

HR Excellence in Research Award: Eight year report – December 2018

Edinburgh Napier University received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in December 2010, retained it in 2014 after an external review process, and again in 2016 after an internal review. 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 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 such as DLTE and HRD. Consultation events with our Early Career Researchers Forum, as well as engagement with research staff representatives were all 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 2017 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 since 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 and again in 2018 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 external review process and represent actions taken in addition to those outlined at the start of this 4 year cycle, illustrating the substantial efforts undertaken to improve our support for researchers and their work.

Our progress within the last two years is captured in our updated 2016-2018 action plan which is available [online](#). Specific progress against each Concordat Principle over the last two years of the award is described here:

Principle 1: We developed a recruitment strategy for the university that values our researchers as critical to the success of the university. Our new PDR process *My Contribution* was successfully embedded across the university, linking developmental opportunities and career planning together for members of staff, including researchers. By 2018 over 95% of staff were engaging with the review process.

Principle 2: We have established our Principal's Research Excellence awards as part of the University wide Research conference to recognise and value the work of our researchers. To increase their visibility further, these awards will now be included in wider recognition scheme, Above and Beyond. We ran an employee engagement survey in 2018 with the results being widely communicated across the university. Four themes emerged and specific action plans for each are being led by Senior Leaders, to ensure Edinburgh Napier remains a great place to work.

Principle 3: We have been utilising our new European E!REKA consortium to encourage ECRs to develop international networks, through hosting its conference in 2017 and in supporting staff attendance at other network conferences and events. We continue to encourage our researchers to maintain an adaptable career path by supporting their development in teaching practice (through our ENRoute HEA scheme). ENRoute has been reaccredited by the HEA and explicitly recognises pathways for research students and staff to engage with.

Principle 4: We have embedded our online courses into the wider Researcher development programme and continue to encourage engagement of contract research staff (CRS) and PhD students with these flexible resources. We are building further online resources that support development in a 'just-in-time' approach, though regular webinars, online videos, and more content on our Virtual Learning Environment, Moodle.

Principle 5: We have continued 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 have run ECR specific 'Grant factories' which have supported staff to develop an idea right through to submission to an external funder. We have developed more opportunities for researchers to hear from external organisations to help them understand the research environment and their responsibilities within that.

Principle 6: We continue our commitment to equality and diversity through our Athena Swan work by having had a further two Schools submit individual applications in 2017, while refreshing our Institutional Bronze award activity. We have developed our relationship with Stonewall and other diversity organisations with staff regularly attending diversity training and events. Since 2017 we have established a number of staff networks that support Equality and diversity, including a LGBTI+ network, a Carer's network, an International Staff network, and a Woman's network. Staff have also engaged with Diversity training from partner organisations, such as Stonewall, and Unconscious bias training within the university.

Principle 7: We now regularly use our Research Information Management System (Worktribe) to assess progress against the University Research KPI's, and have developed an interactive dashboard for research data in Cognos. During this review we have used PRES, CROS and PIRLS data from 2015 and 2017 to judge progress against our Concordat Action plans.

3. Strategies for 2019-2020

We have developed a new HR Badge of Excellence Action Plan 2019-2020 that sets out our priorities and strategies to build on our progress and which aligns with the University Strategy 2020. The Action Plan 2019-2020 can be viewed online at: <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/research-innovation-office/training/Pages/HR-Excellence-in-Research-Award.aspx>

During this action plan period the University will be developing a new 5 year Strategy beyond 2020, and we will ensure the Concordat Action Plan aligns with these developments. We will also adopt and respond to the ongoing revisions of the Concordat at sector level during 2018/19.

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 2019, benchmarking against previous surveys and the sector allowing us to measure progress. Within the new RIO structure we will regularly reviewed progress against our Action Plan 2019-2020 and reports will be submitted to the Dean (Research and Innovation) and the Research and Innovation Committee for monitoring purposes.

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

Principle 1: During this plan period we will launch a Research career promotion framework, creating clear routes for promotion open to research staff. A parallel strand of work will create an 'Agenda for change' working group that helps identify barriers and challenges to researchers applying for promotion, with the aim of reducing systemic barriers to promotion.

Principle 2: To complement a full Staff Engagement survey scheduled for 2019/19 we will establish regular 'pulse' surveys to help the institution recognise and respond to staff concerns in a shorter period. The ongoing action plans from the current survey data will be embedded across the university ahead of the next survey period. We will investigate ways to understand the reasons for staff turnover, identifying if exit interviews or similar would identify themes for staff leaving.

Principle 3: We will continue to run a comprehensive researcher development programme which supports researchers to understand the complex research environment. We will roll out our refreshed Public Engagement strategy and provide training and support for researchers active in PE and those new to PE.

Principle 4: We will expand our examples of career pathways developing an ECR/PhD alumni network. We will continue to raise awareness of our ENRoute scheme towards HEA fellowship through development of case studies drawn from the research community.

Principle 5: We aim to develop a framework that draws researcher responsibilities together from various policy documents (Research Integrity, open access, data management etc.) to help researchers understand their responsibilities. We will embed the Time for Research Policy and the policy for Staff undertaking PhDs across the university.

Principle 6: After the successful launch of four diversity networks we will work to embed these networks across the university and will work to ensure their sustainability. We will continue to engage with Athena Swan through institutional submission for Bronze renewal and individual School applications. We will carry

out Equal Pay audits and will report on our Equality Outcomes. During our preparations for REF we will ensure Equality and Diversity issues are considered throughout.

Principle 7: We will continue to use sector surveys such as PRES, CROS and PIRLS to identify progress and areas for development. We will respond to, and adopt our action plans to changes made to the Concordat during the sector review (2018/19). We will continue to report action plan progress to appropriate Committees, such as the Research and Innovation Committee and the Research Degrees Committee, as well as directly to Senior Leaders and the research community at the University.

4. Success measures

Our success will be measured against specific actions as outlined in our Action Plan 2019-2020. Ongoing general indicators of success for the next two year cycle include:

- Increased uptake of our researcher development programme including our new online courses
- Evidence of progress in PRES, CROS, and PIRLS 2019 data
- Continued engagement with an annual MyContribution review 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