



HR Excellence in Research Award

Anglia Ruskin University – 10 Year Review

Institutional Context

Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) has held the HR Excellence in Research (HREIR) Award since August 2013. In preparing for the ten-year review we have reflected on our progress against the 2021-23 Action Plan and our Gap Analysis and Action Plan completed as a result of signing the new Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in 2021. Our definition of researchers for the Concordat is deliberately wide ranging, and we include 'Research Assistants, Research Fellows, and Senior Research Fellows, Professors who are subject to periodic Professorial Review, academic colleagues who are formally based within one of our Research Institutes, colleagues in managerial posts such as Deputy Deans for Research & Innovation who have a responsibility for research management, and colleagues who have at least 160 credits on their AWBM for research in the relevant year (pro-rated as appropriate for fractional staff).'

At the most recent HESA Staff Census date (31 July 2022) we had 785 staff on teaching and research contracts, of whom 346 staff carried some responsibility for research as determined by our Annual Workload Balancing Model (AWBM) allocations or their job role, and 86 research-only staff. Almost all are permanently employed. We have c.93 Early Career Researchers (ECRs) spread broadly evenly across our four Faculties.

We have made exciting progress in developing a healthier and more sustainable research culture and infrastructure since 2021, underpinned by



an assessment placing researcher development and community at the heart of an inclusive and developmentally-focussed research and innovation environment, and our new Research & Innovation Strategy, launched in Autumn 2022 in tandem with new Education and Operational Strategies. This combined approach, ensuring a cohesive approach to strategy development, strengthens links between teaching, research and supporting infrastructure. Concordat commitments directly underpin elements of the R&I Strategy, for example in our ambition to 'create an inclusive, professionally-supported and confident research culture.' We have also developed three multi-disciplinary, cross-university research, innovation and impact themes – Sustainable Futures, Health, Wellbeing & Performance, and Safe & Inclusive Communities – to bring researchers at all career stages together to tackle key challenges collectively.

How the internal review was undertaken and governance structures.

Our Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG) is responsible for implementing the HREIR Action Plan and preparing the ten-year review submission, the latter delegated to a sub-group of RDWG members. The sub-group, including researcher representatives, performed an ongoing review of performance against the 2021-23 Action Plan and provided updates on progress to the University Research & Innovation Committee, chaired by the DVC (Research & Innovation), which oversees all researcher development. RDWG's Terms of Reference ensure membership includes all four Deputy Deans for Research & Innovation, the Dean and Assistant Director of the Doctoral School, representatives of researchers at different career stages including ECRs, research-only staff, and staff undertaking doctoral studies. Our Research Institute Directors, HR Services and the Research & Innovation Development Office (RIDO) are also represented, the latter by its Director and institutional Researcher Development



Manager. This composition reflects our belief that researcher development is a continuum and in the importance of having direct input of researchers at different career stages into strategic planning groups.

Information gathered through our mechanisms to engage with researchers, including CEDARS and focus groups (as described below) have influenced a number of institutional developments. We have reviewed our systems of appraisal, developed a new Individual Research and Knowledge Exchange Plan (IRKEP) template for staff, and introduced a new AWBM agreement, including revised research time allocations. These allocations include increased allocations for PGR supervision, a commitment of 100 credits for researcher development to meet our Concordat commitments and an allocation of 40 credits for colleagues who support the PGR journey, for example by undertaking annual reviews, acting as internal PhD examiners, undertaking mock vivas, and delivering research training. Together, these actions help deliver our commitment to establishing a developmentally-focused research environment.

