

## HR Excellence in Research Award

### Anglia Ruskin University – Eight Year Review

#### Institutional context

Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) has held the HR Excellence in Research (HR EIR) Award since August 2013. In preparing for the eight-year review we have reflected on our progress against the 2019-21 action plan and incorporated into our future plan the requirements of the new Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers which we will sign in May 2021.

We currently have c.660 academic staff on both teaching and research contracts and research-only contracts and we identify 406 staff as researchers who carry responsibility for research as determined by Annual Workload Balancing Model (AWBM) allocations or their job role and 59 research only staff. We have c.100 Early Career Researchers (ECRs). Our definition of researchers for the Concordat, is in *Next Steps* below,

2019-2021 has seen significant change at ARU. We have a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), 3 new PVC-Deans and 3 new Deputy Deans for Research & Innovation, established the new ARU Doctoral School, reviewed our promotion criteria and implemented a new Academic Career Framework for staff promotion in 2021. We are reviewing our systems of appraisal, of recording Individual Research Reports, and AWBM agreement and management to ensure they support our commitment to deliver a developmentally focused research environment. Covid-19 increased institutional focus on teaching delivery, and the prioritisation of staff and student health and well-being but we have remained committed to an inclusive approach to researcher development regardless of staff contract types or career stages. The new Academic Career Framework underpins that environment by clearly setting out expectations for career progression.

#### How the internal review was undertaken

Our Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG) is responsible for implementing the 2019 action plan and the eight-year review submission, the latter delegated to a sub-group of RDWG members. The group reviewed performance against the 2019-21 action plan and shared drafts of the new plan with the University Research and Innovation Leadership Team, chaired by the DVC Research and Innovation, and the University Research and Innovation Committee, which oversees all researcher development activities. RDWG's Terms of Reference were reviewed in 2020/2021 to broaden membership and it now 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 ECR, and research-only staff, and staff doing doctoral study. 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. These changes reflect our perception of researcher development as a continuum and the benefit of having direct input of researchers at different career stages into strategic planning groups.

#### How researchers' views were taken into account

Researchers were consulted through a number of avenues: HR EIR subgroup members sought views of colleagues directly; opinions were sought through the 2020 institutional staff survey and quarterly Pulse follow-ups; and from the pilot CEDAR Survey 2020 completed by 99 research-active staff. We reviewed feedback from our Researcher Development Programme events (run between 2019 and 2021) evaluating the quality and impact of our provision. We have also considered staff development information elicited from appraisals, sabbatical data, feedback from our new staff research and innovation induction, and feedback from our ECRs following the implementation of our new ECR Charter. These sources evidence our progress in supporting our researchers and helped identify gaps that will be addressed in our new action plan.

#### Key achievements and progress since the 6-year review

We have made progress against a number of objectives but recognise that there is more to do. Some actions have been amended in the light of our maturing understanding of researcher development and our researchers' changing development needs reflected in feedback. We have implemented additional initiatives not in our original plan. We participated in the SMARTeN study to understand better the impact of the national lock down on researchers' mental health and well-being, implemented a new Agile Working Policy, and established a new Health and Wellbeing Group.

### A: Recruitment and Selection-Principles 1

We reviewed our Recruitment and Selection Procedure in July 2019 and further updated it in July 2020. We have been approved as a Disability Confident Employer, reinforcing our commitment to the recruitment and retention of disabled people. Covid-19 has delayed implementation of our plans for recognition as a Disability Confident Leader. We continue to keep our Fixed Term Employment Policy and Procedure (2017) under review.

Our Athena SWAN Bronze Award was renewed in 2018, and in 2019 the Faculty of Science and Engineering gained its Bronze Award. Other faculties have recently applied for Bronze Awards and we continue working towards an institutional Silver Award in 2021/2022. We have established baseline figures showing that in 2017 31% of our professors were female and 11.6% of our staff were BME. We have introduced new operational targets that by 2027 BME staff will comprise 14% of the workforce and 40% of our professors will be female.

### B: Recognition and Value –Principle 2

Our revised Academic Framework, implemented in 2020/2021 has ensured that there are clear and comprehensive criteria and processes for promotion applications. We will review its implementation after its first full year of operation.

After revising our ECR charter in 2019 we implemented processes to identify staff on appointment who meet ARU's ECR definition (within five years of their first appointment as a researcher, or within five years of their doctorate) to ensure they can access the entitlements such status brings.<sup>1</sup>

We have developed and implemented a Research and Innovation Staff Induction (RISI) for newly appointed and current staff, included in our compulsory HR staff induction process and check list. We have run 2 RISIs since November 2020 with 39 staff attending. Feedback from attendees was extremely positive: 89% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop would help them in their research and development. Attendees reported gaining a clear understanding of the research support available at ARU and how to find more information following the induction.

We have introduced a range of Vice-Chancellor's Research awards in recognition of colleagues' achievements and commitments to research. These include awards for research supervision, impact projects, and early career researcher awards.

