

Since Glasgow Caledonian University received the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) 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 six, 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 2017 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). The review and forward planning and the submission for the HREiR Award are developed by researchers, through the Graduate School leadership and under the university executive lead of the Pro Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal for Research. It is a researcher-led activity, working closely in partnership with People Services.

In particular, our Early Career Researchers ECRs are central to the review and forward planning for the HREiR Award and for our continual improvement in upholding the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Researcher Development RD Concordat). In 2018, the institution committed to making significant developments regarding the establishment of an ECR group across the university, the creation and growth of local ECR groups in Schools, Research Centres and in research-related Professional Services and the identification of specific developmental requirements of this cohort of staff regarding their researcher experience, employment and researcher development.

We reviewed a number of different research funders using different definitions of an ECR and agreed on a definition that we felt was suitable to our particular institution, which recognises the possible longer gestation periods for people to emerge from the ECR stage after PhD at a Modern University. The GCU ECR definition is: 1) anyone 5 – 10 years post-PhD (but excluding staff who may have a recent PhD but are obviously well-established in research track records); 2) staff within 5 years of appointment and currently undertaking a PhD; 3) staff within 5-10 years of a ProfDoc award with a proven record of publication.

As of Dec 2018, we identified 94 GCU ECRs. Their staff categories are: 15% Researcher 1a/1b, 17% Research Fellow, 54% Lecturer and 13% Other. Distribution by Academic School shows: 20% GSBS, 34% SHLS, 32% SCEBE, 11% Yunus Centre, 1% GCU London and 3% in other Professional Service Depts*. And time since completion of their doctorate indicates: 5% at >10 yrs, 13% between 5 – 10 yrs, 46% between 0 – 5 yrs, 15% currently registered and 21% other.

ECR governance and ECR culture and community

A governance structure, involving ECRs was set up, that is inclusive and encouraging of more-local ECR groups and which promotes the sharing of specific activities and events that might be led by one or other such groups. It has a three-way interaction between 1) University level/Graduate School 2) Developing Academic Researcher Excellence (DARE) Steering Group and 3) School/Centre-level local groups.

University-level activities are those organised centrally by the Graduate School in cross-university collaboration with the local groups and DARE. In addition, at this level, meetings of the whole ECR group are held with the PVC Research 4x year, some of which may involve an external speaker (e.g. 'meet the Executive Board member') applicable to all ECRs.

School/Centre level activities are organised by the local groups. They have autonomy to develop as they see best suits their research discipline and School/Centre cultures. At the same time, they are also encouraged to work within a GCU framework sharing best practice and collaborating across the University where appropriate. To date local groups have formed in SHLS, GSBS, SCEBE and the Yunus Centre.

As part of the HREiR plan, GCU is committed to a focussed and action-orientated group which oversees progress in all areas of the HR award. This new **DARE (Developing Academic Researcher Excellence) Steering Group** is a formal sub-committee of the University Research Committee URC. It meets regularly to review progress and ensure delivery of the action plan. Members are drawn from across the University to ensure best practice can be shared and a joined-up approach can be facilitated. Particularly, communication and collaboration between the Graduate School, DARE and the local groups is assured with membership on DARE from two ECR leaders from each local group.

The actions in our 2017-2019 plan sought to build on existing excellence in the support of emerging researchers. The newly identified University-level ECR group, the local ECR groups and the DARE steering group have played an integral part in evolving and reviewing this plan throughout 2018/19, in taking ownership of it, and in developing the forward plan for 2019 – 2021.

The current forward plan is evolving and includes elements contributed by our ECR groups that start to tackle some key research culture, employment and researcher development needs and which anticipate the focus of the new RD Concordat Sept 2019. The ECR group and researchers from across GCU contributed to Graduate School consultations on the recommendations of the UK Concordat working group Nov 2018. This enabled a GCU response fed into the UK wide discussion on the shape of the Concordat. It also provided valuable insight into the issues affecting ECRs at GCU and local action was developed into the HREiR plans to impact change.

The DARE steering group and the ECR groups are integral to the completion of a gap analysis of the new RD Concordat and the ongoing development of the forward plan towards the institution to becoming a signatory to the new concordat. With the new RD Concordat only just published Sept 2019, our HREiR Award submission therefore reflects a work in transition from the old to the new concordat principles. A preliminary summary paper on the new concordat has been submitted by the DARE group to URC Nov 2019 and the URC has given its endorsement and recommendation to the executive that the University become a signatory to the new concordat.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE ORIGINAL ACTION PLAN – 2017 to 2019

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

The Staffing Resourcing and Recruitment Policy 2017 outlines GCU's commitment to engaging staff on open-ended employment contracts as the main method of resourcing. 71% of GCU ECRs are currently lecturers and research fellows on open-ended contracts. Best practice on recruitment and selection is shared and embedded across GCU through training of People Managers and guidance updated on the new staff intranet.