How researchers' views were taken into account

Researchers were consulted through a number of avenues: RDWG members ran focus groups in 2021 and 2023 with researchers at all career stages (we will consider focus groups specifically for research-only staff in future). Opinions were also sought through the 2022 institutional staff survey and from the CEDAR Survey 2021 (completed by 109 staff and 106 PGRs; 28% of staff respondents said they were in research-only roles, too small a number to analyse discretely). We look forward to the outcomes of CEDARS 2023, running at present. A number of staff are also PGRs and the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey (PRES) 2022 has also informed development (for the avoidance of any doubt, however, we do not identify PGR students in their own right within our definition of researchers, and have decided not to survey them in CEDARS 2023). We



reviewed feedback from our Researcher Development Programme events (run throughout the review period) evaluating the quality and impact of our provision. We have also considered staff development information elicited from the pilot ECR Mentoring scheme, appraisals, sabbatical data, feedback from our new Research & Innovation Staff Induction, our Research Leadership and Train-the-Trainer research leadership programmes, and feedback from our ECRs following the implementation of our new ECR Charter. These sources evidence our progress in supporting our researchers and identifying gaps that are addressed in our new action plan.

Past progress and key achievements since the 8-year review

We have made significant progress against most of the objectives including implementing a revised AWBM, a new Individual Research & Knowledge Exchange Plan (IRKEP), reviewing and implementing a new approach to appraisal – Professional Contribution and Development Review (PCDR), supported by a new online system, MyPCDR, launched in April 2023. As well as developing the new Research & Innovation Strategy, we signed the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in July 2022. We have further revised our ECR Charter, which applies equally to research-only staff as it does to other researchers, and continually revise and deliver our Research and Innovation Staff Inductions.

Progress and key achievements can be identified in all three areas covering the Concordat principles outlined below:

1. Environment and Culture

Our revised Academic Framework, initiated in 2020/2021, was reviewed after its first year of implementation with minor amendments made as a



result. It has helped ensure that there are clear and comprehensive criteria and processes for promotion applications with a majority of staff reporting in CEDARS 2021 that they thought promotion criteria were clear. In 2021 through RDWG we reviewed our revised 2019 ECR Charter in line with our plans and updated it to reflect our revised AWBM research allocations. The time allocation to support ECRs was further increased compared with the 2019 Charter, ensuring that from September 2023, ECRs will have a minimum 320 credits for research every year for five years and an additional allocation of 100 credits, specifically for additional researcher development, in three of those five years (pro-rated for fractional staff). We have clear processes for identifying staff on appointment who meet ARU's ECR definition (see footnote to page 1 above) to ensure they can access the entitlements such status brings. Monitoring of AWBM allocations is undertaken systematically across ARU with data reported annually to HR Services.

We reviewed our revised Research & Innovation Staff Induction (RISI) for newly-appointed and current staff, included in our compulsory HR staff induction process and check list. Moving the Induction online during the pandemic brought additional challenges, reducing the opportunities for individualised interaction, and we have now reverted to in-person delivery. We run three RISIs per year and feedback from attendees is very positive. Attendees report gaining a clear understanding of the research support available at ARU and how to find more information following the induction. Our Vice-Chancellor's Awards recognise colleagues' achievements and commitments to research including awards for research supervision, impact projects, and ECRs.

We were awarded £161k from Research England Enhancing Research Culture fund and working with the RDWG the institution identified a number of drivers which helped establish the priorities for spending the



money including: the developing R&I Strategy, the HREIR submission, the new UKRI Open Access Policy, Faculty priorities, Doctoral School proposals about enhancing EDI training and the need to address training provision in relation to research ethics and research integrity.

A key commitment of our 2021-23 Action Plan was to develop our research leaders. Following wide discussion and as part of the development of our new Research & Innovation Strategy we determined on a number of actions to develop colleagues' leadership skills. These included directing a large proportion of the Research England funding to Research Leadership Training programmes: a generic programme provided by Vitae for colleagues earlier in their career, supplemented by 'Train-the-Trainer' observation so that we could develop a cohort of research leaders (research managers and researchers) willing to train researchers in future cohorts of the programme. These initial leadership sessions ran in December 2022 and January 2023 where over 70 colleagues attended the training (55 attending the research leadership training and 20 attending the train the trainer provision). In addition, a further 21 colleagues wish to attend this training (15 research leadership, 6 train the trainer). We are now working to develop, led by those on the 'Train the Trainer' course, in-house leadership provision, including Action Learning Sets in areas of research leadership. In addition, ARU will run research team leadership training which will take place in June 2023 for colleagues specifically in research team-leadership roles.

