**HR Excellence in Research: Action Plan 2019-2021**

This document forms our new and on-going actions for 2019-21. The University of Stirling received the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2011, and successfully retained it in 2013, 2015 and 2017.

This document and the associated report form the basis of the eight-year review process which reviews our progress over the past two years and sets out our plans to further support the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. We see these documents, and the HR Excellence in Research Award, as being key in the support and development of our Research Environment more widely. We will revisit this action plan regularly, and amend as appropriate in the light of the revised Researchers Concordat.

All relevant documents, including the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, are available at

[HR Excellence in Research Award](https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/hr-excellence-in-research-award/)

A glossary of terms and abbreviations is provided at the end of the document.

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**Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection**

*Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selection and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.*

| **Issue to be addressed** | **Responsibility for action** | **Success Criteria** | **Timescale** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Good practice in recruitment at Faculty/Divisional level. Our Faculty of Arts & Humanities has devised a model of best practice re recruitment for academic posts, incorporating blog posts, and mechanisms to clear career paths and promote career flexibility. | Chair REWG | Good practice adopted and implemented in roles advertised in 2020 onwards | Share examples of good practice at REWG in November 2019; dissemination to/discussion with faculties via REWG and faculty events; adoption during 2020 recruitment.  (also included under Principle 6) |
| Creation of a centralised Recruitment and Resourcing Team within HR Services.  This team will manage the centralising of recruitment and resourcing activity back into HR services along with reviewing processes ensuring consistency across the institution. | Head of HR Services | Team in post and reviews in process. All relevant web resources/processed to be reviewed and updated. | ONGOING: An HR Service Manager is in post and working on centralised recruitment.  To date: re academic appointments there is a new standardised approvals process and job descriptions, creation of shortlisting grids and standardised interview questions.  (carried forward from 17-19 plan. |

**Principle 2: Recognition and Value**

*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.*

| **Issue to be addressed** | **Responsibility for action** | **Success Criteria** | **Timescale** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ensure that success and effort at grant capture are recognised and celebrated by the University. | Dean RE | Letters to be sent by Dean RE to target successes of ECR staff, and new members of staff. Letters to be issued within 2 weeks of grant award notification. | To commence January 2020 |
| Researchers’ induction: to support new staff to understand our structure and organisation wrt research. | Dean RE, Dean IAS | Induction events/information created specifically for research staff to run in parallel to the University-wide welcome induction events for all new staff. The University-wide induction events will be run 3 times a year (Sept, Jan and April with approx. 60-80 participants, and will include round table discussions, lunch and a Stirling “marketplace” with key service areas represented). Increase in positive scores for induction at CROS survey by 25%. | First events to run from October 2020, and then to be offered twice per academic year (April and October, in line with institutional welcome events). |
| To recognise the range of experience which new staff may have, and to provide appropriate support and training for those different career paths. | Dean RE, Dean IAS | Events/information created, and run. Increase in positive scores for induction at CROS survey by 25% | First events to run from October 2020. |
| To hold informal welcome lunches for new research/academic staff. | Dean RE, Dean IAS | Regular programme of welcome lunches held, and uptake is 50% of new starts in relevant roles. Gather data on attendance and feedback via survey following on from welcome lunches. This feedback will serve to improve on uptake (reach) and value of welcome initiatives. | To run three times per year (depending on numbers) commencing April 2020. |
| To contribute to university- level discussions on the criteria for promotion (research) to encourage consideration of a broadening of the promotion criteria to reward good citizenship/leadership as well as the more traditional metrics. | Dean RE | Included in agenda at University Research Committee, and then with AAPC. | Research Committee: Feb 2020, AAPC June 2020; implementation for 2020-21 round of promotion. |

