

HR Excellence in Research Award: Six year report – December 2016

Edinburgh Napier University received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in December 2010 and retained it in 2014 after an external review process. As part of our award we are reporting here on our progress over the last two years against our Concordat Action plan.

1. How the review was undertaken

The internal review was led by the Leader of Researcher Development within the Research Innovation Office working closely with staff within the Schools and other Professional services. Outputs from our Early Career Researchers Forum were used to capture views from the research community as part of the review process. Feedback submitted from researchers to RIO about recent development events was also considered alongside data from our 2015 PRES, CROS and PIRLS surveys. The HR Excellence in Research Award has been discussed regularly at the Research and Innovation Committee which formally monitors research activity and quality within the university.

2. Key achievements and progress

The development of our University Strategy 2020 had research as one of its main themes when it was developed in 2014. To achieve Strategy 2020, the University reviewed the research support infrastructure during AY13/14 leading to the creation of a new Research and Innovation Office (RIO) in January 2015. The Research and Innovation Office brings together strategic and support functions to help underpin our research ambitions and supports the strategic aims to increase our research capacity. The creation of RIO highlights the commitment the university has made towards supporting our researchers and their activities, and in 2015/16 RIO has since expanded to include a Public Engagement Officer, Web content Officer, and has also integrated Business Engagement into its remit with three further BE roles.

Several strategic initiatives to enhance the research activity of the university have been undertaken since the creation of RIO in 2015 including:

- Development and implementation of a full research lifecycle Research Information Management system (Worktribe) which includes:
 - a new open access research repository
 - editable research profile webpages for all staff and PhD students
 - analytical functions that allow us to measure research progress against key objectives
- Investment in online researcher development courses for any stage of researcher, which have been integrated into our face-to-face workshops using a blended learning approach
- A mini-REF assessment was carried out in summer 2016 to review our research activities as part of our planning and development towards the next REF

These significant projects were initiated after our 4 year review process and represent actions taken in addition to those outlined in our 2014-2016 action plan, illustrating the substantial efforts undertaken to improve our support for researchers and their work during this timeframe.

Our progress within the last two years is captured in our updated 2014-2016 action plan which is available [online](#).

Specific progress against each Concordat Principle over the two years of the award is described here:

Principle 1: We have reviewed our workload allocation model to ensure academic staff have an appropriate balance between research and teaching activities. We have completed an employee engagement survey in 2015 and a working group was set up to implement the resulting action plans.

Principle 2: A new Academic Appointment and Promotion Framework has been developed in which Research is one of the four routes to promotion to Associate Professorship. We awarded five Principal's Research Excellence Awards at our first university-wide conference in June 2016 to recognise the contribution of research active staff to the University. Our new Research Information Management system has led to the creation of editable web profile pages for all researchers allowing them to highlight their work to colleagues and collaborators beyond the university.

Principle 3: Our Postgraduate Certificate in Learning, Teaching and Assessment Practice was revised ahead of AY15/16 and now contains specific learning outcomes on research and supervision. The University's ENRoute scheme has been highlighted to research staff and PhD students as a route to support and evidence teaching activities, and we have seen increased engagement from these groups as a result.

Principle 4: We have continued to develop and review the researcher development programme on a yearly basis and now provide an annual calendar of events to help researchers see the topics and their frequency. We have made a substantial investment in online skills courses and have been integrating them into our programme using a blended learning approach. Mentoring and coaching needs are identified through our PDR process, and local and central provision is available.

Principle 5: We developed more events and communications strategies to highlight external opportunities for professional recognition, including hosting more external speakers at events on campus. Our researcher-led-initiatives fund has continued to run with applications doubling between 2015 and 2016. Research funding competitions have also been held to help support new research ideas, and to help ECRs to become established in their field. At Dec 2016 over £50K of funding had been given to contract research staff from 2015 to 2016, with approx. 13% of current contract research staff now benefiting from internal research funding.

