

## HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

### Bangor University Six Year Evaluation and Review – 2018

#### 1 Introduction

The University is a research-intensive institution and on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2018 the University had; 831 academic staff of which 655 were research active, 234 early career staff (ECRs), 174 contract research staff. The University has 595 PhD students. Much progress has been made in the last two years to support researchers. The introduction of the Strategic Concordat Group is already providing significant benefits to instigate the development of initiatives such as the introduction of the Bangor University ECR Travel Grants and Research Support Awards and provide a valuable link between ECR support and the achievement of the University's research objectives. In this period it must be noted that the University has undertaken a major University-wide restructuring process which has led to a reduction in the number of Colleges from 5 to 3 and a reduction in the number of Schools from 23 to 13.

#### 2 The Review Process

This year's review was undertaken by the Researcher Development and Research Concordat Group (RDRCG) and the Strategic Concordat Group (SCG). The RDRCG includes; 5 early career and contract research staff (that represent each College) and staff from the Research and Enterprise Office, the Doctoral School, HR and the Library. This Group is responsible for overseeing the consultation process and advising on how best to support ECRs in the University. The SCG was established in 2017 and is responsible for taking a strategic view on how best to support researchers in the University - particularly in the context of the University's overall strategic objectives and overseeing the University's Research Concordat Plan. The membership of the SCG includes; the PVC for Research and Enterprise, Director of Research and Enterprise, Dean of the Doctoral School, HR Director, Deputy Director HR (Development), Athena SWAN and Research Concordat Manager and a UCU representative. The six year review process included:

- With the development of the University's ECR Network there has been considerable consultation with ECR's and an ECR survey was held in 2017 to examine what support and development ECRs wish to see provided by the University.
- The CROS survey was also held in 2017 to provide a broader range of feedback than the ECR Survey.
- The College representatives of the RDRCG were asked to consult with researchers in their Colleges to get their views to feed into the consultation.
- A focus group was held with 15 researchers (from a wide range of grades and disciplines) to discuss their opinions regarding what support the University should provide in the future.
- A specific meeting of the RDRCG was held to discuss progress and future action against the Concordat Action Plan.
- Reporting on progress regarding the Concordat Action Plan the Deputy Director HR (Development) discussed the Plan and future ideas with the Executive Team of each of the Colleges.
- UCU were consulted for their views and ideas regarding the Action Plan.
- The 2 year review and report 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 Enterprise) and includes all the Directors of Research in the Colleges) and the HR Task Group.
- The Report and Plan was approved by the University Executive.

The review this year has had considerable input by ECRs and a broad range of research staff. There have been opportunities for ECRs to contribute both in the Network and through the Colleges. The focus group was also offered so that other researchers (not necessarily ECRs) could also outline their expectations. The establishment of the SCG has been particularly useful to provide a strategic link between the aims of the University and the views of the University's researchers.

#### 3 Key Achievements

##### Principle 1 – Recruitment and Selection

- 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 112 academic staff have attended this training.
- Staff feedback following recruitment is reviewed and as a result procedures have been updated following the previous review e.g. some minor changes to the short-listing report and the interview scoring sheet to ensure consistency and transparency.

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

- The University has concentrated on increasing participation by all staff in the Performance Development Review (PDR) Scheme. In 2016 79% of staff had received a PDR and 49% in 2017. The factors for this discrepancy is noted in the Action Plan and is attributed to the major restructuring process in the University.
- In the last CROS survey 88.3% in Bangor responded that they had received a PDR in the last two years (the UK response was 72.4%).
- An electronic PDR system has been developed in order to ensure that the process is more efficient and effective. This will be piloted from June 2018 and rolled out to staff from December 2018.
- Bangor University rewards its most innovative academics at the University's Impact & Innovation Awards. These awards recognise outstanding research and enterprise activities that benefited the wider economy and society. In the last awards there were 12 applications for four awards that included Best Impact Project and Best Business Innovation.