We provide a supportive environment in which to work and study, where treating each other with dignity, courtesy and respect is standard. ARU is ranked 1st nationally and 20th Globally for Wellbeing. This ethos is reflected in our overall institutional strategy, Designing Our Future 2017-2026.



2. Employment

We updated our Recruitment and Selection processes in July 2020 and continue to keep this and our Fixed Term Employment Policy and Procedure (2017) under review. We are a Disability Confident Employer and continue to progress toward making a Disability Confident Leader submission, reinforcing our commitment to the recruitment and retention of disabled people. Our Athena SWAN Bronze Award was renewed in 2018, in 2019 the Faculty of Science and Engineering gained its Bronze Award, and we are working towards an institutional Silver Award submission in early 2024.

In 2021, we developed a Race Equality Strategy to advance racial equality at ARU. This was to provide direction and support the institution in achieving equality of experience and outcomes for our Black, Asian, and Minority ethnic staff. We are one of only 38 universities to have been awarded a Bronze Award under the Race Equality Charter and are continuing to implement our institutional-wide action plan to deliver our Race Equality Strategy. Our researchers including research-only staff have the opportunity to feed into these activities.

We established baseline figures in 2017 showing that 31% of our professors were female and 11.6% of our staff were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. We continue to work towards our institutional targets that by 2027 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff will comprise 14% of the workforce and 40% of our professors will be female.

Our main focus now is to continue to raise awareness of the new Concordat, complete and implement our new Researcher Development operational plan in support of our new Research & Innovation Strategy and complete legacy issues from our last action plan.



3. Professional and Career Development

Our Researcher Development Programme (RDP), which has been running for 5 years, is tailored to support colleagues to realise their personal ambitions around research, innovation and impact within the context of the ARU Research & Innovation Strategy. Our approach to researcher development is driven by the needs of our researchers, informed by survey data such as that generated by CEDARS and focus groups. We also use the (revised) IRKEP to capture development needs for colleagues participating in appraisal - PCDR from April 2023 – which is used in planning RDP sessions in the following academic year.

The RDP offers face to face and e-learning sessions and publicizes further relevant offerings from other (internal) providers. Training and development sessions are grouped into 10 researcher development themes mapped to Vitae's RDF; each individual session is categorized by relevance to career stage (ECR, mid-career and senior researchers). The 2022-23 programme offered c.65 online sessions with additional e-learning offerings and workshops that align with the actions in the ARU R&I Strategy Action Plan and include but are not exclusive to: open research practices, improving research conduct and reproducibility, project management, improving research leadership skills across all career stages, creating routes for collaboration and exchange with businesses and knowledge transfer, impact culture and funding and communicating research through social media platforms. Content is delivered by internal experts and external professional experts as appropriate; recent external providers have included organisations such as Vitae, Advance HE, FastTrack Impact and ThinkWrite, representing a significant investment in enhancing the RDP to maximise its benefits to researchers.

The RDP is actively promoted through a digital brochure, and links to the programme in personal e-mail invites and through newsletters to all



academic staff. We also maintain internal RDP training webpages which see significant website traffic. We increasingly record and upload recordings of workshops allowing researchers to access these sessions at any time. Post workshop feedback survey responses from attendees in 2021-22 and 2022-23 has been overall very positive. The results from CEDARS 2021 showed that 83% (up from 70% in 2020) of researchers said they had knowledge and understanding of the university staff RDP (up from 51% in 2020) and 69% of respondents had engaged in and attended activities in the RDP, and we look forward to CEDARS 2023 data in this space. CEDARS 2023 will also inform the development of a new Researcher Development Operation Plan to support the 13 KPIs identified in the new University Research and Innovation Strategy, and to benchmark our position and update our second Concordat action plan.

