

Supporting Statement

How the 2 year internal evaluation was undertaken

As actioned in our 2012 original 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan', the HR Excellence in Research Award has become a standing item on the agenda of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). The membership of RKEC may be found at <https://www2.brookes.ac.uk/committees/unicommittees/rkctc/membership>. It is Chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Knowledge Exchange and includes representatives of Senior Management – for example, the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee and the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee. Importantly, it also includes significant representation by researchers, including the Associate Deans for Research & Knowledge Exchange for each Faculty, Research Leads and Research Managers from each Faculty, two student representatives appointed by the Research Students' Committee, and a member appointed by, and from, the University's Contract Research Staff. It also includes the Representative for Knowledge Exchange from the Research and Business Development Office (RBDO), which provides support for researchers in all aspects of research funding and knowledge transfer, and the Research Support Manager from RBDO. Members of the Committee are responsible for 'feeding down' information from the Committee to researchers in their care. Thus, the 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan' has been regularly reviewed since we were granted the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2012 and the views of researchers have been taken into account at every stage, including the current 2 year review process.

RKEC agreed the formation of a Working Group to oversee the 2 year review process. The composition of the Group was as follows:

- The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Knowledge Exchange, Professor Alistair Fitt
- HR Business Partnership Manager, Ms. Elaine Dagnall
- The Associate Dean Research and Knowledge Transfer, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Professor Linda King (representing Research Leads from the Faculties)
- Human Resources Manager, Mrs Claire Morris
- Research Support Manager, Research and Business Development Office, Mrs Sarah Taylor
- University Research Training Co-ordinator, Dr Susan Brooks

Three members of the Working Group, Alistair Fitt, Susan Brooks and Linda King are themselves also active researchers. We plan to include additional research staff in our Working Group for the 4 year review.

The Working Group thoroughly reviewed and revised our 2012 original 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan'. All aspects were carefully mapped against University policies, procedures and documents, and the results of the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) were reviewed against it. Special attention was paid to the 2012 'Action Plan', and a 'Revised Action Plan' was developed which documents where planned Actions have successfully been completed, and where Actions remain outstanding, and why. There was careful consideration of inclusion of entirely new Action points for the next 2 year period emerging from developments and changes that have happened in the University since 2012. The review process proved to be extremely informative and readily highlighted areas that should be further developed and / or reviewed and these were incorporated into the 'Revised Gap Analysis and Action Plan'. The 'Revised Gap Analysis and Action Plan' were presented to and RKEC and, after RKEC members had had the opportunity to consult with other researchers within Faculties, it was approved at the meeting on 25th February 2014.

Bob Price, Director of HR, who was part of the original working party that undertook the 2012 original 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan' retired at the end of 2013. Thus, the 2 year review process was undertaken at a time of transition when the new Director of HR, Alison Cross, was not yet in post. However, we are now benefitting from her views, expertise, experience and support. Under her leadership, the HR Directorate, in particular the HR and Equal Opportunities and Diversity Team, has a key role in advancing equality, diversity and inclusion within the University. Alison has taken a personal interest in the EDI work and has already initiated reviews of our recruitment and selection procedures and EDI training. Our EDI work is set out in our Equality Objectives and is monitored through the EDI Advisory Group chaired by the Vice Chancellor.

Key achievements and progress since 2012

The 2012 original 'Gap Analysis' proved to be an extremely helpful and illuminating process and was considered to be especially timely in view of the University restructuring, launched from the beginning of the 2011-12 academic year. While it demonstrated that the University was compliant with the Concordat, it highlighted areas where improvement or review would be beneficial. These are detailed point by point in the 2012 original 'Action Plan' and in the 'Revised Gap Analysis and Action Plan', but key elements are summarised below with a statement of progress, indicators and actions.

1.3, 2.1, 2.2 & 4.10 The University's Code of Practice for Career Management and Development of Researchers had been last revised in 2004 and we identified that it should be reviewed and updated by the end of 2012. This has been done and the document can be found at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/Documents/Research/Policies-and-codes-of-practice/carman/>

2.3, 2.6, 3.1, 5.4 & 7.1 While guidance and training for Research Managers in guiding, supervising, performance management and careers advice for researchers under their care was available, it was identified that there was a need for clearer policy and procedures. It was actioned that such a document would be developed and, initially, piloted within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences during academic year 2012-13 before being 'rolled out' the rest of the University from the second half of 2012-13 onwards. The document has successfully been developed and is currently being piloted within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences a little later than originally planned. It will be 'rolled out' to the rest of the University from beginning of 2015 onwards, once review of the piloting phase through focus group feedback is completed.

