

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD: INTERNAL REVIEW REPORT (2015-2017)

Since Glasgow Caledonian University received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in November 2013, monitoring and evaluation of the actions have been part of a continuous process. As we near the end of year four, our progress is outlined below.

1. HOW WAS THE INTERNAL REVIEW UNDERTAKEN?

A review of progress made in relation to the action plan developed in 2015 has been conducted, and findings have been discussed across the university spectrum which includes strategic research leaders, research staff and administrative leads, People Services (PS), the REF Management Group (RMG), University Research Committee (URC), the Graduate School (GS), the university's Equality and Diversity (E&D) Forum, the Research Directorate, the Schools - the Associate Deans of Research (ADRs) as well as the university executive lead – Pro Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal for Research. As part of the university restructure, the CREDO group has been replaced with the Researcher Careers Development Steering Group (Nov 2017) with its core objectives centred around researcher careers. This review has further been informed by feedback from research staff attending workshops and data from the Contract Researcher Online Survey (CROS), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS).

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE ORIGINAL ACTION PLAN

The original action plan was set out in alignment with the Concordat principles and key achievements are reported against each of these below.

2.1 Principle 1 Recruitment Selection and Retention of Staff

As part of the commitment to strengthen research, the University has carried out an audit of its recruitment methods. The resultant outcome was a refreshed and updated recruitment and selection policy and set of guidelines published on the website in November 2016. In these policies, GCU has emphasised and maintained its commitment to engaging staff on open-ended employment contracts as the main method of resourcing. A further outcome of the audit was the provision of bespoke training for the HR team and a cascade of best practice to People Managers across the university. In the CROS2017 survey for research contract staff, GCU had the excellent result of 90.5% of GCU respondents agreed that they had been provided with the necessary information on recruitment and selection procedures, exceeding all of the comparator benchmarks (post-92, Scottish, UK) by up to 5.2 points.

During the past two years the university has also undergone a large scale restructure, anticipated to be complete in early 2018. The restructure is enabling the university to consider staffing levels across the board and sustain sufficient levels of research staff in line with the Refreshed Research Strategy (2016). To this end, two thematic Research Centres have been created, with a further two being launched in January 2018. The PURE research information management system remains the version of records of the University's research activity, with all current research active staff now trained in and using the system.

2.2 Principle 2: Researcher Recognition and Value

The university is now into its second year of running a Points of Pride "competition", celebrating the great work colleagues have done over the past year and the valuable contribution members of staff have made to the University and to our communities. Whilst this is not limited to researchers, it does give staff the opportunity to share in and observe the work of others outwith their own area, creating a sense of pride as well as a platform for networking. Numbers of nominations have more than doubled to 70 for this annual celebration. Each year nominations include celebration of staff researchers and their research projects that: have impact in addressing three societal challenges: *Inclusive Societies, Healthy Lives and Sustainable Environments*; help achieve the United Nations sustainable Goals; and embed research into our teaching and support for students.

GCU continues to welcome all input from its staff and engages in regular reviews and consultations of staff through its staff survey and pulse staff surveys for all staff; its biennial CROS, PIRLS and related PRES surveys for its researchers and its cascading of focus groups and action planning to School and Professional Service Departmental levels after each survey.

GCU exceeded all Post-92, Scottish and UK comparative benchmarks in CROS2017 for agreement that the University both recognises and values staff contributions: specifically relating to grant/funding applications; knowledge transfer; managing budgets; peer reviewing; publications (particularly high at 82%, exceeding all 3 benchmarks by 5-14 points); public engagement; supervising/managing staff; and teaching and lecturing.

2.3 Principle 3: Researcher Support

During the period 2015 - 2017, the Graduate School Researcher Development programme maintained delivery of about 100 workshops per annum for PGRs, research staff and supervisors. Enhanced development options were made available to experienced supervisors and mentors of supervisors with a series of 15 workshops (90 minutes to 3 hrs) delivered per annum. The CREDO framework also delivered its full suite of 20 research excellence and research leadership workshops for staff in 2015/16. The restructuring of the Professional Services in 2016 moved the responsibility for the oversight and coordination of researcher development for staff from CREDO to fully the Graduate School.

Research staff are represented on the CREDO sub group and the subsequent RCD Steering Group, and participate actively in the design and delivery of the content of the research staff development programme. A university wide exercise was undertaken to assess the past, present and future research development provision for PGRs, research staff and supervisors. The outcome of this exercise was a commitment for over 120 different workshops in the forthcoming academic year (2017/18).

