards. This is an awards ceremony that recognises outstanding research and enterprise activities that have succeeded in benefiting the wider economy and society.

### **Principle 3, 4 and 5 – Career Development, Support and Researcher' Responsibilities**

- An annual academic and research induction programme has been relaunched for research and teaching staff. This is organised jointly by HR and the Research and Enterprise Office.
- A researcher development website has been launched which contains information about; development opportunities, career development advice and specific information for PI's.
- The Researcher Development Programme for researchers has continued to develop which supplements the University's own Staff Development Programme. The training provided is now also supplemented by staff being able to participate in the Doctoral School workshops.
- There has been considerable improvement in staff attending workshops on doctoral supervision and 120 staff have attended these workshops to date.
- Coaching and mentoring has continued to develop in the University and following a pilot in one of the Schools the next stage will be to consider the development of mentoring more widely in the University.
- To support effective research leadership a number of Bangor researchers are chosen each year to undertake the Welsh Crucible programme. A number are chosen from participating institutions and since the last application Bangor has had 14 participants in this programme in the last two years
- As already noted in this report the four year review enabled the University to consult extensively with research staff and raise staff awareness of the Concordat.

### **Principle 6 – Equality and Diversity**

- In 2014 Bangor once again achieved the Athena SWAN University Bronze award. Two Schools have achieved a Bronze award - the School of Sport, Health and Exercise Science (2015) and the School of Psychology (2016).
- The University has developed its Strategic Equality Plan and achieved much of the actions in the original plan which has supported all staff during the last four years.
- Bangor University was a recent winner in the 'Employer of the Year' (public sector) category in the Chwarae Teg 'Womenspire' awards that recognises the contribution made by women across Welsh society.
- 92 research leads have now attended the 'Equality for Managers' course that is mandatory for all managers in the University.
- The University has introduced a new Professorial Framework within the extended pay scale for professorial staff. The Framework sets out a criteria and expectations for each of the three new professorial bands. A full review of existing professors was undertaken to assimilate them into the new Framework in order to ensure equality in terms of equal pay for work of equal value.
- Occupational maternity pay is now available from the first day of employment.
- The University offers a 'one-stop shop' for mothers-to-be with pre-and post-maternity support and advice offered to improve retention of mothers returning from maternity leave and providing their line managers with equivalent advice on how they can support staff throughout this process.

### **Principle 7 – Implementation and Review**

- A key development in terms of implementation and review is the appointment of an Athena SWAN and Research Concordat Manager in February 2016. The aim of this post is to integrate the overlapping strategic objectives in terms of the Research Concordat and Athena SWAN and further develop the Researcher Development Programme and University-wide initiatives to support researchers.
- The CROS and PIRLS survey were held in the University in 2015 and all relevant academic staff were invited to respond. The Concordat Action Plan is reviewed on an annual basis by the RDCG, the Research Strategy Task Group and the HR Task Group. One of the key success measures highlighted in the previous reports was improved results in the CROS and PIRLS survey and this has been achieved.
- As noted in our previous report the RDRC Group continues to ensure a broad representation of researchers in its membership.

## **4 Next Steps**

For the next two years the key aim of the University is to ensure high-quality support for all researchers both at University and College levels through aligning its development activities with the RDF, providing a development route from PhD to senior researchers and integrating its initiatives in the areas noted below to maximise the impact of these initiatives across the University.

*Key priorities for 2016-20 include:*

In light of priorities identified in the University's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 they key objectives of the University is 'to deliver an environment where the research community has the best opportunity to thrive at all levels'. In order to achieve this, in light of the requirements of the Concordat the University has identified the following as its key priorities:

- To identify researchers with leadership potential and support their development – this will be achieved through the development of a University Research Leadership Programme.
- Provide support for researchers and research careers through a career development-planning pathway – this will be primarily carried out through the development of the PDR process and further enhancement of the researcher development programme and networking and engagement with the Welsh Crucible. There will be specific actions to support early career researchers.
- Deliver a mentoring scheme for publications, grant applications and to support career development.

- Apply the principles of the Athena SWAN Charter and the Gender Charter Mark in the University.

Also In terms of the strategic enablers included in the University's strategy ensure that researchers can demonstrate how their research contributes to sustainability (as defined by the Well-being of Future Generations Act) and develop a sustainable workforce.