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University of Chester

HR Excellence in Research Award Six Year Review

(covering the period January 2017 - December 2018)

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Introduction

In November 2009, the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office (RKTO) and Human Resources (HR) completed the first self-audit against the principles of the Concordat and identified an action plan which was approved by Senate in June 2010.

The University of Chester achieved its first HR Excellence in Research award in 2012 and renewed the awards in 2014 and 2016. During the years since the introduction of the Concordat and the last award review, the University has continued to make progress on the research agenda with increasing levels of grant and contract income awarded across a wide range of subject areas, and with REF2021 preparations underway, we are once again reviewing and planning enhancements to the research culture and infrastructure. The University is currently also revising the Research Strategy, and updating the Corporate Plan, which affirms the importance of fostering a culture of personal and professional development, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce and to the creation and propagation of knowledge with recognised impact and excellence. Our community of researchers (used in the broadest sense - to include research and academic staff) therefore remains vital to the achievement of our research ambitions.

Evaluation process

For the renewal of the HR Excellence in Research award, the evaluation process began by a working group of four key members of staff in RKTO and HR updating the original action plan with our achievements. A steering group continues to oversee and advise on the review process as well as monitoring progress on the action plan. The steering group consisted of: the working group, two researchers from different faculties, two research assistants including a third faculty, a line manager of researchers, an early-career academic and a Head of Department - the aim being to capture a wide range of perspectives.

The steering group meet in order to:
- Review progress against the 2017-18 action plan;
- Identify strategically important areas and key priorities for the future and formulate new actions;
- Advise on consultation with a wider researcher group; and
- Finalise the action plan on behalf of Research, Postgraduate & Knowledge Transfer Committee.

Consultation with researchers (Research Assistants through to Senior Research Fellows) and their line managers was organised by Research & Knowledge Transfer Office via circulation of the draft document to all 29 research staff (and 21 managers) and was the focus of discussion at a meeting of the Researcher Network. We also participated in the CROS survey 2019 for the first time in order to gather general feedback and to allow some comparison with the national results (we encouraged our researchers to complete the survey early in order to inform this review).

Seven (24%) researchers responded to the consultation and nine (31%) to the survey – of which three responded to the institution specific question regarding priorities for action. It is important to recognise that the number of researchers remains quite small but spans a wide range of subjects/qualifications/experience and grades.

Ongoing monitoring

In the 2017 review we proposed changes to the monitoring arrangements which have been implemented, are working well and will continue for the next period. There are regular meetings of the working group to keep momentum, with monitoring undertaken by the steering group on a termly basis and annual reports to Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee. We have retained overlapping membership with the Athena Swan steering group in order to ensure the two action plans work in tandem and that researchers are considered within our work on gender equality.

Key Achievements and Progress against the Concordat Principles

With a priority to enhance the research culture across the University, our strategy is necessarily long-term and evolving over a number of years. However there has been progress against each of the Concordat principles:

Principle 1 - Recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers

Since the rebranding of the corporate website to increase recruiting appeal, the focus has been upon supporting new employees through the introduction of online orientation plans (33% completion rate

amongst researchers compared to 30% overall) and the streamlining of information and support via the Research Hub. RKTO now routinely contact all new academic and research staff by email to introduce the service and forge links.

Principle 2 - Recognition and value

The role of researchers in the University is key to achieving our longer terms research plans. Since the last review we have:

- introduced online PDPs;

- set up a mentoring scheme for researchers with 12 researcher mentor profiles now available on Portal for mentees to access with four mentoring relationships established. This is in addition to informal mentoring which is not recorded centrally, nor does it reflect the mentoring PhD students (who are also employed) receive from supervisors;

- expanded networking opportunities by holding termly Research Network meetings and themed networking sessions during the Research Festival which are open to all research staff. Six members of research staff attended the Research Festival, with the majority of attendees being academic staff, although the need to focus on increasing engagement is acknowledged; and

- established a fund to support conference attendance for researchers wishing to attend for development purposes (which complements schemes designed for research dissemination). Uptake of the fund was initially low with feedback that the sum available was too small. Therefore, the amount was increased for 2018/19 and further revision to the scheme is currently being considered. To date three members of research staff have benefitted from the scheme.

Feedback from the CROS survey 2019 and triennial staff survey (completed autumn 2018) provides evidence of staff feeling valued. For example, the results of CROS show that research staff feel particularly valued for their activities relating to peer reviewing (56%), publications (67%) and public engagement with research (44%).

There was some dissatisfaction with pay and resources for research (triennial staff survey scores of 2.28 and 2.18 respectively out of a maximum score of 5) and their contribution to the student experience (CROS survey 44% dissatisfied), and this point is picked up in the new action plan.

