

HR RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

Bangor University Two year Self-assessment Report – April 2014

1 Introduction

Bangor University achieved the HR Research Excellence Award in 2012, thus recognising that Bangor actively supports its researchers and that its activities in this area address the principles of the Concordat. The University regards its commitment to supporting researchers as a process of continuous improvement and welcomes the opportunity, through the self- assessment process, to review progress and identify further action to enhance its provision and support.

2 The Review Process

Through three surveys the University has been able to develop information regarding researchers' opinions regarding their experiences of working in University and how the University can further support research staff. The University Staff Survey in 2012 provided results specifically for researchers that highlighted issues regarding work life balance, performance development review and training.

In 2103 the University held the CROS and PIRLS surveys. These surveys reinforced much of the information gained in the University Staff Survey however, the information was clearly far more relevant for researchers and identified areas that the Researcher Development and Concordat Group (RDCG) felt should be examined in more detail e.g. training needs and the research environment in the University and in the Colleges. An external consultant was asked to undertake focus groups with staff to develop a qualitative base of evidence on which to base our future action plans. The consultant drew on the results of the University Staff Survey and particularly the results of the CROS and PIRLS on which to base the topics addressed in the focus groups.

The focus groups were undertaken over a number of months in 2013. Two sessions were held with early career researchers and mid-career researchers in different locations. The PI's were interviewed individually. The groups were also compiled to reflect a mix from the different Colleges. The consultant then developed a comprehensive report on the findings which was then presented to the RDCG, the HR Task Group and the Research Strategy Task Group in 2013. The results of both surveys were considered when developing the University's Concordat Action Plan for 2014-2016.

3 Management

The RDCG(chaired by the Director of Research) has the responsibility for developing and monitoring the University's Concordat Action Plan. This group reports to the HR Task Group and the Research Strategy Task Group. The Research Strategy Task Group is chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) and the Directors of Research in each of the Colleges are represented at this Task Group

4 Key Achievements

Principle 1 – Recruitment and Selection

Since the previous application the HR Department has reviewed its recruitment and selection policy and process. This was linked to the introduction of an electronic recruitment system. Additional functionality is now provided to support the Concordat principles. These new developments include:

- A questionnaire for new staff that seeks their opinions regarding their experience of the recruitment and induction process. This enables HR to identify any issues for researchers – both with permanent and fixed term contracts.
- A new Recruitment Guide has been produced for all staff involved in recruitment.
- Training for all staff who take part in the recruitment and selection process will be provided from June 2014.
- In terms of probation, a team in HR reviewed our current progress and changes were made to make the process more efficient.

Principle 2 - Recognition and Value

- Much work has been undertaken to encourage greater participation by researchers in the Performance Development Review Scheme. Bangor's CROS results demonstrated that 73% of staff had received a PDR in the last two years, which is better than the UK average.
- A major development has been the introduction of a new senior academic promotion criteria and process. This process was reviewed with the intention of ensuring that the expectations of the University for Staff seeking promotion were clear and that the system was simplified and transparent. A number of researchers have been successful in achieving promotion since the introduction of the new process.
- HR reviewed the University's Fixed Term Contract Policy and a question has now been added to the system to ask academic schools why a post is not being made permanent. This encourages the Schools to consider placing staff on permanent contracts and provide a justification regarding why Schools are unable to make a post permanent.
- In terms of redeployment, HR developed a comprehensive register of staff on redeployment and now work across the University to identify opportunities for staff. A further enhancement to the redeployment process has been the introduction of a longer lead-in time before the end of the contract so that staff have more time to actively explore redeployment opportunities before the end of the funding period.
- Bangor's CROS results demonstrated that 74.5% of staff believe they are integrated into their College's research community and initiatives have been undertaken to develop research networks across the University.

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

- HR now monitors attendance at the University Induction to maximise the number of staff that attend. All researchers with permanent and fixed term contracts are invited to attend. The CROS survey noted that 53% of staff found the University induction useful. Also, an annual induction event has been introduced for research staff by the Research and Enterprise Office.
- A Researcher Development Programme for researchers which is linked to the RDF has been developed. The content of the programme is based on feedback from the Bangor CROS results and the focus groups. The Researcher Development Programme is also being developed in conjunction with Aberystwyth University, to maximise resources and expertise at both institutions. Courses are also held each year to support research supervision.
- A University-wide Mentoring and Coaching Policy and process has been agreed and a mentoring pilot is currently being undertaken in one of the Schools before introducing the scheme to all early career researchers in the next academic year. Female researchers in Bangor have also participated in the Women's University's Mentoring Scheme.
- In terms of career support, courses to support broad career development are now provided as part of the Researcher Development Programme.
- To support effective research leadership a number of Bangor researchers are chosen each year to undertake the Welsh Crucible programme. Bangor University is part of the consortium of Welsh universities who, in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, run the programme in Wales. The programme won the Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Development in the THE awards in 2013.

- A number of senior research managers took part in the Senior Research Leader's Programme for the St David's Day Group in 2013.
- Managers are invited to take part in the University's Effective Manager Programme and a number of research managers have attended.
- Researcher responsibilities are addressed during recruitment, induction and performance development review. In the CROS survey 93% of staff noted that researchers take ownership of their career development and 61% have a career development plan.

Principle 6 – Equality and Diversity

- In 2012 Bangor achieved the Athena SWAN University Bronze award.
- In the CROS survey 81% of staff agreed that the University is committed to equality and diversity, which is better than the UK average.
- Bangor requires that all staff undertake equality training and run a specific course for managers. Researchers and research managers are invited to attend.
- Following the results of the University Staff Survey and CROS/PIRLS survey the University has introduced a programme of courses to support staff to manage work pressure and promote wellbeing. This programme has been well received. Also the University has developed a draft academic workload policy and guidelines which will go for broader consultation in June 2014.

Principle 7 – Implementation and Review

- The CROS and PIRLS survey were held in the University in 2013 and all relevant academic staff were invited to respond. Through focus groups, a qualitative study was also undertaken with early career staff, established researchers and PI's.
- The Concordat Action Plan is reviewed on an annual basis by the RDCG, the Research Strategy Task Group and the HR Task Group.

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 success measures for 2014-16 include:

- Expanding the RDCG to include a broader range of researchers to identify innovative initiatives at both University and College levels.
- Evidence of improved results in the next CROS and PIRLS survey.
- Further development and increased participation on the Researcher Development Programme.
- Retention of the University Athena SWAN award in 2014 and evidence of integration between Concordat and Athena SWAN activities.
- Effective development of mentoring and coaching provision for early research staff in the University.