3.2, 3.4 & 3.5 While careers advice and guidance for researchers was provided, it was identified that it could be strengthened and steps could be taken to raise awareness of its availability. We actioned that careers advice provision for researchers specifically would be reviewed and enhanced. After careful review and discussion (involving members of the Careers Service, the Graduate College and the Research and Business Development Office), an enhanced programme of careers events focussed on researchers was offered in 2013-14. Rather than Faculty-specific careers events, which were originally envisioned, a University-wide approach was taken. Examples of provision included: a 'researcher careers pathways' event in January 2014 featuring alumni and local employers and Saturday researcher careers days. Clearer 'signposting' of researcher careers provision on University webpages, for example the Graduate College webpages, directs researchers to careers provision. We will continue to assess the success of these initiatives by reviewing attendance at careers events by researchers and collecting feedback from them.

2.3, 3.3, 3.6 & 4.11 While a structured Induction for researchers was provided, it was identified that there was a need to review and revise it in view of the University restructuring. This was done in addition to a broader review of the 'your first three years' programme for newly appointed research staff <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/research/research-support/training-events/research-methods-and-management-training-for-research-staff/>, of which it is a part. As part of the review process, it was determined that not all newly appointed research active staff were being identified by HR and invited to take part in the 'your first three years' programme. A new 'action point' is to review mechanisms by which newly appointed research active staff are identified. Success will be measured by improved take up of 'your first three years' programme in 2014-15 academic year and reviewed in July 2015.

3.8, 4.14, 5.4 & 7.1 While a mentoring scheme did exist within the University, it was found to be little used by research staff. It was actioned that a mentoring scheme specifically for research staff would be developed. This has been achieved, has proved to be popular with approximately 30 mentor-mentee matches in its first year. Details of the scheme can be found at <https://www2.brookes.ac.uk/research-support/mentoring>. The scheme is now entering its second year with, again, excellent take-up from research staff at all levels. The scheme to be reviewed annually every April through participant feedback.

6.4 & 6.10 The University has been a member of the Athena SWAN Charter since 2009 and we actioned that the application process for University 'bronze' status would be taken forward. University 'bronze' status was achieved and re-application for the award is actioned for 2016. A new action point is to apply for Departmental 'silver' in Health and Life Sciences in November 2014 and Departmental 'bronze' for Technology, Design and Environment in March 2014.

7.1 & 7.2 It was actioned that Compliance with the Concordat and implementation / progress with this Action Plan would become a standing item in University RKEC agendas and would be formally reviewed annually at the February meeting. This has happened as planned, and will continue.

Strategy for the next two years

Oxford Brookes University's strategy for the next 2 years, with regards to the HR Excellence in Research Award, is firstly to ensure ongoing awareness of, and compliance with, the Concordat by reviewing the 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan' formally through its consideration at University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee meetings where it will be a standing item on the agenda and will be formally reviewed annually at the February meeting. As detailed above (in part 1), this will ensure input from researchers throughout the University and also links with other internal and external implementation/monitoring mechanisms. The original 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan' was drawn up during a time of restructuring and change within the University and we view the next 2 years as a critical time for establishing and 'bedding in' new and revised procedures and policies. Success will be measured by successful retention of the Award in 2 years' time.

Secondly, in parallel with our working towards retaining the HR Excellence in Research Award, the University will continue to strengthen its commitment to equality and diversity through not only robust internal procedures, policies and initiatives (as detailed in the 'Gap Analysis and Action Plan') but through application for Athena SWAN awards. The application process for Departmental 'silver' Athena SWAN award for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences and Departmental 'bronze for Technology, Design and Environment' will be undertaken during 2014. The application process to retain University bronze award in 2016 will be undertaken. Success will be measured by the University achieving these awards.

Thirdly, career development of researchers will be a priority. Over the past 2 years, awareness of careers events for researchers has been enhanced by clearer 'signposting' on the University webpages, for example, the Graduate College 'training events' pages, and the success of these initiatives will be measured by attendance at careers events during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years. There will be greater support for Research Managers with a newly developed document defining their responsibilities in guiding, supervising, performance management and careers advice for researchers under their care. This document is currently being piloted and reviewed through focus group feedback (review and revision to be completed by December 2014) within one of the four Faculties (Health and Life Sciences) before being 'rolled out' to the rest of the University at the beginning of 2015. More robust mechanisms for identifying newly appointed research staff and directing them to career support – including the 'your first three years' programme – will be identified by HR and the success of such mechanisms will be measured by greater up-take of this programme during the 2014-15 academic year and reviewed again in July 2015. The new research staff mentoring scheme, launched in April 2013 and now in its second year, will continue and its effectiveness will be reviewed annually every April through researcher up-take and participant feedback.