Recruitment and employment contracts for PgR students employed by the University have been improved for transparency and equity with all employees on casual hours contracts. These now include formal contract, equity and transparency of pay grades, recognition and payment for teaching contact and preparation working hours and inclusion of pro-rata annual leave entitlement.

Researcher recognition and value of ECRs by the university has been raised significantly in 2018/19 by the identification of the university ECR group and leading of meetings 4 x per year with the PVC Research; the development and support for the local ECR groups and the creation of the DARE steering group. With its pre-dominantly ECR membership, the DARE group has been given responsibility to evolve and review the HREiR Award action plan and to have oversight of the development of the DARE to Lead researcher development programme for ECRs.

GCU exceeded all Post-92, Scottish and UK comparative benchmarks in CROS2017 for agreement that the University both recognises and values staff contributions at 53% average on 9 areas. Recognition of the value of contributions to publications at 82% was particularly high, exceeding benchmarks by 5 to 14 points.

The Graduate School has continued to increase the number of researcher development opportunities for PgR, staff and supervisors with 137 offered in 2018/19, up from 116 in 2017/18. The average recommend rate for these workshops has continued to increase and is consistently of the highest values 99% in 2018/19, up from 97% in 2017/18.

The total number of PgR and staff attendees has continued to increase with 1367 attending, 375 of whom were staff, in 2018/19 compared to 1334 attending in 2017/18, 293 of whom were staff.

New ECR staff are now identified upon arrival to GCU, welcomed to the University ECR group and their local ECR groups and invited to engage with the local and Graduate School RD programmes. 57% in 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.

A refreshed push for all staff to undertake the PDAR Performance and Development Annual Review process occurred in 2018/19. Managers of researchers and academics as PDAR reviewers are given guidance and are expected to include discussion of research work plans, expected research outcomes, and to distinguish whether staff have work commitments at (Sig Res) Significant Research levels or as for scholarly activity. 75% of CROS2017 respondents participated in the PDAR. 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 University was awarded Institutional Athena Swan Bronze level in Nov 2017. 3 E&D case studies were accepted to the Advanced HE for PgR best practice by the Graduate School in 2018/19. The university delivered further development on E&D issues related to disability, Gender based violence, mental health, intercultural competence and race equality. GCU designed and delivered in house the PgRES a new survey for PGRs in 2019.

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. This plan will continue to evolve and be focused on the new Concordat, as a gap analysis is completed and actions are developed to fill the gaps and strengthen our researcher support. Progress will be monitored via the DARE Steering Group and the URC.

Staff researchers' and managers of researchers' experience of recruitment and selection will be reviewed via the new CROS/PIRLS survey 2020 and as per the new RD concordat Principles on **Employment**. Measures indicating levels of job security such as redeployment, open-ended contracts will be identified, benchmarked and reviewed. Researcher satisfaction with the employment conditions will be benchmarked in CROS/PIRLS 2020, with areas for enhancement identified and actions planned and implemented.

The DARE to Lead **RD programme** for ECRs will be designed and delivered in a combination of GS central workshops and events with local ECR group activities. An ECR hub site will be developed for communication of RD events cross university for ECR group, GS and local ECR groups. A new PDP will be developed and implemented for research staff.

The university will benchmark and increase the engagement with PDARs and view according to the different categories of staff researchers and managers of researchers. Opportunities for research staff to develop networks and contribute to University research plans will be facilitated, growing GCU's **research culture and environment**. GCU will run the new CROS/PIRLS survey based on the new RD concordat in 2020. The Graduate School staff continue to take a lead role in developing surveys as a member of the UK Vitae CROS/PIRLS advisory group and in hosting the UKCGE Scottish Forum on Researcher Surveys: How we capture the experiences of researchers Dec 2019.

Success measures include:

- A stronger research base indicated by increasing numbers of research active staff operating at higher levels of independently assessed research quality. I.e. increased numbers of Sig Res staff and improved REF results.
- Successful delivery of over 150 different workshops for PGR, supervisors and staff, with continued increase in uptake and the highest satisfaction rates of 99%.
- DARE to Lead **researcher development** programme, researcher-led designed and delivered to cohorts of staff.
- A strengthened **research culture and environment** through collaborations on events and development opportunities cross university between Graduate School and ECR local groups and GS researcher networks.
- Increased uptake in participation in GCU PgRES, CROS/PIRLS surveys.

- Continued improved GCU PgRES and CROS/PIRLS survey indicators in comparison to the benchmarking groups (Post 92, Scottish and UK) and previous years' results.