Senior research staff were supported to engage in “train the trainer” events, present papers at international conferences, sharing best practice with external colleagues. GCU also found opportunities to bring UK experts to GCU by designing and delivering workshops and hosting them at GCU. Examples include organising the 2nd and 3rd Annual Scottish Researcher Development Policy Forums; designing and hosting 2 UKCGE workshops and presenting at the UKCGE International and Professional Doctorate conferences each year.

In August 2017 a research web group was set up with the specific task of refreshing the internal/external look and feel of research within GCU, ensuring easy accessibility to the range of information and opportunities available to the research community. The group has carried out an audit of existing research pages on the web site, and is currently identifying the “gaps” in the web provision and, where appropriate, rewriting the content.

2.4 Principle 4: Personal and Career Development

GCU has supported the Aurora Leadership Foundation mentoring scheme for women over the last four years, sending around 50 staff on the programme over the period. Feedback from participants and growing alumni has been very positive. Staff are continuing to be encouraged to establish cross/interdisciplinary research as a means of widening both internal and external collaborative research. Peer review processes have been set up in Schools and are active means for staff to get supportive help, advice and extensive written and verbal feedback on developing their external grant applications. The action has contributed to a high success rate across all range of funders.

PURE is one of the tools used to capture the research activity of staff and its content is used to inform line managers of the annual research activity of individuals as well as for promotional opportunities. All new employees are required to complete the essential training and make themselves aware of essential information and policies as part of the induction process. 57% of GCU respondents of CROS2017 found the induction programmes useful overall, exceeding all 3 benchmark groups by up to 8.4 points. Departmental induction programmes were considered useful by 69% of respondents, more than 25 points ahead of the 3 benchmark groups.

2.5 Principle 5: Researcher's Responsibilities

Across the university, the Staff Performance and Development Annual Review (PDAR) is seen as an integral part of agreeing and developing a research workplan, personal development, work allocation and setting targets in line with the University Research Strategy. GCU fixed term researcher participation in appraisal schemes (75% of CROS respondents) exceeded all 3 comparator benchmarks by up to 2 points. Overall agreement with the usefulness of the GCU appraisal scheme reached 71.4%, exceeding the 3 comparator benchmarks by up to 19.3 points.

The URC, widened its membership in 2017 to include staff at the beginning of their research careers, giving them insight into the workings of a research committee, with the opportunity to make a contribution to the research strategy and action planning of the university. Staff are encouraged to be part of research groups as part of widening their own portfolio, establishing a network for collaborative working and mutual support. Cross-school networks of research leaders have also been established for the purpose of sharing best practice and exchanging ideas on strategic and operational issues related to research.

GCU CROS2017 responses met or exceeded all 3 comparative benchmark groups agreeing that contract staff felt integrated into the department's research community and the departmental community more generally. Results exceeded two benchmarks for feeling integrated into GCU's university wide research community and the wider disciplinary community.

2.6. Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

In November 2017 the University was awarded Institutional Athena Swan Bronze level, which has included signing up to the expanded principles of Athena Swan and encompassing gender equality. The Advancing Gender Equality Group meets regularly with the focus on researchers (both staff and students) experience in areas such as recruitment, retention, development and engagement. Three School Self-Assessment Teams have been formed with a view to submitting departmental Athena Swan applications. The University offers an online unconscious bias training package to all staff, which is complemented by tailored sessions at the request of individual departments/teams.

Equality and Diversity is embedded in the "Effective Researcher" workshops as well as being a compulsory part of the new staff induction process whereby each new member of staff will complete the online equality and diversity module. Participation in the Aurora Foundation programme of academic leadership for women is part of the continued development opportunities open to staff. The University has a record number of women professors with 40% in 2017/18, an 8.7% increase in the last ten years. This compares to 23.9% of professors in the UK are women (from the Equality Challenge Unit's *Equality in higher education* 2017).

2.7. Principle 7: Implementation and Review

The URC is responsible for the review of implementation and progress against agreed action plans on an annual basis. CROS, PRES and PIRLS surveys were completed in the summer of 2017, with results currently being analysed and action planning expected to be completed by January 2018. Survey feedback and staff consultation continues to be used as a basis for improving researcher development provision and review of the agreed actions.

