

The University of Birmingham  
Concordat Implementation & HR Excellence in Research  
Action Plan Review  
September 2013

The University of Birmingham (UoB) received the HR Excellence in Research Award in September 2011. As a holder of this award we are required to undertake a two-year internal review of our progress in achieving the actions set out in our Concordat Implementation Plan from 2011. This report summarises this internal review.

### **How was the internal review undertaken?**

The University approach to developing and implementing HR best practice is that this is applied to all staff, unless there are very specific issues to be addressed. The majority of actions in our published plan are organisation wide projects applying to significant staff populations including researchers. Review of progress takes place via the individual project timelines against key milestones. Progress and associated reporting has been managed and monitored by the relevant University project boards. For example progress on the Performance and Development Review (PDR) Scheme project has been monitored at various levels by the HR Leadership Team, PDR Steering Group and the University Executive Board. Equality & Diversity projects have been managed by the University Equality Executive Group.

This report on the internal review of the action plan was submitted to, discussed and approved by, the HR Leadership Team in September 2013.

Individual project progress has been collated into this summary and the associated detailed progress document (attached). The People and Organisation Development team, in conjunction with HR Colleagues, play a significant part in developing, implementing and monitoring these projects and have worked closely with academic & professional colleagues within local Colleges to do this.

Evaluation of activities has been carried out dependent on the stage reached by each project. An evaluation of the PDR scheme pilot has been carried out by a Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor using focus groups, individual feedback and a targeted on-line survey. The evaluation revealed that the scheme is seen as beneficial, however further work is needed to maximise the quality of the reviews and on monitoring and recording. Adjustments to the scheme have been made based on the feedback received. Evaluation of key researcher development activities has been carried out using one to one interviews and a targeted on-line survey of participants. This indicated that research leadership and skills development are valued and have an impact on personal performance and confidence. As a result funding has been secured to maintain provision in these areas.

A broader evaluation method was to have been our internal staff survey, originally scheduled for March 2013. Unfortunately our internal survey was delayed for operational reasons until November 2013 which has prevented us from using it to evaluate elements of the plan. The CROS 2013 coincided with our original survey schedule. We had already therefore decided not to take part.

The progress review has informed the updated action plan and includes revised approaches to evaluation (attached).

## Key achievements and progress against the original action plan

Full details of progress against the original action plan are provided in the updated plan available to view online and linked to at the end of this report. A summary of key highlights is provided below:

Key achievements over the 2 years have been

1. Implementation and on-going roll out of a revised Performance and Development Review Scheme for academic staff across all Colleges. This included a pilot in one College for research staff. Plans are now in place to roll out to all academic staff.
2. The implementation of a professional and coordinated system of support for researchers seeking grant funding across all Colleges. Each College now has in place a team dedicated to providing bespoke advice and guidance to all staff in making research grant applications including fellowships and funding aimed at staff at a variety of stages in their career. This has contributed to a 55% rise in the value of research awards and an 80% increase in new awards from Research Councils since 2010/11.
3. Development of an integrated leadership development programme for academic leaders. The programme includes Research Team Leader, 42 participants, Introduction to Leadership for Early Career Researchers collaboration with University of Nottingham, 14 UoB participants. Mentoring and coaching support has also been offered. These programmes provide initial access to leadership development which feeds in to Emerging and Senior Leadership programmes. The overall programme creates a more consistent and robust research leadership environment.
4. Development of the University Equality Scheme, consolidating all aspects of equality and diversity for example centralised maternity leave fund which will have a significant impact on Early Career Researchers, a significant proportion of whom are female. The Scheme also incorporates the organisational achievement of Athena Swan Bronze Award, and 5 Schools also achieving Bronze Awards. This work will be further embedded by the designation of 2013/14 as the "UoB Year of Equality in Employment", sponsored by the Provost & Vice Principal Prof. Adam Tickell.
5. Local researcher development activities (e.g. Research Gala, Research Staff Master Classes, Post Doc away days and one to one tailored support) are now taking place across all Colleges. Additional organisation development resource has now been allocated to provide specialist local support to further develop consolidated and focused learning and development approaches for research staff.

## Updated Actions and Next Steps to September 2015

The University of Birmingham Strategic Framework "Shaping our Future: Birmingham 2015" continues to direct our actions. Becoming **"the destination of choice for staff as well as students"** through providing **"a supportive and dynamic intellectual environment to attract and develop high quality research faculty."** remains at the heart of our people strategy through

- Employing talented professional staff
- Providing opportunities to develop leadership and management skills
- Fostering an environment of supportive and effective performance management
- Encouraging all staff to excel.

Our updated action plan maintains our commitment to these key principles and combines on-going actions from our original plan and additional actions that build on our progress to date.

Progress will be monitored by the HR Leadership Team and reports provided to PVC Research & Knowledge Transfer.

The detailed action plan, which includes responsibilities and time lines is attached. A summary of key next steps is shown below: -

<b>Concordat Principle</b>	<b>UoB Strategic Goal</b>	<b>Action</b>
2,3,5	1,4	Continued roll out and development of the Performance and Development Review Scheme (PDR) to include all academic staff in all Colleges. The lessons learned from the first cycle of reviews will be applied to enhance the quality of reviews and ensure the new process is applied appropriately and equitably.
3,4,5	1,4	Development of Learning & Development Plans that identify the requirements of the full range of staff across the University. This is a key action for POD Consultants working in collaboration with College and other research support functions. The revitalised focus on identification of learning & development needs will inform and enhance the quality of support to develop researchers as well as other staff.
1,6	4,5	Implementation of key equality & diversity principles to fully embed the Equality Scheme. The focus will be on key equality in employment aspirations (e.g. career progression for female researchers; equality training for all recruitment panels). This wide ranging initiative will also encompass the achievement of Athena Swan recognition in more areas and further involvement in the LFHE Aurora Project.
5,7	4,5	Review of staff survey outputs. The re-scheduled staff survey will provide important evaluation data and inform further action. Academic staff responses will be reviewed specifically wherever possible.
5,7	4,5	Investigate the feasibility of UoB participation in CROS 2015.

### **Broad indicators of progress**

As well as progress and impact of specific initiatives we intend to use the following broad indicators of progress: -

- Evidence of progress/improvement in staff survey data when compared with previous years
- Increased take-up of appraisal / annual review
- Engagement of research staff in local and central development activities
- Further attainment of Athena Swan Awards.