Our reflection on research leadership led us to recognize that we needed to do more work to define our "research leaders" and identify who our aspiring research leaders are. Consequently, we will carry forward our plan to "revise our approach to mentoring with the development of a new pilot programme strand focused on support for mentoring aspiring research leaders." We did implement new mentoring provision for our ECRs in line with our ECR Charter commitments while offering development opportunities for research managers acting as mentors. A pilot programme, running for 6 months, including training for both mentors and mentees, was launched in February 2021 with 20 mentoring partnerships matched (20 ECRs and 15 Mentors). Feedback has been extremely positive with 94% researchers who attended the initial training agreeing or strongly agreeing that the training would help in their mentoring relationships. Participants also spoke positively of their increased confidence in becoming a mentor. We will evaluate the pilot to see if a larger and more inclusive programme open to all researchers is desirable and viable.

### C: Support and Career Development – Principles 3 and 4

We continue to support researchers at all stages of their career in their career development through our Researcher Development Programme (RDP) which has been running for 3 years. The programme is actively promoted through a brochure, flyers (pre-Covid) and links to the programme in personal e-mail invites and through monthly newsletters to all academic staff. Newsletter opening rates increased from 17% in 2018/19 to 24% in 2019/2020. We also developed new internal RDP training webpages which saw significant website traffic and, following Covid-19, now routinely record and upload workshops allowing researchers to access these sessions at any time.

The 2019/2020 RDP offered 90 face to face and 71 e-learning sessions and publicized further relevant offerings from other (internal) providers. Training and development sessions were grouped into 10 researcher development themes mapped to Vitae's RDF; each individual session was categorized by relevance to career

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<sup>1</sup> We define Early Career Researchers in a deliberately inclusive manner, reflecting the particular context of our University: *ECRs are contracted academic colleagues who, within the past five years have (a) formally had their Doctorate conferred or (b) started their first contracted appointment that includes some responsibility for undertaking research.* Postgraduate research students, including staff taking doctoral degrees, are supported through our Doctoral School and its postgraduate research development programme.

stage (ECR, mid-career and senior researchers). From 38 face to face workshops 137 staff attended (and 147 postgraduate research students (PGRs), a 20% fall on 2018/2019 attendance. The programme was re-evaluated following Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020 and provision was rapidly switched to online delivery leading to an upturn in attendance. The current (2020/2021) programme offers c.65 online sessions with an additional 50 e-learning offerings. Post workshop feedback survey responses from attendees in 2020/2021 has been overall extremely positive.

Data from a review of 2020 appraisals relating to researcher development needs and the results from CEDAR 2020 survey showed that 70% of researchers (n=99) said they had knowledge and understanding of the university staff RDP (Q46) and 51% of respondents had engaged in and attended activities in the RDP. We continue to revise our approach to researcher development based on the needs of our researchers and plan to run CEDARS again in June 2021. The data will be used to benchmark our position and construct our Concordat action plan.

Although we identified elements of the RDP programme as suitable for colleagues at particular career stages we did not develop specific career-stage researcher development pathways as proposed in our 2019-2021 action plan. This was due in part to a better appreciation from RDWG members and feedback from researchers about their development needs. This has enabled a more nuanced understanding of our researchers' fit with these career stages and recognition that pathways could in fact hinder some in engaging with development. We will review this in our 2021-2023 HREIR action plan.

We also recognised that our aspiration to run a research leadership programme for 10 research leaders set out in our 2019-2021 action plan needed refinement. While we acknowledge a need for research leadership programme, (identified through staff surveys and CEDAR Survey 2020 results (50% of ARU staff would like research leadership training) our view is that developing research leadership among our staff needs to be more wide ranging and inclusive, based on an approach which recognises research, innovation and impact and reflects colleagues' different career stages, skill sets and abilities. We will implement this approach in our 2021-2023 HREIR action plan.

We implemented our revised ECR charter from the 2019/20 academic year to extend the period of ECR status from 3 to 5 years, ensure ECRs have a minimum of 12.5% of their time for research p.a., and to provide them with £2000 for research support over the course of their ECR status and a mentor. The 2019/2020 evaluation showed that more than 85% of ECRs had 12.5% of their time committed to research, but that take up of mentorship varied across faculties. This prompted the focus of our pilot mentoring programme on the two poorer-performing faculties. We will review the ECR Charter in 2021. As set out in our 2019-2021 action plan, we reviewed ECR membership of university committees. Although ECR representation was generally good with ECRs on Senate, Research and Innovation Committee, Research Ethics Committee, and Faculty Research and Innovation Committees, it was evident that this was serendipitous. As a result, we are seeking increased formal involvement of ECRs on relevant committees to support their development and ensure their views are heard. This will help address the view expressed in our CEDAR survey which showed 62% of respondents (n=56) wanted to participate in institutional policy and decision making.