**Principles 3 & 4: Support & Career Development***Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment. The importance of researchers’ personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.*

| **Issue to be addressed** | **Responsibility for action** | **Success Criteria** | **Timescale** |
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| Develop a University Early Career Network, making use of face to face events and explore potential to use virtual networks for ongoing support | Dean RE, Chair REWG | An ECR network will be established with a target representation of 20 members across our 5 Faculties. Setting up of virtual networks as a repository of relevant resources (eg use of MS Teams to inform of targeted funding opportunities, training/events available as well as using Canvas – internal staff resource for training information). Focus groups arranged with each Faculty to understand development needs and any obstacle to undertaking training opportunities. | Network Commencing February 2020, Focus groups April 2020 |
| Increase awareness and collaboration between staff within own Faculties about the research activities of their peers through use of engaging activities (e.g. Speed dating) as part of each Faculties Away Day in 2020 | Chair REWG | The REWG will offer to deliver a session during the Faculty away days in 2020 to increase research awareness and collaboration. The sessions will start with the Faculty of Social Sciences away day in June 2020 and with other Faculties as dates are confirmed. | Faculty away-day dates during 2020 (currently TBC). |
| Promotion of interdisciplinary connections across the institution: a series of informal lunchtime events to bring colleagues together in a central space, to facilitate conversations and creation of new connections. | Dear RE, Chair REWG | To hold 4 events per AY. Attendance to be 10+ at each event, with a range of disciplines. | Plan of events created, with note of expected outcomes, publicised in February 2020. First event to run in Semester 2 (March/April), 2019-20. Then to run regularly. |
| Support is required for senior research colleagues to share learning and explore how to strengthen research teams and capacity build for future research generations. We will hold three University wide “Professorial Colloquia” that will bring professorial staff form across the University to share best practice, develop research teams, and build capacity of early career researchers. | Dean RE, Chair REWG | Three professorial research colloquia will be held during 2020 | December and June of each year. |
| Creation of resource for new PIs.  We intend to create a new session to support PIs/research leaders in the institution. This would take the form of face-to-face training, to cover a range of relevant topics (finances, recruitment, governance) as well as having some ‘case study’ sessions with current PIs to allow for discussion on a wider range of issues. | Chair of REWG | Handbook produced, events held, positive feedback following the event, and registrations for future events. | Carried forward from 2017-19 plan,  Will be led in collaboration with IAS.  PI Handbook to be produced by October 2020.  Events to run from June 2020 – Dec 2020. |
| To gather data on numbers of research staff on multiple concurrent contracts, and assess any impact on ability to access development opportunities, or on career progression. | Chair REWG | Data gathered and analysis carried out. | Carried forward from 2017-19 plan.  Data compiled by March 2020, analysis conducted and report presented to REWG in September 2020 for consideration. |

**Principle 5: Researchers’ Responsibilities***Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.*

| **Issue to be addressed** | **Responsibility for action** | **Success Criteria** | **Timescale** |
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| To hold two world café events as part of the institution’s Festival of Research. This world café would open with a short presentation on Research Environment Working Group, and host discussions around the newly launched Concordat, the University’s most recent CROS and PIRLS survey results and other related topics. The aim of these events are to engage with research staff on the new Concordat and related issues.  Festival of |Research is a year-long event that showcases our research, led by IAS and our DP Research, supported by RIS [Research Week](http://www.stir.ac.uk/research/researchweek/) | Chair REWG | Events to run in Festival of Research in May 2020, with a minimum target of 20 participants at each.  Events held, and outcomes of discussions presented to the REWG and URC and appropriate recommendations made**.** | May 2020 |
| To deliver an international mentoring partnership programme for established and early career researchers. We aim to enhance research excellence at both Institutions, to deliver impactful research outcomes. A pilot project, focused on three research themes, in which 6 mentors and 4 mentees from UNESP will be partnered with up to 6 mentees and 4 mentors from UoS, respectively. Although the development of research capability will be an important focus of the mentoring partnership, cultural and social sharing and co-learning will form a natural part of the programme. This is funded by the institution’s GCRF Formula Grant from the Scottish Funding Council, from UKRI’s GCRF programme. | RIS | Partnership is established and Mentorship Programme is delivered by institution staff and external facilitators. The first pilot ran in June 2019 with 10 mentors and 10 mentees on the programme, the 2nd pilot, which builds upon feedback, will run in May 2020. The target for 2nd pilot was a minimum of 16 and a maximum of 20, between mentees and mentors. The scheme will then be evaluated by participants and plans regarding support and on-going development put in place by Nov 2020. | 1st Pilot June 2019, 2nd pilot in May 2020, ongoing development plans Nov 2020. |