CEDARS 2021 showed that 90% of respondents (n=94) had participated in staff appraisal/review in the previous two years, or since taking up their current position. However, 55% reported finding it not very useful. In 2021-22 ARU reviewed its appraisal process and in April 2023 launched PCDR, as a new, coaching-based approach which involves more regular meetings between appraiser and appraisee. The effectiveness of this change will be monitored and be reviewed through future actions in our 23-26 Action plan.

At the University Research & Innovation Committee we review the impact of our revised ECR Charter which was introduced from the 2019/20 academic year. It extended the period of ECR status from 3 to 5 years, committed to giving ECRs a minimum of 12.5% of their time for research p.a., and £2,000 for research support over the course of their ECR status, and a mentor. CEDARS 2021 showed that 82% (n=89) (up from 62% in 2020) of respondents were aware of ARU's ECR Charter. Annual monitoring shows that in 2021-22 65% of ECRs received their allocated



research time and 69% had a mentor. All ECRs were able to access the funding to which they were entitled. Increasing the number of ECRs who receive their entitlement of minimum hours on their AWBMs will be a target moving forward.

Strategic Objectives and Implementation Plan

A) Environment and Culture

1. Refresh our Researcher Development Working Group, appointing co-chairs with specific oversight of staff and PGR development respectively, and ensuring its members, including research-only staff, are actively engaged in enhancing our research & innovation environment.
2. Develop and implement our Researcher Development operational plan. This will set out our vision and priorities for researcher development aligned to and supporting the strategic pillars and specific initiatives identified in our new Research and Innovation Strategy and its underpinning actions, measured through our institutional KPIs for research & innovation.
3. Enhance awareness of the new Concordat and HREIR as a key backdrop to the development of a healthy research culture alongside delivering our R&I Strategy. We will implement a number of actions to continue our progress towards achieving the Concordat's aspiration that all staff should be aware of it. In CEDARS 2021 awareness of the Concordat amongst staff was 42% (up from 35% in 2020) and of HREIR, 22% (up from 11% in 2020).
4. Continue to review the RDP to ensure it meets ARU objectives as defined in our R&I Strategy.
5. Deliver and monitor the effectiveness of our in-house research leadership and research team-leadership programmes, as targeted



support to 'grow capability, capacity and leadership from our research and knowledge exchange colleagues'.

6. Complete the development of the Research Integrity and Ethics training and monitor take up of these new programmes, as critical underpinnings of our strategic intention to 'conduct excellent research and innovation with global impact'.

7. Actively promote surveys such as the Staff and CEDAR Surveys and run targeted focus groups with researchers within our community (e.g., ECRs, research-only staff) to ensure their opinions are a key part of shaping the inclusive research culture to which we aspire.

B) Employment

1. Review the impact and effectiveness of our new appraisal system - Professional Contribution and Development Review (PCDR).
2. Carefully monitor the Annual Workload Balancing Model and its implementation to ensure research allocations are appropriate and that ECR Charter commitments are delivered. We will also monitor the allocation of the 100 credits for researcher development to review take up and benefit.

Both actions stem from our R&I Strategy and its intention to 'radically enhance management, infrastructure and development support to grow capability, capacity and leadership' for our researchers.

C) Professional and Career Development

1. Continue to work on synthesising our training and development activity to enhance, enhancing our aspiration to ensure professional and career development at ARU is continuous through all career stages, and targeted



to research-only staff as appropriate to enable advancement within and beyond ARU.

2. Review the University mentoring scheme with a view to its effectiveness for researchers. Along with the work on our training and development activity referred to above, these actions directly align to our strategic intention to 'enhance the excellent and unique contributions ... of our researchers and innovators and support them to achieve their full potential.'

3. Continue our work towards achieving the operational targets of increasing numbers of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff across the workforce and of female professors (as outlined above), as a key step in delivering the truly inclusive research culture which is at the heart of our new R&I Strategy.

Overall, we have made very significant progress against our eight-year action plan, completing the vast majority of our targets in the 2021-23 Action Plan but recognise that there is more to do. Moving forward we will ensure that the principles of the Concordat are embedded throughout the University, and that we have put actions in place to deliver on these goals.