Principles 3, 4 and 5 – Support, development and personal responsibility

The development of the Research Hub on Portal has provided improved access to training, information and resources for researchers. In addition, the Learning Directory (i.e. training catalogue) is being constantly updated and linking training needs analysis via the RDF/PDP has been strengthened via the online PDP. Feedback from the staff and CROS surveys indicated a very positive response regarding researchers taking responsibility for their own development. Data on use of online PDP/probationary reviews shows that 45.5% of researchers completed a review or PDP in the last year compared to 46.9% for all staff. Completion rates are considerably higher for the probationary review but vary considerably between departments. The feedback from CROS showed that 85.7% of respondents found the review/appraisal process (i.e. PDP or probationary review) to useful or very useful – feedback that we shall build upon in promoting higher rates of completion.

Work has begun to identify a Careers Pathways Framework with one Job Family relating specifically to research. This long term project will be an important step in promoting personal and career development and the University's commitment to supporting research careers.

Principle 6 - Diversity and equality

The University retained its Athena Swan bronze award in November 2018, with a new action plan that contains specific actions to support D&E for researchers. Feedback from CROS indicates that a large majority of researchers believe the University is committed to equality and diversity. The University's annual Diversity Festival continues to grow in the range of events offered and to attract a wide audience. An event in March 2017 was specifically for developing research careers, and further events took place in the 2018 and 2019 Research Festivals. The staff survey indicated positive views of diversity and equality in the University.

Principle 7 – Implementation and review

The implementation of regular meetings of the working group and Steering Group has helped to maintain momentum with the institutional action plan, and feedback from CROS will continue to feed into the agenda. In addition, the Annual Reviews of Research now prompt articulation of support for researchers and research development as part of the template.

Priorities and implementation strategy for the next 2 years (2019-2021)

Our aim is to improve the quality, reach and impact of the research we undertake and harness this new knowledge to improve our teaching and student experience.

Our priorities:	Our success measures:
Enhancing the status of researchers (career pathways project)	
• Establish funds to extend contracts beyond the grant period for publication/impact work & bridging between grants	• Fund established with clear criteria; 10% of contracts extended
• Review contractual status of all researchers to establish whether any should be prompted to consider the "professional" version of the support contract (if not already offered)	• 'Professional' contracts offered to all eligible staff i.e. staff paid at OS9 and above (& monitor uptake)
• Develop a guide for researchers and managers to address some of the status issues perceived by researchers. Guide to address contract types; volume of teaching and student support work that can be undertaken by researchers; processes for changing contract type and changing fixed term contracts to permanent etc.	• Guide circulated to current researchers and managers and available via the Research Hub • Positive feedback from research staff and managers that the guide has informed and assisted with career planning • Monitor requests for contract changes (changes to academic, re-grading, FTCs to permanent)
• A better understanding of feedback from CROS on recognition and value particularly in relation to teaching and student support activities	• Specific actions identified to address the issues & appropriate success measures established
Enhance training & development for researchers	
• A better understanding of what support for personal and career development looks like for researchers	• Specific actions identified to address the issues & appropriate success measures established
• Develop training & support resources for line managers (e.g. Vitae RDF, resources to support development discussions, information on manager responsibilities, opportunities to engage and participate) and include guidance in workload model on time for researcher line management responsibilities	• Improved feedback from CROS with staff reporting that they are encouraged to engage in development increasing from 55% to 60% • Increase % of researchers with a development plan from 66% to 70% and those keeping records of CPD from 44% to 50% as reported in CROS survey • Attendance and feedback data on training uptake
• Develop more courses designed for researchers	• New course delivered on: ethical research conduct; research impact; grant writing; teaching/lecturing/student research supervision • Attendance & feedback data
Enhanced engagement from researchers with University research environment	
• Improve researchers sense of integration into the University research community	• Increased attendance at Research network, Research Festival & training opportunities by 10% • Improved feedback from CROS with % reporting sense of integration increasing from 44% to 50% (whilst maintain levels of integration in local community)
• Increased participation in PDPs & staff survey	• Improve completion rates of PDP from 30% to 45% (matching all staff rate)

ACTION PLAN

Our action plan has been colour coded to distinguish completed actions (purple), those that have elements that are ongoing (yellow) and new actions (green). This layout facilitates a clearer view of how the work on one action can initiate new actions. The new action plan with ongoing components and new actions with revised numbering will be used for ongoing monitoring (presented at the end).