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

- In 2016 a University ECR Network was launched. The purpose of the network is to provide support for career development, to share ideas and provide an opportunity to meet other ECRs. Topics covered have included; applying for research funding, using social media to promote research and IP & Commercialisation. ECR network events have also been used a platform for consultation with ECRs. 38% of ECR's have engaged with the Network to date and response has been positive to all events. In an ECR survey (2017) 74% noted that they will attend future events. In terms of impact, feedback from ECRs notes that they feel that they now have a platform to influence the training and support provided by the University (examples include the social media training) and they had a direct input into the development the research mentoring scheme.
- Since the last application there has been an increase in ECR support in the Colleges that include: the development of an ECR Network in Healthcare Sciences, ECR events in the College of Natural Sciences and Social Sciences that included a British Sociological Association (BSA) supported workshop and an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account Showcase and Networking event.
- In 2017 a University-led but College based research mentoring scheme was launched but due to the recent University-wide restructuring this has been delayed until late 2018.
- Considerable work has been undertaken to ensure that staff understand the requirements of the PURE system and providing guidance in relation to impact. Over 600 staff have attended sessions in these two areas during the period.
- Work has progressed to develop a new comprehensive Research Leadership Programme for staff. This will be piloted with the first group from June 2018.
- The University has also launched a University-wide coaching programme that provides staff with access to qualified coaches to discuss personal and career development. 41 staff have engaged with the Coaching Programme since 2016. Individual evaluation following the coaching demonstrate positive impacts on career planning and being more effective in work.
- KESS 2, an EU funded project led by Bangor on behalf of the HE sector in Wales, offers funded PhD and Research Masters, in collaboration with a company partner. There are 336 projects across the 8 universities in Wales. KESS 2 creates opportunities for academics to develop research links outside academia and presents opportunities for co-supervision. These industrial links frequently led to larger grants.
- To support effective research leadership a number of Bangor researchers are selected each year to attend the Welsh Crucible Programme which is now linked with the Learned Society of Wales. Bangor has had 14 participants in this programme in the last two years.
- The Doctoral School was introduced in its current form by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact) in 2016 and is headed by the Dean of Postgraduate Research. The aim of the Doctoral School is to develop and support an interdisciplinary and integrated research community and ECR staff have access to relevant training and development opportunities offered by the Doctoral School.
- There has been an increase in staff attending the doctoral supervision course and since 2016, 120 staff have attended. The impact of the training has been attributed to a reduction in complaints and improved compliance with relevant regulations. To support ECRs new to a doctoral supervisory role, co-supervision of a PhD candidate has been introduced and allows ECRs to develop effective supervisory skills.
- 120 academic staff have attended GDPR training to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities in this area.

**Principle 6 – Equality and Diversity**

- In April Bangor applied for its third Athena SWAN University Bronze award. Since 2016 two Schools have achieved a Bronze award; the School of Psychology (2016) and the School of the Environment, Natural Resources and Geography (2016). The School of Ocean Sciences are applying in 2018.
- The University will be introducing Equality Champions in each College at the end of the current academic year. The Equality Champions will be assisting with promoting awareness of equality issues in their Colleges and will assist the University to progress and embed its equality objectives in the University.
- The University has continued to develop its Strategic Equality Plan and achieved much of the actions in the original plan which has supported all staff since its introduction.

**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 of the Research Concordat and Athena SWAN and further develop the Researcher Development Programme and University-wide initiatives to support researchers. This post has had considerable impact in further enhancing the University’s support for researcher development.
- The CROS survey was held in the University in 2017 and had a 22% response rate.

**4 Next Steps**

For the next two years the key aim of the University is to ensure high-quality support for all researchers and address the strategic objective highlighted in the University’s Strategic Plan 2015-2020 to ‘*deliver an environment where the research community has the best opportunity to thrive at all levels*’. In order to achieve this, the University has identified the following as its key priorities in this area:

<p>1) To identify researchers with leadership potential and support their development – this will be achieved through the development of a University Research Leadership Programme.</p>	<p>1) This Programme has been prepared and a pilot programme will be run from September 2018.</p>
<p>2) 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.</p>	<p>2) Elements of the Career Development Pathway are being developed at present i.e. the PDR, the expansion of the Researcher Development Programme and the ECR survey has informed development of the support for ECRs. The Welsh Crucible Programme is already in place. A Career Development Guide will bring together these elements and this is currently under consultation and the next draft of the Guide is being prepared.</p>
<p>3) Deliver a mentoring scheme for publications, grant applications and to support career development.</p>	<p>3) The research mentoring scheme has been launched in the Colleges and this will be relaunched following the implementation of the College restructuring.</p>
<p>4) Embed the principles of the extended Athena SWAN Charter in the University.</p>	<p>4) Progress has been made as the University holds a University Athena SWAN Bronze award (and has reapplied this year) and since 2016 two Schools have achieved the award and another School will apply in April. The aim is that all Schools apply for an award by 2022.</p>