

University of Birmingham

HR Excellence in Research Action Plan 2020-22

Supporting Statement

As the University moves in to its 9th year of HR Excellence in Research accreditation, we find ourselves in unusual and challenging circumstances. However, we continue to be mindful of the environment being experienced by our research staff and the importance of ensuring that a supportive culture exists which enables challenging and ambitious research to be undertaken, whilst at the same time rapidly developing the careers our researchers.

Our new strategy, *Birmingham 2026* is an ambitious yet achievable plan to raise the academic performance of the University by growing research activity and investing in our staff. To facilitate this ambition the University is embarking on two important initiatives, which will underpin our commitment to the new Researcher Concordat

- At the heart of our new strategy is a People and Culture theme which recognises the central importance of people to delivering our strategy, and the ways in which we can continue to develop a vibrant culture. Key aspects will include academic career pathways, equality and diversity, and workplace wellbeing.
- In addition, we have begun the process of refreshing the *Birmingham Academic Career Framework* – a project which covers all aspects of the academic career cycle. Key work-streams of importance to this action plan include
 - Career Pathways
 - Academic Development Programme
 - Early Career Staff

The Early Career Staff work-stream clearly aligns with the target population of the 2019 Concordat. Its key milestone is to develop “A programme of support for the development and progression of early career staff to be devised and embedded in each College”. This work, in conjunction with the other work-streams will create a consistent and holistic framework across the University that will support new and developing academic staff. Proposals for the career pathways arising from this work-stream and the associated development programme will be submitted by November 2020.

The recent “Have Your Say” all-staff survey, combined with the results of the recent national research staff Careers in Research On-line Survey, has informed a significant proportion of our Action Plan and will provide benchmark data against which to evaluate progress. Where appropriate, other institutional action plans and goals have been incorporated. These include Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter and Research Integrity.

We are also revising our approach to engagement and governance. Key elements will be:-

- Local, College based, researcher support and development groups will continue to provide tailored local support for their researchers through a more consistent approach to identifying development requirements, and will report annually to their College leadership and then to a revised central Researcher Support and Development Group.
- The Researcher Support and Development Group will report annually to University Executive Board. This group will champion institution-wide researcher issues, enable a sharing of best practice and manage the relevant institutional projects e.g. Researcher Concordat compliance, HR Excellence accreditation.

This will ensure researchers are at the heart of creating a supportive and developmental environment, provide a link between local College activities and institutional priorities and ensure that the action plan is monitored effectively.

Based on the feedback received from the researcher community the following key areas of focus have been identified for our Action Plan. Clear measures of success have been identified within the Action Plan.

Key Areas of Focus
Environment & Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and clearly communicate a vision for the research staff environment informed by feedback from researchers and the institutional strategic aims. • Clearly articulate what is expected of research team leaders with respect to leading and managing their people, to create the expected research environment. • Provide support, development and recognition for research team leaders.
Employment / Professional & Career Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring researcher induction is consistent and appropriate to the individual need. • Optimising PDR guidance, documentation and training to ensure a consistent, high quality experience that provides a framework for articulating clear goals, exploring career aspirations and associated, appropriate opportunities for development. • Ensuring research leaders facilitate their researchers' access to relevant professional development opportunities and researchers engage actively in planning their own development.
Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define areas of consistent practice for College based researcher and early career support groups. • Re-define the role, responsibilities and reporting lines for the institutional Researcher Support and Development Group.