REF	Aim	Actions for 2016-2020	Responsibility	Outcomes and success measures	Current Status as at May 2019
Concordat section A. Recruitment and Selection Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research					
A	Improve induction arrangements for new staff Increase engagement with induction processes and online orientation	Develop and implement orientation plans, to enhance existing integration process for newly appointed/promoted employees by January 2018	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Orientation Plans to be made available online by end of January 2018 100% of People Managers to be trained to use the new Orientation Plan process by end June 2018 A minimum of 60% of new employees/promotions to have up-to-date orientation plans	**Completed:** The online orientation process went live on 5th June 2018; all newly appointed and promoted employees are automatically invited to complete the process which takes them up to their first formal probationary review meeting All appointing managers are provided with information about the online orientation process in terms of their responsibilities and how to monitor completion Feedback from users since its launch has been positive Since introduction, the engagement rate with the new orientation process has been 33.3% for researchers cf. 44.3% for all new staff
		Produce training/support materials for line managers emphasizing good orientation process & expectations	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Monitor orientation plan completion rate data. Increase completion rate to 50% by December 2019. Set further target for 2020	**New action**
B		Develop a Research Staff Hub on Portal to provide a range of resources tailored to research staff and PIs.	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development with Grants Officer (RKTO)	Information to include within 6 months (Dec 2017): 1. Getting started in your Role – e.g. structures/car	**Completed:** A Researcher Hub has now been developed and is available for all Research staff via Portal. It covers

completed	ongoing	new action

		Relevant information for job applicants - to give a fuller picture of working as a researcher at the University (e.g. support mechanisms, case studies, role descriptions) - to be available from the website		parking/catering/HR/Estates/GreenChester/Health4All/IT Services – signposted from online orientation on HR portal pages ✓ 2. Orientation Plans, Online Probationary Process & PDP ✓ 3. Development Opportunities, links to Vitae and RDF & support for future employment – signpost to the L&OD portal pages ✓ 4. Researchers Network, Research Staff Discussion Board, Connecting with Researchers & Staff Forum (newsletter) ✓ 5. Vision and Strategy 6. Research Committees ✓ 7. Research related policies and procedures ✓ 8. Principal Investigators 9. Equality and Diversity✓ 10. REF & TEF information✓ 11. Current Vacancies & salary scales✓ Within 18 months (Dec 2018): 12. Resources e.g. Funding; Running a project; Research Impact; Ethics ✓ 13. Apprenticeships 14. Early Career Researchers✓ 15. Research events calendar 16. Health and Wellbeing – signpost to Portal ✓ 17. Supporting our staff, including case studies Within 36 months (Dec 2019): 18. Career Pathways & Managing Your Career 19. Engaging with our community (including impact) 20. Staff Survey✓	the majority of content identified (indicated by ✓). **Ongoing:** Further work is required on 4 themes (Vision & strategy being updated; Career pathways under development; additional materials on Impact and Case Studies required). We had planned to monitor hit rates on the new Hub to compare with previous pages, but institutional changes mean we are no longer able to do this, although further changes are planned which should resolve this. However positive feedback has been received from 3 researchers. Action continuing – remaining topics to be completed by December 2020

completed	ongoing	new action

C	Improve job security for researchers	Produce a proposal to Senior Management Team to develop mechanisms to enhance researcher retention and job security for research staff on fixed-term contracts by January 2018	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	If proposal is approved, establish funding level and criteria by August 2019 to influence funding from 2019/20 academic year, so that contracts can be longer than grants to facilitate dissemination and impact	**Completed:** HR data was analysed to establish the extent of breaks in contract for research staff, as a consequence plans were made to make a fund available. **Ongoing:** However, general budgetary constraints continue to limit progress with this proposal but it remains a priority for RKTO. Plans for budgetary provision have been proposed for 2019/20.
D	Enhance researchers preparedness for new roles & improve signposting to support & resources	Enhance the HR exit process to include a reflection on research/generic skills and support for future employment	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	'Managing Your Career' online guide to be made available from September 2017 and monitoring of hit rates thereafter. A link to the document to be emailed to all researchers prior to end of contract	**Completed:** Some progress has been made in terms of centralising some resources on the Researcher Hub including: Career Development and Networking; Coaching and Mentoring; Conference Funding **Ongoing:** Further progress to be made which is also dependent upon career pathways, a wider institutional priority affecting other job families. Action continuing – timescale revised to September 2020

