Swansea University HR Excellence in Research Report 2014

Evaluation

This evaluation was conducted by the Development Officer for Research Staff, supported by the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG). Oversight and strategic leadership has been provided by the Director of HR, and the report has been circulated to the PVC (Research) and the Academic & Professional Enhancement Centre (APECS) Academic Director (Research). Input has also been provided by the University's Senior External Funding Officer, and members of the Research stream of the ongoing Professional Services Review. The RSWG is chaired by the Development Officer for Research Staff, and comprises representation from research staff, the Athena SWAN officer, the Careers officer (research), and the Senior HR Officer (recruitment and grading). A report on the 2013 CROS and PIRLS surveys was presented by the Development Officer for Research Staff to the Strategic Management Group Research (SMGR) and to the PVC (Research), and the responses of those groups have also been considered.

Data has been gathered from the results of CROS 2013, PIRLS 2013, and through the University's own HR and training systems. National comparators have been used for both the CROS and PIRLS survey as a benchmarking tool. This data has been used to inform priorities for the forward action plan, in consultation with the RSWG. In addition to research staff involvement through CROS and the RSWG, an internal survey was carried out in October 2014 to gather up to date data on the priorities and needs of research staff, and this has also been useful in informing the planning process.

Key achievements and progress 2010-2014

Principle 1: Recruitment and selection

- Role profiles for research only roles have enabled consistency to be applied to grading across all disciplines and aid in fair recruitment and selection practices. Moving to an online recruitment system (LUMESSE) has enabled better tracking of candidate data including success rates.
- Training has been put in place for all those undertaking recruitment and selection activities. This includes mandatory equality and diversity training, standalone recruitment and selection training with a strong experiential element, and an embedded module within the *HR Policies and Procedures for Line Managers* training.
- Induction for research staff has been improved with the introduction of a termly "New researcher lunch". This includes brief presentations from research support librarians, a careers officer, a funding officer and a sustainability officer, as well as the Development Officer for Research Staff. All new starters are personally invited, with information also being circulated to their PIs about the event. In the 2013 CROS survey, satisfaction with induction processes was above the UK average, and satisfaction with the researcher specific induction had improved from 61.6% to 70%

Principle 2: Reward and Recognition

- Funding was allocated to 2 research staff to attend the Vitae research staff conference in November 2013
- Improvements are ongoing in the management of the end of fixed-term and fixed-funded contracts. All research staff coming to the end of contract are covered by the University's redeployment policy, which gives them prior consideration for roles within the institution before wider advertisement. Research staff are also offered priority access to coaching and careers advice. The Director of Human Resources, in consultation with the appropriate committees and the UCU union, has rewritten a

University ordinance to better facilitate the transfer of staff onto open ended contracts. Fixed-term contract reduction rates are a key priority target for the HR department. A new HR IT system has recently been introduced which will enable better tracking of conversion rates.

- Improving leadership and management at all levels is a key strategic priority, and this includes PIs and research leaders. *HR Policies and Procedures for Line Managers* training runs 6 times a year and includes specific sessions for academic line managers. As well as recruitment and selection, modules include the management of fixed-term staff and coaching skills training (which is co-delivered by the Development Officer for Research Staff). All new line managers are invited to the training as part of their induction information and many existing and long serving line managers have also attended. Additionally, a suite of leadership and management development opportunities have been programmed during the last 12 months including a *Leadership in Action* programme, *Leading for Change* coaching training, and *Understanding Your People Through Culture Change,* which focussed on emotional intelligence. Participants have been selected on an invitation only basis, with priority given to senior leaders, including many PIs. A new *Principles of Management* programme, designed and delivered by the Development Officer for Research Staff, has just been introduced for those new to management, and a high proportion of places have been booked by academic line managers, including PIs. The Development Officer for Research Staff has been closely involved in the development of the management and leadership programme, and has attended a number of Leadership Foundation events, including the annual Wales conference and a Swansea University leadership consultancy day.

- The University is undergoing a significant change in the next 12 months with the opening of the new Bay Campus. To support this transition to dual campus operation, a Professional Services Review (PSR) is currently taking place, led by the PVC designate. One of the key priorities identified in phase 1 is research support. Proposals have been drawn up to place a "research hub" within each college to support all those engaged in research activities. The Development Officer for Research Staff has been consulted during this process.

- There has been significant progress in embedding the Personal Development Review across the institution. The PDR forms part of the Performance Enabling agenda, which won 2 national awards in 2012. CROS and PIRLS showed that numbers of staff receiving appraisals was higher than nationally, and that satisfaction rates with the usefulness of the process were above the national average. Satisfaction had also improved since CROS 2011, with 56.5% finding the PDR useful, compared to 49.2% in 2011. Current figures show that in Autumn 2014, 98% of eligible staff have had a PDR. Staff input into the Performance Enabling agenda is gathered through a regular members forum. A number of research staff volunteer to participate in this forum to ensure that the researcher voice is represented.

- A section of the Researcher development website is dedicated to PIs. PIs of new research staff are contacted within a month of new appointments to make them aware of the support available to them.