Principle 6: Our Athena Swan action plan was developed as part of our successful submission for a Bronze award gained in Jan 2015 and we have since gone on to have two Schools submit individual plans in November 2016. A further two Schools are due to submit in April 2017. An equal pay audit was carried out in 2015 and our Academic Appointment and Promotion Framework addresses our academic selection and progression criteria to ensure equality of opportunity.

Principle 7: We carried out PRES, CROS, and PIRLS in 2015 and have used them to identify progress and areas for development, including topics for inclusion within our researcher development programme. Within the new RIO structure we have regularly reviewed progress against our Action Plan 2014-16 and reports have been submitted to the Research and Innovation Committee.

3. Strategies for 2014-2018

We have developed a new HR Badge of Excellence Action Plan 2016-18 that sets out our priorities and strategies to build on our progress and which aligns with the University Strategy 2020 and the Academic Strategy 2014-2020. The Action Plan 2016-18 can be viewed online at:

<http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/research-innovation-office/training/Pages/HR-Excellence-in-Research-Award.aspx>

In this current progress review (as with previous reviews) some actions are now seen as on-going as these fall into our continued 'business as usual' within the research activity of the University. The actions that fall

into this group will be subject to regular review to ensure that they remain relevant and driven by the needs of our research community, and will also connect into other forms of quality enhancement including our Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) monitoring and our Athena Swan initiatives.

We will continue to run PRES, CROS, and PIRLS in 2017, benchmarking against previous surveys and the sector allowing us to measure progress. Our progress against the new Action Plan 2016-18 will be monitored by the University Research and Innovation Committee.

A brief summary of our actions and next steps is provided here:

Principle 1: We will develop a recruitment and retention strategy for the university that will continue to value our researchers as critical to the success of the university. Our new PDR process *My Contribution* will be embedded across the university, linking developmental opportunities and career planning together for members of staff, including researchers.

Principle 2: We will run our Principal's Research Excellence awards as part of a university wide conference to recognise and value the work of our researchers. We will run an employee engagement survey in 2017 and implement emerging action plans from it to ensure Edinburgh Napier remains a great place to work.

Principle 3: We will utilise our new European E!REKA consortium to encourage ECRs to develop international networks. We will encourage our researchers to maintain an adaptable career path by supporting their development in teaching practice (through our ENRoute HEA scheme) or public engagement activity as appropriate.

Principle 4: We will embed our online courses into the wider Researcher development programme and will encourage engagement of contract research staff (CRS) and PhD students with these flexible resources.

Principle 5: We will continue to create development opportunities for researchers to gain experience in winning funding, being involved in funding decisions, and staying up-to-date with sector development such as open access, research integrity, and data management. We will create more opportunities for researchers to hear from external organisations to help them understand the research environment and their responsibilities within that.

Principle 6: We will continue our commitment to equality and diversity through our Athena Swan work by having a further two Schools submit individual applications in 2017, while refreshing our Bronze award activity in November 2017. We will develop our relationship with Stonewall and other diversity organisations and will continue to develop staff networks that support Equality and diversity.

Principle 7: We will use our new Research Information Management System (Worktribe) to assess progress against the University Research KPI's. We will use PRES, CROS and PIRLS data in 2017 to judge progress against our Concordat Action plans.

4. Success measures

Our success will be measured against specific actions as outlined in our Action Plan 2016-2018. Some general indicators of success for the next two year cycle will include:

- Increased uptake of our researcher development programme including our new online courses
- Evidence of progress in PRES, CROS, and PIRLS 2017 data
- Continued engagement with an annual PDR by research staff
- Increased numbers of staff holding external research funding
- Increased publication quality and quantity towards REF2020 submission
- Increased research student numbers
- Increased completion rate for PhD students
- Increased integration of our research activity into our teaching activity
- Increased visibility of research as part of the redevelopment project of the University website
- Increased external recognition of our staff through professional awards, memberships