Concordat section B. Recognition and Value

Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research

E	To improve explicit recognition of researchers contribution at the local level	Complete implementation of the online PDP across the University by June 2018	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	The aim is for all employees to have access and have been trained to use this tool. This will make it easier for remote researchers to complete this virtually where necessary (to increase participation), improve the visibility of the RDF and	**Completed:** All employees now have access to their online PDP; however, some roles which are not desk-bound prefer to complete their PDP on paper – this information is forwarded to HR to retain on their electronic PDP file

completed	ongoing	new action

				make a clearer link for researchers between the RDF and PDP process 100% of employees/departments to be trained and given access to the new online PDP process by July 2018 Increased completion rates for PDP amongst researchers to 40% (Review Year runs from August 1st to July 31st each year)	Completion rate for PDPs amongst researchers was 30% cf 44.63% for all staff. Action to implement online PDP complete
		Issue revised PDP guidance specifically for researchers and also include in training/support materials for line managers	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Revised guidance available by July 2019 Completion rate increased to 50% by 2020	**New action**
		Lobby for reinstatement of information on research within the University induction (arising from CROS survey feedback)	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer / PVC Research & Knowledge Transfer	Revised University induction session for September 2019 Improved responses to CROS 2021 – increase "usefulness of institutional induction" from 50% to 60%	**New action**
		Develop a guide for researchers and managers to address some of the status issues perceived by researchers. Guide to address contract types; volume of teaching and student support work that can be undertaken by researchers; processes for changing contract type and changing fixed term contracts to permanent etc.	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Guide available and circulated to researchers and managers by December 2019 & available via the Research Hub Positive feedback from research staff and managers that the guide has informed and assisted with career planning Monitor requests for contract changes (changes to academic, re-grading, FTCs to permanent)	**New action**

completed	ongoing	new action

		Review contractual status of all researchers to establish whether any should be prompted to consider the "professional" version of the support contract (if not already offered)	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	'Professional' contracts offered to all eligible staff i.e. staff paid at OS9 and above	**New action**
F		Review the probationary review process to ensure suitability for short contract durations and tailored (as necessary) for use by researchers; review to be concluded by December 2017	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Review to be concluded by December 2017. Increased completion rates for probationary review process amongst researchers to 60%	**Completed:** The probationary review process was reviewed – unfortunately the software does not allow tailored reviews, only permitting them at the scheduled points of 3, 6 and 9 months. Researcher probationary reviews 100% engagement rate since introduction in June 2018
		Develop a template to support discussions around career development in probationary and PDP reviews and include in training/support materials for line managers	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Template available via Research Hub by July 2019 Improved CROS responses – "maintaining records of CPD" from 44% to 50% and "use of Vitae RDF" from 22% to 30%	**New action**
G	To facilitate researcher development and networking	Promote the mentoring scheme to researchers via direct emails. Upon successful establishment of the mentoring relationship, create a case study document to further promote the scheme by April 2018	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development & Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	RKTO to identify key researchers to encourage and prompt identification of individuals as potential research mentors by September 2017 Aim to recruit at least 10 mentors and establish 2 research mentor relationships Case study document developed by April 2018	**Completed:** 12 Researcher mentors are now accessible for mentees; mentor profiles are available on Portal. Four mentees are using the scheme. One case study has been developed and is available in the Researcher Hub
H	To improve understanding of the wide range of ways	Draft a Manager's Recognition Guide and seek approval from SMT to	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Guide completed and approved by September 2017, and published on portal. Monitor hit-	**Ongoing:** A university wide awards framework to be established by end July 2019

completed	ongoing	new action

	researchers can receive recognition	implement by September 2017		rate and seek feedback after 12 months	
		Hold focus groups with research staff in autumn 2019 to follow up feedback from the CROS 2019 survey to understand responses regarding Recognition and Value particularly in relation to teaching and research supervision Further actions, outcomes and success measures will be set after the focus groups have taken place for the period up to December 2020	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	A better understanding of the issues as perceived by researchers will enable the identification of appropriate actions and targets by April 2020	**New action**
I	Establish career development frameworks for different role types within the University	Conduct by April 2018 a review of options to support researcher career progression including an initial exploration into career pathways for researchers which may exist at other HEIs and incorporate a review of researcher job descriptions	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Comprehensive review to be concluded by April 2018 for implementation of approved actions through 2018/19 academic year	**Completed:** An initial first draft of a Career Pathways Framework has been developed for various Job Families **Ongoing:** There is much more work to be done on its development and implementation; a review of researcher JDs will be one element of developing this framework. Action ongoing, timescale revised to September 2020
J	Improve researchers understanding of the wider HE landscape	Keep researchers informed of relevant developments and implications of the TEF & REF (via Research Staff Hub by December 2017)	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	Information on Portal by December 2017 and discussed at the Researcher Network during 2018	**Completed:** Information has been added to the Researcher Hub which gives an overview of TEF and REF suitable for Research Staff. Session on REF included in Research Festival More detailed information on REF (aimed at Category A eligible staff)