#### D: Concordat Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

Attendance data and feedback from researcher development workshops along with CEDARS survey results highlight researchers are pro-actively engaging in their own personal and career development and lifelong learning. 76% of CEDARS respondents reported spending at least a day on researcher development in the past 12 months (24% 1-2 days, 31% 3-4 days, 21% 5-9 days).

We have progressed our 2019-2021 action to increase take up of Research Integrity training by actively promoting it to academic staff. Completion rates have increased among both new and current research staff but we will carry forward this action to our 2021-2023 action plan to achieve our success measures of 90% completion for new staff and 60% for existing staff.

We encourage staff to develop their careers in diverse ways, offering 43 workshops in working with business and industry including sessions in IP and knowledge transfer partnerships (KTPP), knowledge exchange, and consultancy sandpits (multidisciplinary collaboration). We actively promote KTP and KEEP+ schemes supporting knowledge exchange activity. We recently joined the University Alliance and actively support staff to engage in sector initiatives and activities such as reviewing for research councils, participation in REF panels and contributing to sector reviews. We actively seek staff participation in a university-wide consultations; for example, currently, as we develop our new Research Innovation and Impact Strategy for 2022 and beyond.

## E: Concordat Principle 6 - diversity and equality

We provide a supportive environment in which to work and study, where treating each other with dignity, courtesy and respect is standard. This ethos is reflected in our strategy, *Designing Our Future 2017-2026*. In addition to our work on Athena Swan awards noted above, we signed up to the Race Equality Charter in 2018, and in April 2019 were shortlisted for a national University HR award for our equality and diversity work. In October 2020 we approved new KPIs in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion including the achievement of Advance HE's Race Equality Charter award by 2022 and Disability Confident Leader status by 2027.

### Next Steps.

Our main focus now is to raise awareness of the new Concordat, carry forward legacy issues from our last action plan and implement new activities as needed to embed the Concordat's commitments. We have adopted the following, inclusive, definition for staff covered by it: *ARU's definition includes Research Assistants, Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows, Principal 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 and Innovation who have a responsibility for research management, and colleagues who have at least 200 credits on their AWBM for research in the relevant year (pro-rated as appropriate for fractional staff).*

Our main actions will be:

#### A) Environment and Culture

1. Enhance awareness of the new Concordat and HREIR. In the CEDAR Survey awareness of the Concordat amongst staff was 35% and of HREIR, 11%. We will implement a number of actions in an effort to achieve the Concordat's aspiration that all staff should be aware of it.
2. Revise our Researcher Development Programme in the light of the CEDAR Survey feedback and the appraisal and IRR information about desired training and development activity. We will continue to deliver the RDP and further promote awareness of it.
3. We will review and further develop our research induction programme in the light of feedback. We will seek the input of Deputy Deans for Research & Innovation.
4. Work towards achieving the Advance HE Race Equality Charter Award by 2022.
5. Continue our work on raising awareness and understanding of Research Integrity training.
6. Ensure wide consultation on the development of the new Research, Innovation and Impact Strategy being developed for 2022 and create a developmentally focused research environment that supports colleagues' development in a variety of ways.
7. Actively promote surveys such as the CEDAR Survey, PRES Survey as well as ARU specific Staff and Pulse Surveys along with regular opportunities to feedback to ensure the opinions of researchers are heard and responded to.
8. Continue our work on ensuring staff health and wellbeing through the actions of the health and wellbeing working group and the appointment of staff to support this. We will monitor the implementation of our new Agile Working Policy.

#### B) Employment

1. Review our recruitment processes in order to make them quicker and more flexible.
2. Continue the implementation of the new Academic Career Framework and review its first year of implementation.
3. Focus our efforts in training and development on ensuring research leadership is supported for staff at all levels reflecting the different elements and roles of the research career and recognising that staff have a variety of skills and expertise.
4. Introduce a training and development programme for research leadership ensuring it is inclusive.
5. Complete our reviews of the Annual Workload Balancing Model and its implementation, the appraisal system and our method and system for recording Individual Research Reports.

#### C) Professional and Career Development

1. Synthesise our training and development activity by ensuring that Deputy Deans for Research and Innovation, the Researcher Development Manager, the Associate Director of the Doctoral School and colleagues in HR responsible for the staff development programme work more closely together to create a complementary approach to staff training and development and programme of events that best meets staff needs.
2. Evaluate the ECR pilot mentoring scheme with a view to evaluating whether it should be extended to include all researchers.

3. Develop an inclusive approach to research leadership which recognises the many ways in which staff demonstrate leadership in research and aspire to research leadership and which supports them in doing so.
4. Ensure training about and opportunities for career development beyond academia are included in our researcher development programme.
5. We will continue our work towards achieving the operational targets of increasing numbers of BME staff across the workforce and of female professors as outlined above.
6. Review the ECR Charter and its implementation to ensure its commitments are honoured.

Overall, we have made progress against our six-year 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 this goal.