

**GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY**  
**HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD: TWO YEAR INTERNAL REVIEW REPORT (2013-2015)**

Glasgow Caledonian University received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in November 2013. A two year internal review of our progress in achieving the actions set out in our submission plan at that time is presented 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 by the CREDO research staff development group which oversees staff pan-institutional researcher development provision and the University Research Committee. Each of these groups has research staff representation specifically embedded in their structures. This review has been informed by the development of a new University Research strategy; the outcomes of the REF2014 exercise; the institutional staff survey, feedback from 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**

The University has published its employment policies agreed by Court including those on recruitment and selection on the external website to inform staff interested in joining the institution. In addition, the University has established a dedicated internal portal that provides help and resources as well as regularly updated information for members of staff on matters relating to institutional policy, procedures and guidance. The People Services section of the staff portal has been updated to provide staff with information related to the recruitment process, job opportunities, temporary staff appointments, casual hours, and preparing for the arrival of a new member of staff. GCU is committed to the Concordat for Researchers. Additional resources now provided to staff include a guide on Career Planning, a Development library, the Academic promotions process and a section on the People Passport for managers and leaders. Equality and Diversity processes are mainstreamed in our selection procedures and it is a contractual requirement that academic staff should be research active. Senate has approved the creation of thematic centres to support the recruitment of research leaders and the development of critical mass in our chosen areas of research strength, evidenced by the REF2014 outcome. The University has also revised its research strategy and has set targets to significantly increase research quality, research income. and the number of PhD students by 2020. This will require investment in attracting new staff to the University, developing the skills of existing staff and in enhancing research supervision capacity. The University Research strategy implementation plan contains a commitment to annual review of research staffing levels and to monitor progress against objectives to increase associated research volume and quality. The PURE research information system is now established as the version of record of the University's research activity and the number research active staff using PURE over the last two years has almost doubled.

**2.2 Principle 2: Researcher Recognition and Value**

Communicating with our staff is vitally important to understanding their needs. GCU welcomes all input from its staff and engages in a regular series of reviews and consultations to ensure that we continue to work to the highest standards. In addition to regular communications via all available internal channels, a consultative committee mechanism allows staff to have a constructive and positive dialogue with institutional management in which matters relating to the research environment can be raised. A pilot "Thank you" recognition scheme was conducted to acknowledge exceptional contributions by staff and the means of consolidation into on-going practice is currently under review. The Staff Survey last conducted in 2014 provided an opportunity for staff to provide feedback on the working experience at the University and to indicate their personal satisfaction. The survey was conducted anonymously by a third party to encourage free expression of views, and aggregated outcomes were communicated to all staff and provided as a resource on the internal portal. Action plans for Schools and Departments were developed based on the responses received and published in the staff portal.

**2.3 Principle 3: Researcher Support**

The University Research Committee via its sub group has created the Caledonian Research Excellence Development Opportunities (CREDO) framework as an overarching statement of staff development provision to support staff across the full range of research activity (contract researchers, early career researchers, principal investigators, senior researchers and research leaders). University external webpages concerning researcher development have been updated and linked to material resources and guidance to researchers available in the internal staff portal Research Hub and Graduate School areas. Key features of this framework development include the creation and delivery of a suite of 20 research excellence workshops, the initiation of a research leadership workshop series using an external facilitator and internal research clinics to discuss individual issues or challenges and specific provision for research administrator development. Research staff are represented on the CREDO sub Group, the University Research Committee and participate actively in the delivery of content. Feedback on the delivery has been systematically gathered and approval ratings on content are consistently rated 'good' or 'very good' by those attending. Our developments in this area

continue to be informed by involvement in sector initiatives in researcher support, for example, by leading and contributing to the UK Vitae CROS and PIRLS Advisory Group, the Universities Scotland Research Training Sub Committee planning and delivery and in the creation of the Universities Scotland Scottish Researcher Development Policy Forum.

#### **2.4 Principle 4: Personal and Career Development**

The University has committed via the implementation plan associated with its updated research strategy to achieving world leading status in its chosen areas of research strength. Staff are being encouraged to engage in greater interdisciplinary activity via the development of internal and external collaborations. In order to assess progress in this endeavour and provide feedback to staff on how staff can review their own personal progress a process of peer review has been agreed and is in the process of being implemented by Schools. Feedback to staff is provided on an annual basis via the institutional personal review process based on the PURE research system content for individuals. A GCU mentoring scheme for research staff was implemented in AY2013-14. The University is also active in the Aurora Leadership Foundation mentoring scheme for women. People services also provide career guidance and development resources to staff via the internal staff portal. As part of the new CREDO framework, a researcher-specific induction programme for new staff has been developed and will be delivered for the first time in AY2015-16.

#### **2.5 Principle 5: Researcher's Responsibilities**

Staff received feedback on their personal research activity submission recommendations/ contributions in the context of unit of assessment and research group strategy as part of the REF2014 process. Subsequently in AY2014-15, the University introduced a new workload allocation model for staff that gives specific time allocations to individuals for research activity. The workload model was the subject of consultation and communication between People Services, School and Departmental Managers and Staff. Staff are responsible for ensuring that their research activity is recorded in PURE, the University's research information system, which is considered the version of record for research management purposes. Their research progress is formally reviewed via the annual performance and development review for staff and plans created on the basis of activity they reported as part of that process.