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

| **Issue to be addressed** | **Responsibility for action** | **Success Criteria** | **Timescale** |
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| Institutional Athena SWAN renewal (Bronze) to be submitted in April 2020. | Dean E&D | Award retained | Submit April 2020, results October 2020. |
| Divisional/Faculty level applications submitted for new Athena SWAN awards. | Divisional Athena SWAN groups, Dean E&D | Awards submitted and achieved. | TBC currently. |
| Good practice in recruitment at Faculty/Divisional level. Our Faculty of Arts & Humanities has devised a model of best practice re recruitment for academic posts, incorporating blog posts, and mechanisms to clear career paths and promote career flexibility. | Chair REWG | Good practice adopted and implemented in roles advertised in 2020 onwards | Share examples of good practice at REWG in November 2019; dissemination to/discussion with faculties via REWG and faculty events; adoption during 2020 recruitment.  (also included under Principle 1) |

**Principle 7: Implementation & Review***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.*

| **Issue to be addressed** | **Responsibility for action** | **Success Criteria** | **Timescale** |
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| Quarterly updates of REWG will be provided to URC and summarised in the Research Environment Digest in the University’s newsletter | Chair REWG | Increased senior management awareness and understanding of the work of REWG. Updates will be recorded in Research Committee Minutes | To be added to URC agenda from February 2020. |
| For the expanded REWG to ensure there is increased and effective communication between the REWG and Faculties. To attend relevant faculty meetings and to regularly create blog posts (Research Environment Digests). | REWG members | Faculty staff will have an increased awareness of the REWG. Attending away days, and track readership of RED (produced twice per semester | To attend faculty away-days from October 2019 onwards (dates are TBC at time of writing). RED produced twice per semester, first to be November 2019. |
| To revisit marketing of CROS and PIRLS in order to increase uptake from 2019 to at least 40% of completed questionnaires in both surveys. | Chair REWG | CROS and PIRLS will both have increased their responses by 15% based on 2019 response rates | June 2020 |
| Incorporate revised Concordat in to our action plan and to raise awareness across the institution of the content of the new Concordat. | Chair REWG | Events held across institution/in faculty, blogs published. Increased awareness scores in CROS survey by 30%). | October 2019-Oct 2020. |
| To expand REWG membership to include fixed term contract researcher (s), Early Career Researcher representation and a sustainable REWG membership | Chair REWG | Membership to include a minimum of 1 contract researcher (fixed term contract) and a minimum of 2 Early Career Researcher representative across the Faculties by April 2020. Annual internal review of membership engagement, contribution and sustainability. Longer term goal of including, for succession planning purposes, 2 PhD students,  2 post-doctoral members and 2 contract researchers on a rolling basis, which will be managed via our ECR network. | April 2020 and September 2020 |

| **GLOSSARY** |  |
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| AAPC | Academic Advancement and Promotions Committee |
| Achieving Success | Annual appraisal/review for staff |
| AS | Achieving Success (annual appraisal/review for staff) |
| CES | Careers and Employability Service |
| Dean E&D | Dean for Equality and Diversity |
| Dean RE | Dean of Research Engagement |
| Dean RI | Dean of Research Impact |
| DP Research | Deputy Principal for Research |
| ECR | Early career researcher |
| ESG | Equalities Steering Group |
| HR | Human Resources |
| HR AD | Human Resources Academic Development |
| HR OD | Human Resources Organisational Development |
| IAS | Institute for Advanced Studies |
| PI | Principal Investigator |
| RDF | Researcher Development Framework |
| RDP | Researcher Development Programme |
| REWG | Research Environment working group |
| RIS | Research & Innovation Services (previously REO) |
| SMT | Senior Management Team |
| URC | University Research Committee |
| USPG | University Strategy and Policy Group |