completed	ongoing	new action

					is also available on the RKTO portal pages

Concordat section C. Support and Career Development

Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment

Principle 4: The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career

B	Improve access to information, training and resources	See action B (section A)			
K	Ensure University strategies remain aligned with vision and mission	The People and Organisational Development Strategy to be absorbed into the People Strategy during the next review by the HR Director to align with the University's Corporate Plan; this revised People Strategy to be made available to staff by September 2017	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	People Strategy Completed by September 2017	**Ongoing:** A revised People Strategy has been drafted and is going through approval processes, due to be published in September 2019 Action ongoing, timescale revised to September 2019
L	Improve engagement with training on offer	Monitor participation rates of researchers in all Learning and Development events for 2016/17 and undertake appropriate marketing of the opportunities for this specific audience	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Establish the 2016/17 participation rate by September 2017 and identify appropriate target for increased participation rates in 2017/18 Dates of training events to be highlighted via researcher portal pages, discussion board and bimonthly messages	**Completed & Ongoing:** For 2016/17 362 members of staff participated in developmental sessions included in the annual Learning Calendar – only 2 out of the 362 were research staff. For 2017/18 593 members of staff participated in developmental sessions included in the Learning Calendar – 6 out of the 21 research staff employed engaged in training 17 times during this academic year For 2018/19 (part year) 8 research staff attended events to date

	completed		ongoing		new action	

					6 members of research staff attended 7 sessions at the Research Festival in April 2019 Attendance at Learning & Teaching Institute sessions: 1 in 2017 and 3 in 2018.
		Hold focus groups with research staff in autumn 2019 to follow up feedback from the CROS 2019 survey to understand responses regarding Support and Career development	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development / Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	A better understanding of the issues as perceived by researchers will enable the identification of appropriate actions and targets by April 2020	**New action**
M		Develop & deliver by April 2018 training for academic staff who have come from a professional (i.e. non-research) background to help them maintain & build research activities post-PhD; and develop resources & training for managers to address unconscious bias in workload allocation	HR Manager – Development and Diversity with Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	A 'Developing your research career' event was delivered March 2017 - feedback obtained and to be analyzed to inform planning of future events by October 2017. Development & delivery of new training by April 2018. Attendance levels and feedback to be monitored for enhancement opportunities Success measure will be in inclusion of a higher proportion of female staff in REF2021 (I.e. more representative of the staff profile) – Equality impact assessment completed Dec 2020 – Feb 2021	**Completed:** Making Professor workshops delivered in February 2019 as part of the Diversity Festival **Ongoing:** Additional training session to be delivered in the Research Festival April 2019 on developing research for individuals with professional backgrounds. Unconscious bias training is now delivered to all new managers and managers as part of the recruitment and selection training (managers need to do this every 3 years). A specific training session on unconscious bias in relation to workload is needed.
N	Improve quality of supervision of researchers	Revise content of the Supervisor Good Practice training sessions to explicitly include supervision of researchers (in addition to	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer & Project officer (AQSS)	Planning to be completed by September 2017 for introduction of amended content during 2017/18 academic year - anticipate delivery twice pa.	**Completed:** The training session has been revised to include this topic and continues to be delivered approximately 4 times per annum

completed	ongoing	new action

		doctoral students) by September 2017		Feedback from participants to be monitored to inform future delivery	by Director of R&KT or Head of RKTO
		Develop new training/support materials for line managers so they can support career development more effectively and ensure time allocation for research managers	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development / Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	Training/support materials developed and available to line managers by July 2020. Improved responses to CROS survey in 2021 relating to aspects of Support and Career Development: encouraged to engage in development increasing from 55% to 60%; % of researchers with a development plan from 66% to 70% and those keeping records of CPD from 44% to 50% Collect feedback from managers on the usefulness of resources Attendance and feedback data on training uptake (date to be set once materials are available)	**New action**
O	Increase employability of students in research roles	HR to work with Careers and Employability to develop an action plan to improve the employability of research students to increase the possibility of them gaining research positions after completing their studies; any subsequent actions to be reviewed and approved by SMT by April 2018	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development & C&E	HR Team to inform Careers of Researcher vacancies. Process to be in place by December 2017	**Completed:** Careers provide 1) Unijob – a scheme for part-time, short term work; and 2) Careers Hub – used to advertise vacancies available outside and within the UoC. HR inform Careers when research vacancies are advertised for inclusion on the Careers Hub and Careers selectively email PGR students with this information e.g. Psychology posts emailed directly to Psychology PGR students. Careers also support students with their applications/interview techniques.