Principle 3 and 4: Support and Career Development

Principle 3

- A number of strong partnerships have been formed since 2013, with departments and services that can provide positive input into the development of research staff. For example, in 2013, a partnership was formed with the Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership (IfEL) within the university, to provide a number of training and development opportunities to research staff. These included a 3 day bespoke programme entitled "Enterprising Researchers". A strong partnership with Swansea University Librarians has enabled research staff to take up a range of training opportunities, particularly in the areas of open access publishing, online portfolio management and networking, social media, and research databases. In 2013, the postgraduate skills training programme was opened up to all research

staff, in addition to staff only sessions. Librarians attend new research staff inductions to highlight the support available, and also took part in the recent career development day for fixed-term research staff. Since 2013, the sustainability team have provided information sessions; both stand alone and within new research staff inductions to highlight sustainability principles and the support and resources available to researchers. The careers service has also been participating in the new research staff inductions. The new researcher development webpages signpost the availability of 1-2-1 careers support and advice, and a number of careers themed seminars for research staff have been carried out. Uptake of careers services by research staff has increased substantially over the past 2 years. Careers officers took part in the recent career development day for fixed-term research staff and the careers officer (research) participates in the RSWG. Funding officers from the Department of Research and Innovation have also been participating in research staff induction. Recently, the Development Officer for Research Staff has begun participating in the induction sessions run by DRI for all new academic, project, and research staff. This has provided an opportunity to highlight the support available, especially to new PIs, who make up the bulk of the audience. The Development Officer for Research Staff has also worked closely with the new Impact Acceleration Officer on a number of projects, including the provisions of business engagement, networking, and media training within the 2014/15 research staff programme.

- Swansea University became a EURAXESS Local Contact point in 2013, EURAXESS information is circulated to new international researchers, and displayed in APECS.

Principle 4

- Coaching is available to all research staff on a one-to-one basis with the Development Officer for Research Staff. The Swansea University Research Forum (SURF) also runs a popular annual research coaching scheme, where research staff are able both to become coaches, and to be coached. Mentors are identified at the recruitment stage for all new staff.
- A broad range of training and development activities, led both by external consultants and internal specialists is available to research staff. Courses are aligned to the Researcher Development Framework.
- The 2013 CROS survey showed that the large majority of research staff felt encouraged to engage in personal and career development (82.1% compared to 73.6% nationally)
- In 2013, the *Post Graduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education* (PGCtHE) programme – leading to Associate Fellowship of the HEA, was opened up to research staff who have an eligible teaching load. 3 research staff are currently undertaking the programme.

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

- Researchers are encouraged to engage with coaching and careers advice.
- Research staff engagement with the CROS survey in 2013 was significantly increased compared to the 2011 survey, and well above the national average (37.6% compared to 26.1% nationally).
- There is still a significant expectation gap between those who aspire to obtain a permanent academic post/career and those who are likely to do so. The Development Officer for Research Staff is working closely with careers services to provide information about alternative careers. At the same time, development opportunities are provided for those who wish to explore the academic career path.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

- The Development Officer for Research Staff works closely with Athena SWAN – sitting on both the Athena SWAN University self-assessment team and Athena SWAN career development working group.

The Athena SWAN officer sits on the RSWG and has also attended training on the Vitae "Every Researcher Counts" programme.

- The Development Officer for Research Staff has taken part in the Women in Medicine and Science (WIMS) seminar series – giving a seminar on assertiveness. A further seminar on learning and development opportunities is scheduled for early 2015.
- A *Career development day for fixed term researchers* was recently organised by the Development Officer for Research Staff with the support of the Athena SWAN career development working group. This was attended by around 30 research staff, with 85% providing very positive evaluation.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- The newly formed Research Staff Working Group will review progress against the action plan on a regular basis throughout its life, and will consult on any future plans. The report and plans will be available for scrutiny on the research staff webpages.

Future Priorities

This section articulates the priorities that have been identified for the next 2 years. The overarching priorities are leadership and management development for PIs, and research staff engagement in the broadest sense. It is strongly anticipated that further actions will be added, and existing actions amended following the results of the CROS survey in Spring 2015. For success measures and specific actions aligned to these priorities, please see Action Plan 2015/16

Principle 1: Recruitment and selection
- The development of clear guidance on researcher promotion and career pathways within the institution, with events to promote to researchers.

Principle 2: Reward and Recognition
- A continued emphasis on leadership and management training for PIs and research managers to develop their skills and therefore enhance the management and leadership of research staff within the institution.

Principle 3 and 4: Support and Career Development
- Extension of activities designed to develop teaching skills for those researchers who desire an academic career.
- Development of greater opportunities for collaboration and networking among research staff.
- Provision of more short sessions and seminars, online resources and blended learning from 2015 onwards to ensure maximum engagement by research staff, and to support researchers on the new campus

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities
- Research staff representatives from the 3 largest research active Colleges to sit on the RSWG.
- Use of the CROS in 2015 survey, with the emphasis on maintaining the participation rates from 2013.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity
- Continued action to promote equality and diversity, including the submission for an institutional Athena SWAN silver award in late 2015 /early 2016.
- Mandatory diversity training for all new staff, with a phased roll out to existing staff members.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review
- RSWG to meet twice a year to review progress against action plan.