#### **2.6. Principle 6: Diversity and Equality**

The University is fully committed to mainstreaming a consistent institutional approach to equality and diversity throughout all of its activities, policies and procedures. A code of practice was developed for REF2014 which was approved by the Scottish Funding Council, published, communicated to staff and implemented during REF submission planning. An online training facility was provided for all staff involved in the selection of staff for the REF2014 submission and an appeals process was instituted to ensure fair treatment for protected groups. A satisfactory institutional equality and diversity report was received as a result of feedback from the REF2014 exercise. Equality and diversity content has also been embedded in the institutional training provided by the Graduate School for research supervisors in relation to the selection of research student applicants. Schools and Departments have established equality and diversity action plans as an institutional requirement. The University has created a Women-in-STEMM group in AY2014-15 and has for three years participated in the Aurora Foundation programme of academic leadership for women. An application for the Athena Swan Bronze level award is in the final stage of preparation. The University has also participated in the Aurora Leadership programme over the last 3 years.

#### **2.7. Principle 7: Implementation and Review**

The University Senate Research Committee is responsible for the review of implementation and progress against agreed action plans on an annual basis. The institution has continued to participate in CROS, PRES and PIRLS and uses the feedback provided to seek to improve 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 original plan but also identifies new areas of focus. Progress will be monitored via the CREDO group and the University Research Committee.

#### **3.1 Principle 1 Recruitment Selection and Retention of Staff**

The recruitment and retention of staff is critical to the development of a strengthened research at the institution. Research staffing levels will continue to be monitored on an annual basis as part of our Research strategy implementation with particular reference to recruitment and retention in our key thematic Centres. Our PURE research system will be used to monitor specific staff groupings in order to identify research capacity related issues. People services will ensure that recruitment and selection processes are appropriate to the institutional strategy and that career development resources for staff are available and updated.

#### **3.2 Principle 2: Researcher Recognition and Value**

The University has a well-developed and independent system in place for monitoring staff experience and opinion. Management action plans are in place at all appropriate levels of the organisation to address specific local needs as well as institution level feedback. It is anticipated that this will have a positive effect on how staff perceive recognition of their contributions in the next survey in comparison with the relevant 2014 survey indicator percentages.

### **3.3 Principle 3: Researcher Support**

Research is a key criterion for promotion. Consequently the University has established the CREDO framework intended to address staff development needs at all levels, in line with strengthening research excellence (a key objective of the research strategy) and contributing to a stronger institutional culture of collaboration. This process is now directly linked to staff annual performance and review and activity planning for research. The accompanying action plan sets out the details of the specific intervention types to be prioritised in the coming two years. These developments which are researcher led are specifically designed to support the implementation of the research strategy and progress will be monitored in terms of levels of engagement with key groups and in the quality of feedback related to delivery in that context.

### **3.4 Principle 4: Personal and Career Development**

The well-established annual review process for staff has now been augmented by a new workload model that provides staff with dedicated research time allocations. Annual academic feedback is provided on an individual about their research achievements and recognition of the contribution made. However, the institution has also made progress on internal peer review of research funding applications and research outputs that help to inform personal development, activity direction and career choices. In addition, the University will run central research clinics to allow informal discussion of these matters on a confidential basis. People services have plans in place for the delivery of an annual personal development training week from January 2016 that staff will be able to attend free of other duties and there will be a significant research component to that delivery.

### **3.5 Principle 5: Researcher's Responsibilities**

As part of the University 2020 strategy, a set of institutional values has been developed that will be rolled out from 2016. This process delineates clear institutional requirements on responsible behaviours expected of all staff. Researchers now have a responsibility to agree research activities in line with the School workload model. Progress will be monitored and feedback provided annually and it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that PURE records are accurate and up to date for this purpose.

### **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. A training course in dealing with unconscious bias has been developed and will be rolled out over the next year. In terms of research, the next REF exercise is about to be confirmed and the institution has already committed to a review of its code of practice for the selection of staff and equality impact assessment following the recommendations of the REF2014 EDAP report. Requirements will be communicated to staff as soon as the nature of the next REF exercise is clear. However, the University has also recognised the strategic need to achieve Athena Swan accreditation to support career development for Women in STEMM subjects and in particular in relation to research. Action plans have been put in place to address issues in relation to identified imbalance in male /female population ratios between different Schools which are less significant at institutional level. Equality and Diversity Champions have been appointed at departmental level charged with leading change and delivering local action plans. An Athena Swann application is currently in preparation and the outcome will be known in 2016.

### **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 University Research Committee of Senate. The CREDO sub group oversees the action plans in relation to researcher development on a biannual basis and reports thereafter to the Research Committee. Operationally individuals and groups specified in the action plans are responsible for delivery and recommending changes based on experience and feedback. The University is also committed to continued participation in CROS, PRES and PIRLS surveys and to use 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
- An improvement in institutional staff survey indicators in relation to staff recognition and valuing of contribution compared with 2014 benchmark
- An increase in the total uptake of researcher development opportunities provided via the CREDO Framework and monitoring of staff feedback to ensure that delivery is maintained at a high level of quality
- An annual training and development week for staff run
- All research staff trained in the use of the PURE research information system and records maintained as a mandatory requirement.
- A successful application for Athena Swan Bronze Award in 2016.
- An increase in uptake in participation in CROS, PRES and PIRLS surveys