Swansea University HR Excellence in Research Report 2016

Evaluation

This evaluation was conducted by the Learning & Development Manager, supported by the Chair of the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG), made up of key stakeholders. The RSWG, which includes Research staff representation from all Colleges, reviewed the 2015-16 plan, and their new terms of reference give them oversight of the Concordat Action Plan for 2017 onwards. Oversight and strategic leadership has been provided by the Director of HR, and the report has been provided to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research), who also provided comments.

Swansea University participated in the 2015 CROS and PIRLS surveys. Research staff engagement with the CROS survey in 2015 was maintained at 37% - significantly above the national average of 28% and responses have been considered when preparing this report. Data has been gathered from the results of CROS 2015, PIRLS 2015, 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.

Key achievements and progress 2014-2016

Principle 1: Recruitment and selection

- Clear promotion guidelines are available for research staff and the processes open to them are displayed on the University's webpage. In 2016, 8 out of 10 Research staff promotion applications were successful. Feedback provided in 2015 to unsuccessful candidates was utilised and informed one of the successful applications in 2016.
  http://www.swansea.ac.uk/personnel/promotions/promotionprocessfortutorsandresearchstaff
- Criteria for academic roles are available to researchers to enable them to understand the requirements and standards for applying for an academic staff post and to ensure a rounded academic profile is developed alongside their research.
  http://www.swansea.ac.uk/personnel/current-staff/academic-career-pathways
- Training on Recruitment & Selection guidelines and procedures is provided for those undertaking research staff recruitment and selection activities. Recruitment and selection modules now form part of the mandatory training for all new line managers and the feedback for the training has been excellent, with 98.3% stating that they had gained greater awareness of their responsibilities as line managers.
- A revised Induction Programme was launched earlier this year to which all new Research staff are invited. Research Staff are signposted to all the support available under the University's initiative arising from the Concordat. All Research staff are also given the opportunity to get involved with specific research staff development activities (see below) and to meet the Vice-Chancellor. Over 320 new staff, including many researchers, have enrolled onto the induction training, and feedback scores have been consistently high.

Principle 2: Reward and Recognition

- An exercise was recently conducted to transfer all eligible staff funded externally from fixed term to permanent contracts. We have now introduced a systemised process to ensure that all members of staff with more than 4 years' service are transferred to open ended contracts where possible. In total 162 staff have been transferred over, 60 of whom are Research staff.
- All Research staff who are coming to the end of fixed-term contracts have the opportunity for prior consideration for advertised posts through the University's redeployment policy, before wider

advertisement. Research staff now also have access to coaching and careers advice, and while take-up has so far been low, we will consider how this might be improved.

- Front line services have been established to support the delivery of key activities including research, through Research Hubs.
- A new Reward & Recognition Manager was appointed in July 2015. A meeting took place to discuss the needs of research staff and the Reward & Recognition Manager is now a member of RSWG.
- In both 2015 and 2016, Research staff were supported and encouraged to apply for external development activities including the prestigious Welsh Crucible Research Leadership Programme. Although the programme is aimed primarily at Academic members of staff, members of Research staff were successful in gaining a place on the programme in both 2015 and 2016.
- Annual performance development reviews are embedded across the institution. In 2014, 2015 and 2016, a sector leading 99% of eligible staff took part in a PDR (including all research staff, other than those on probation), affording all research staff the opportunity to have a meaningful conversation with their line manager about their performance and development, at least once a year.
- Funding was allocated to the Learning & Development Manager to attend the Vitae research staff conference in September 2016, to enable her to develop and improve her professional practice.

Principle 3 and 4: Support and Career Development

Principle 3
- The Learning and Development Manager worked closely with partners across this institution to develop a coordinated and improved programme of training and development opportunities for research staff. We adapted a new, co-ordinated approach to Learning & Development for research staff, identifying internal experts, listening to the needs of research staff, and bringing together researcher development strands from across the institution. We were able to bring together 32 distinct programmes in our researcher development brochure (increased from 9 in the previous year). Responding to researcher needs and demands, there has been an increased offer of short courses to enable more researchers to attend and participate. More than half of the programmes now have this format.
- The Learning & Development Manager took part in two Staff Road Shows to highlight the services on offer to research staff as part of a wider initiative in partnership with the Reward and Recognition lead. Information was provided about the wide range of learning and development opportunities available.
- The Learning & Development Manager is in regular contact with all research staff via an email group and provides them with regular updates and information on the support and development available to them. She also meets regularly with research staff on a one-to-one basis and in small groups, providing advice and support as required.
- A Career Development Event for Researchers was held and attended by over 40 staff. Former Research Staff shared their experiences of their transition from Research to Academia and other career destinations to assist current researchers with their career development. Former Research Staff who had participated in Welsh Crucible were also invited to speak at Roadshow Events.