3. NEXT STEPS AND FOCUS OF FUTURE STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS, INCLUDING SUCCESS MEASURES.

The broad strategy and focus for the next 2 years is summarised below. An updated action plan has been developed (attached) that sets out where actions continue in relation to the previous two years but also identifies new areas of focus. Progress will be monitored via the RCD Steering Group and the URC.

3.1 Principle 1: Recruitment Selection and Retention of Staff

As a priority area, the university will continue to monitor and implement good practice in the recruitment and retention of staff. The URC will refresh the policies and action plans for the Code of Good Practice for Researchers, Researcher Integrity Policy and Research Data Management Policy. The university will review the PGR students' policies procedures and guidelines together with PGR students' employment policies. Research staffing levels will continue to be monitored with particular reference to recruitment and retention in the thematic Research Centres.

3.2 Principle 2: Researcher Recognition and Value

A researcher experience action plan for staff will be developed from the CROS and PIRLS 2017 results and consultation with staff focus groups. A staff survey is planned for the coming year, with results informing future action plans in this area. The Points of Pride will continue as an annual event.

3.3 Principle 3: Researcher Support

The previous CREDO framework of provision for staff has been reviewed and is currently under reconstruction, with more input from a wider staff complement. The new provision will ensure researchers have access to increased level of support, thus continuing to strengthen the university's research excellence. The new programme (Developing Academic Research Excellence) DARE to Lead is being designed with intended delivery to an invited cohort of developing research leaders selected from across the University. The programme will also serve experienced researchers taking a selection of the opportunities, leading as guest experts and in research mentoring roles.

An offering of 123 workshops covering a wide spectrum of subjects will be available in 2017/18. 25 of these are newly designed and aimed specifically at PGR and Supervision development. Research integrity and research data management policies will also be embedded in the training programme for all researchers. Continuous monitoring of the uptake and content of workshops will contribute to the future design and delivery of each subject.

3.4 Principle 4: Personal and Career Development

As part of staff development weeks (January and June 2018), the GS will run 14 workshops covering supervision and routes to doctoral qualifications. The peer review processes will be developed and embedded in all Academic Schools. The School of Health and Life Sciences will refine its peer review to include specialist panel input from wider university experts. The School of Engineering and Built Environment will roll out peer review guidance across the school. PhD students will be included giving them exposure to multidisciplinary research and differing funder requirements. Specific research induction will be added to the University, School and Departmental inductions.

3.5 Principle 5: Researcher's Responsibilities

University guidance for research workload allocation will be developed for use within the PDAR process. Researchers will be encouraged to develop personal research work plans as part of the PDAR. Researchers are responsible for maintaining and updating their PURE record in order to ensure that the university has access to the highest quality data in preparation for REF2021. Opportunities for research staff to develop networks and contribute to University research plans will be facilitated through the development of research groups, Research Centres and cross-school network groups.

3.6 Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

The University has mainstreamed its approach to diversity and equality across all of its activities and has provided resources and on-line tools to support staff. An online training course in dealing with unconscious bias is now available. Future plans also include development of campaigns covering dignity and respect. The University will await new REF guidance on equality and diversity and implement accordingly during the REF 2021 exercise.

3.7 Principle 7: Implementation and Review

The institution is committed to reviewing the implementation of its research strategy on an annual basis via the URC. The RCD Steering Group is charged with advising the URC on the content and delivery of the forward programme of researcher staff development each academic session. The RCD Steering Group will also oversee the biennial review of the HR Excellence in Research Award and coordinate 6 monthly reviews of the action plan. The university will explore different methodologies for getting staff feedback on the embedding of GCU values. The University is also committed to continued participation in CROS, PRES and PIRLS surveys and to use the survey findings to inform action plans going forward.

4. BROAD SUCCESS MEASURES

- A stronger research base indicated by increasing numbers of research active staff operating at higher levels of independently assessed research quality.
- Successful delivery of over 120 different workshops for PGR, supervisors and staff.
- Increased total uptake of researcher development opportunities and high level of quality maintained as monitored by staff feedback surveys.
- DARE to Lead researcher development programme, designed and delivered to cohorts of staff.
- All new research staff trained in the use of the PURE research information system and records maintained as a mandatory requirement.
- Successful departmental applications for Athena Swan Bronze Award in 2018
- Increased uptake in participation in CROS, PRES and PIRLS surveys.
- Improved CROS, PRES and PIRLS survey indicators in comparison to the benchmarking groups (Post 92, Scottish and UK) and previous years' results.