completed	*ongoing*	*new action*

P	Improve feedback mechanisms to gather researchers views of their needs and encourage their engagement with the University & other researchers	Seek feedback from researchers via the Researcher Network, taking a lead from the themes within the CROS survey. Consider participation in CROS 2019 if number of researchers (or interest from researchers) increases	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer & HR Manager – Development and Diversity	Establishment of Research Network by January 2018 Thereafter mechanisms, key themes and timeline for feedback agreed with researcher community. Subsequent actions to make improvements evidenced by follow up feedback	**Completed:** Research Network meeting held focused upon participation in CROS – agreed to participate in 2019. Session at Research Festival April 2019 on the Concordat and HR Excellence Award **Ongoing:** Further meetings of the Network planned to follow up themes from the survey.
Q	Facilitate development via conference attendance	Secure funds in 2017/18 RKTO business plan to support conference attendance for career development purposes (rather than for research dissemination) and inform researchers of opportunity to apply	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	A £3000 annual fund established from 2017/18 offering awards up to £500. Applicants to identify the specific benefits of attendance in their applications. Applications to exceed awards by 50% to encourage strong, well thought out applications	**Completed:** A scheme has been in operation since 2017/18. Uptake has been low so far (3 researchers) with feedback that the sum available is too small – therefore the amount was increased for 2018/19. Funding for researchers is part of a wider scheme to support conference attendance with the criteria for Researchers tailored to their career stage. **Ongoing:** Further revision to the scheme to be considered including removal of link to faculty funding or funding the full amount.
Concordat section D. Researchers' Responsibilities					
Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning					
R	Increase researchers sense of responsibility for their own development	Develop case studies and other resources which promote examples of how researchers have taken responsibility for their own career development; this will be an element of the 'Managing Your Career' guide	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development & Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	At least 2 case studies developed and included on portal as researcher resource by July 2019	**Ongoing:** Managing Your Career Guide, including case studies yet to be developed and then uploaded onto Portal's Research Hub.

completed	ongoing	new action

		referred to as an action in e. Principle 1			
		Develop a template to support formally recording career and personal development	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Improved responses to CROS survey in 2021 regarding record keeping of CPD activities	**New action**
S	Provide a means to help researchers meet and support each other	Establish a new Research Network, meeting termly from January 2018	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer with Grants Officer (RKTO)	Some meetings to address issues raised by research staff. Target engagement by 30% of researchers	**Completed:** The Research Network was established in January 2018 and has been meeting termly. Themes to date included: Introducing how RKTO can help support researchers and consultation on what researchers want from the network; avoiding predatory journals & conferences; revision to the University Research strategy; REF and use of research metrics. Attendance: only one member of the University's research staff has attended to date. **Ongoing:** More targeted promotional work needs to be undertaken. Consider varying location & offer catering
T		HR to facilitate via Portal, the opportunity for research staff to connect with other researchers within and outside of their own department, whether professionally or socially. This informal facility to 'Connect with other Researchers' to be available from January 2018	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Directory of Connections to be available by January 2018	**Completed:** Themed networking sessions were held during the Research Festival in 2018 Research Mentor profiles are now on Portal Research staff discussion board also available via the Researcher Hub **Ongoing:**

completed	ongoing	new action

					Exploring the use to ChesterRep to include more researcher profiles – but will need promoting. Action ongoing – timescale revised to July 2020

Concordat section E. Diversity and Equality

Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers

U	Increase engagement of researchers with D&E events	Direct email and telephone marketing of relevant events at the Diversity Festival to researchers & managers in January/February 2018 in order to improve participation, followed by attendance monitoring and feedback	HR Manager – Development and Diversity	Increase participation rates of Researchers in Diversity Festival Events from 0% of researchers attending events in 2016 to 5% for 2017 and 10% in 2018 Specific email to researchers requesting suggestions for events for 2018 that they would like to attend, to be linked with network meeting	**Ongoing:** 2017: Developing Your Research Career event with direct marketing to all research staff. 1 (4%) researcher attended 2018 festival attendance: 0 2019 festival attendance: 4
V	Fully integrate researchers into work for Athena Swan awards	To ensure relevant HR Excellence in Research actions are incorporated into the Athena SWAN April 2018 action plan	HR Manager – Development and Diversity	Athena SWAN action plan to include relevant actions from HR Excellence in Research Action Plan (from April 2018)	**Completed & Ongoing:** Successful application submitted. Actions include m - unconscious bias training m – training for staff from professional backgrounds i - career pathways incorporated into promotion guide e - PDP guidance and training to increase participation & usefulness Action plan complete – but actions ongoing
W		Develop research staff equality data in line with the data requirements of the Athena SWAN (AS) charter and set specific targets with the AS action plan to address	HR Manager – Development and Diversity	Data to be reported to Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team (SAT) and reviewed in line with Athena SWAN requirements. Actions will be developed as a	**Completed:** Data on research staff was included in the Athena Swan bronze application.