Principle 4
- The 2015 CROS survey showed that a significant majority of research staff felt encouraged to engage in personal and career development (78% compared to 75% nationally).
- Coaching is available to all research staff on a one-to-one basis. Mentors are identified at the recruitment stage for all new staff.
- A bespoke teaching skills course, the *"Introduction to Teaching skills for researchers"* has been introduced and following successful evaluation, has now been integrated into the main researcher development programme. In addition the full *Post Graduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education*

(PGCtHE) programme – leading to Associate Fellowship of the HEA, is now open to research staff who have an eligible teaching load. Three research staff have undertaken the full programme to date.

- Principle Investigators are encouraged to participate in our leadership framework http://www.swansea.ac.uk/dts/leadershipandmanagement. 360 feedback, based on our leadership values, was carried out in June – July 2016. 44 PIs participated in courses that underpin this framework (e.g. 'Managing at Swansea' and 'Leading for Change' - designed to enable a coaching style of leadership to maximise individual and team potential). From 2016 PIs are eligible to apply for the prestigious week long leadership summer school "*Academi Wales*". One PI has already attended.

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

- The RSWG was reinvigorated in 2016, and now meets regularly. The PVC (Research) nominated a senior academic member of staff, Professor Perumal Nithiarasu, to Chair the Committee. The group has research staff from each College (nominated by Heads of College), and other members from Human Resources, the Employability Academy (SEA), Research Engagement & Innovation Services (REIS), Information Services and Systems. New Terms of Reference have been written and agreed.
- The Learning & Development Manager provides reports to the Director of HR and University Management.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

- The Learning & Development Manager works closely with Athena SWAN – sitting on the Athena SWAN Career Development Working Group. A member of the Equality team sits on the RSWG.
- Mandatory Equality Training for all new staff, now forms part of University Induction.
- Following a successful submission by the College of Engineering in October 2016, all four STEMM Colleges now hold the Athena SWAN Bronze award, while the Medical School gained the Silver award in April 2016.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- The reinvigorated Research Staff Working Group has been given oversight of the Concordat Action Plan and will review progress against the plan regularly. This report and the plan 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. These are set out in a new action plan, together with measures for success. The overarching priorities are research staff engagement in the broadest sense, improving recruitment and selection, and the development of leadership and management capability across the institution. It is strongly anticipated that further actions will be added, and existing actions amended following the results of the CROS survey in Spring 2017. Key areas include:

Principle 1: Recruitment and selection
We will review the Recruitment & Selection guidance for staff, including research staff, to ensure that we recruit, select and retain researchers of the highest potential. Positive action statements will be introduced into job advertisements where we identify under-representation of particular protected characteristics to attract the best research staff from a diverse pool of applicants. The introduction of strategic academic recruitment at key points in the year will enable us to better induct new recruits and plan and deliver training more effectively. This will also work across discipline areas, enhancing perspectives on research.

Principle 2: Reward and Recognition
We will place a continued emphasis on leadership and management development, including the introduction of a new leadership skilling framework, values culture, and feedback mechanisms, which will improve the management and leadership of research staff within the institution. Processes to transfer eligible research staff to open-ended contracts will be embedded and monitored.

Principle 3 and 4: Support and Career Development
We will work with the newly nominated College representatives on the RSWG to develop greater collaboration and networking amongst research staff and across colleges.

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities
We will use the CROS survey in 2017, with the emphasis on maintaining or improving the participation rates to ensure that as many researchers as possible are able to contribute their ideas and views to our planning. We will build networks and support for research staff through representation on the reinvigorated RSWG.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity
The University will apply for an Athena SWAN silver award in April 2017, and review success rates by protected characteristic for research staff appointments.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review
The RSWG will meet twice a year to review progress against action plan. The new draft action plan will be amended and reviewed by RSWG after CROS 2017 to ensure that researcher views continue to be fully represented.