completed	ongoing	new action

		any inequalities (December 2017)		result and updated in this action plan	

Concordat section F. Implementation and Review

Principle 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK

| X | Maintain focus across the University on supporting researchers and research careers | Hold termly meetings of steering group with expanded the terms of reference to monitor completion of actions, and report annually to R&KT Committee to coincide with annual reviews of research. PVC (Research) to be involved in biannual sign off of action plan and annually through report to R&KT Committee | Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer & R&KT Committee | Ensure timely completion of actions and feedback to R&KT Committee. Annual report to R&KT Committee in November each year | **Ongoing:** The steering group has met once per term with the proposed expanded terms of reference. Annual reports on progress with the action plan were received by R&KT Committee in September 2017 and February 2019 (rescheduled to coincide with the annual reviews of research) |
| Y | | Expand the scope of Faculty annual reviews of research to explicitly report on researcher development from 2016/17 | Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer | Researcher development explicitly addressed in annual reviews, with Departments and Faculties reporting local measures to enhance environment and support | **Completed & Ongoing:** Scope of Faculty reviews was expanded to include researcher development section. Whilst the annual reviews have a significant focus upon REF preparations at the current time, information on support for research staff is to be captured in the 'Environment' section of the reviews. Action complete, reviews ongoing |

completed	ongoing	new action

Summary of Action plan for January 2019 - December 2020
REF in brackets relate to ongoing actions from the previous plan

REF	Aim	Actions for 2019-2020	Responsibility	Outcomes and success measures
1	Improve induction arrangements for new staff Increase engagement with induction processes and online orientation	Produce training/support materials for line managers emphasizing good orientation process & expectations	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Monitor orientation plan completion rate data. Increase completion rate to 50% by December 2019. Set further target for 2020
2 (B)		Develop a Research Staff Hub on Portal to provide a range of resources tailored to research staff and PIs. Relevant information for job applicants - to give a fuller picture of working as a researcher at the University (e.g. support mechanisms, case studies, role descriptions) - to be available from the website	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development with Grants Officer (RKTO)	Information to include by Dec 2020: i. Vision and Strategy ii. Principal Investigators iii. Research events calendar iv. Supporting our staff, including case studies v. Career Pathways & Managing Your Career vi. Engaging with our community (including impact)
3 (C)	Improve job security for researchers	Establish bridging fund to enhance researcher retention and job security for research staff on fixed-term contracts in between grants	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	If budgets allow, establish funding level and criteria by August 2019 to influence funding from 2019/20 academic year, so that contracts can be longer than grants to facilitate dissemination and impact
4 (D)	Enhance researchers preparedness for new roles & improve signposting to support & resources	Enhance the HR exit process to include a reflection on research/generic skills and support for future employment	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	'Managing Your Career' online guide to be made available from September 2020 and monitoring of hit rates thereafter. A link to the document to be emailed to all researchers prior to end of contract
5	To improve explicit recognition of researchers contribution at the local level	Issue revised PDP guidance specifically for researchers and also include in training/support materials for line managers	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Revised guidance available by July 2019 Completion rate increased to 50% by 2020
6		Lobby for reinstatement of information on research within the University induction (arising from CROS survey feedback)	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer / PVC Research & Knowledge Transfer	Revised University induction session for September 2019

				Improved responses to CROS 2021 – increase "usefulness of institutional induction" from 50% to 60%
7		Develop a guide for researchers and managers to address some of the status issues perceived by researchers. Guide to address contract types; volume of teaching and student support work that can be undertaken by researchers; processes for changing contract type and changing fixed term contracts to permanent etc.	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Guide available and circulated to researchers and managers by December 2019 & available via the Research Hub Positive feedback from research staff and managers that the guide has informed and assisted with career planning Monitor requests for contract changes (changes to academic, re-grading, FTCs to permanent)
8		Review contractual status of all researchers to establish whether any should be prompted to consider the "professional" version of the support contract (if not already offered)	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	'Professional' contracts offered to all eligible staff i.e. staff paid at OS9 and above
9		Develop a template to support discussions around career development in probationary and PDP reviews and include in training/support materials for line managers	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Template available via Research Hub by July 2019 Improved CROS responses – "maintaining records of CPD" from 44% to 50% and "use of Vitae RDF" from 22% to 30%
10 (H)	To improve understanding of the wide range of ways researchers can receive recognition	Draft a Manager's Recognition Guide and seek approval from SMT to implement	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	A university wide awards framework to be established by end July 2019
11		Hold focus groups with research staff in autumn 2019 to follow up feedback from the CROS 2019 survey to understand responses regarding Recognition and Value particularly in relation to teaching and research supervision Further actions, outcomes and success measures will be set after the	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	A better understanding of the issues as perceived by researchers will enable the identification of appropriate actions and targets by April 2020

		focus groups have taken place for the period up to December 2020		
12 (I)	Establish career development frameworks for different role types within the University	Conduct a review of options to support researcher career progression including an initial exploration into career pathways for researchers which may exist at other HEIs and incorporate a review of researcher job descriptions	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Comprehensive review to be concluded by September 2020 for implementation of approved actions through 2020/21 academic year
13 (K)	Ensure University strategies remain aligned with vision and mission	The People and Organisational Development Strategy to be absorbed into the People Strategy during the next review by the HR Director to align with the University's Corporate Plan; this revised People Strategy to be made available to staff by September 2019	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	A revised People Strategy has been drafted and is going through approval processes, due to be published in September 2019
14 (L)	Improve engagement with training on offer	Monitor participation rates of researchers in all Learning and Development events and Research Festival each year and undertake appropriate marketing of the opportunities for this specific audience	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Dates of training events to be highlighted via researcher portal pages, discussion board and bimonthly messages Target for participation: 33% (note target is difficult to monitor due to staff turnover and short contracts)
15		Hold focus groups with research staff in autumn 2019 to follow up feedback from the CROS 2019 survey to understand responses regarding Support and Career development	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development / Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	A better understanding of the issues as perceived by researchers will enable the identification of appropriate actions and targets by April 2020
16 (M)		Develop & deliver training for academic staff who have come from a professional (i.e. non-research) background to help them maintain & build research activities post-PhD	HR Manager – Development and Diversity with Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	Training sessions at the Research Festival plus Making Professor workshops Attendance levels and feedback to be monitored for enhancement opportunities Success measure will be in inclusion of a higher proportion of female staff in REF2021 (I.e. more

				representative of the staff profile) – Equality impact assessment completed Dec 2020 – Feb 2021
17		Develop new training/support materials for line managers so they can support career development more effectively and ensure time allocation for research managers	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development / Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	Training/support materials developed and available to line managers by July 2020. Improved responses to CROS survey in 2021 relating to aspects of Support and Career Development: encouraged to engage in development increasing from 55% to 60%; % of researchers with a development plan from 66% to 70% and those keeping records of CPD from 44% to 50% Collect feedback from managers on the usefulness of resources Attendance and feedback data on training uptake (date to be set once materials are available)
18 (P)	Improve feedback mechanisms to gather researchers views of their needs and encourage their engagement with the University & other researchers	Seek feedback from researchers via the Researcher Network, taking a lead from the themes within the CROS survey. Consider participation in CROS 2019 if number of researchers (or interest from researchers) increases	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer & HR Manager – Development and Diversity	Increased participation in the Researcher Network & Research Festival to 30%
19 (Q)	Facilitate development via conference attendance	Secure funds in 2019/20 RKTO business plan to support conference attendance for career development purposes (rather than for research dissemination) and inform researchers of opportunity to apply	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	Continuation of the annual fund, with revised limits (or fewer restrictions) to ensure an increase in applications, so that all funds can be awarded to strong applications
20 (R)	Increase researchers sense of responsibility for their own development	Develop case studies and other resources which promote examples of how researchers have taken responsibility for their own career development; this will be an element of the 'Managing Your Career' guide	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development & Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	At least 2 case studies developed and included on portal as researcher resource by July 2019

		referred to as an action in e. Principle 1		
21		Develop a template to support formally recording career and personal development	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development	Improved responses to CROS survey in 2021 regarding record keeping of CPD activities
22 (S)	Provide a means to help researchers meet and support each other	Review communication of information about the termly Research Network meetings, vary site for meetings and offer refreshments	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer with Grants Officer (RKTO)	Target engagement by 30% of researchers
23 (T)		Review mechanisms to facilitate opportunities for research staff to connect with other researchers within and outside of their own department, whether professionally or socially	Assistant HR Director Learning & Development with Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer	Mechanism to be decided and promoted by July 2020
24 (U)	Increase engagement of researchers with D&E events	Direct email and telephone marketing of relevant events at the Diversity Festival to researchers & managers in January/February annually in order to improve participation, followed by attendance monitoring and feedback	HR Manager – Development and Diversity	Increase participation rates of Researchers in Diversity Festival Events to 10% researchers attending events annually
25 (X)	Maintain focus across the University on supporting researchers and research careers	Hold termly meetings of steering group with expanded the terms of reference to monitor completion of actions, and report annually to R&KT Committee to coincide with annual reviews of research. PVC (Research) to be involved in biannual sign off of action plan and annually through report to R&KT Committee	Director of Research & Knowledge Transfer & R&KT Committee	Ensure timely completion of actions and feedback to R&KT Committee. Annual report to R&KT Committee in November each year