



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



HR Excellence in Research Award External review report

This report is provided as a result of the external review of the institutions which hold the HR Excellence in Research Award, 8 years after gaining the Award. An international peer reviewer team, containing two UK and one international peer reviewers, undertook the review, and this report is the output of that assessment.

This report was then reviewed by at least two members of the UK HR Excellence in Research Award Panel, who reviewed the recommendations of the peer review team in relation to your institution and reviewed consistency of judgements across the peer reviewer teams.

Principles of review

The Peer reviewers were seeking to be convinced that there is sufficient evidence that:

- there are robust mechanisms in place within the institution to regularly and thoughtfully review and reflect on progress and define appropriate strategy and actions
- the institution is making genuine progress against its strategy and where possible that the impact is evident within the researcher community

Institution	University of Oxford
Date of review	1 May 2020
Peer reviewer team:	
Peer reviewer name	Peer reviewer job title and institution
Ms Sarah Priston	Head of Research Support, Bath Spa University
Dr Dawn Duke	Head of Head of Researcher Development Programme and Director of Graduate Training, University of Surrey
Dr Katharine M. Reibig	Research Development Manager (Faculty & Researcher), University of Stirling
Institutional representatives:	
Name of representative	Job title
Professor David Gavaghan	University Advocate for Research Staff
Dr Anjali Shah	Researcher Developer, People and Organisational Development
Dr Dexter Canoy	an early career researcher within the Medical Sciences division
Dr Justin Hutchence	Acting Chair of the Research Staff Working Group and Researcher Training and Development Manager

Is the evidence provided?	
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	Y/N	Evidence found in documentation, including highlights	Evidence provided during the call with institutions being reviewed
Shows how internal evaluation was undertaken	Y	<p>This is clearly described in the report document.</p> <p>The People and Organisational Development (POD) Unit led the evaluation and consulted colleagues across departments, as well as Oxford Research Staff Society (OxRSS), the University Careers Service, the Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU), Personnel Services, Research Services.</p> <p>This included their newly appointed 'Advocate' (=champion) for research staff, and involvement by the Oxford Research Staff Society. The University's research staff working group agreed the evaluation plan, and a sub-group was created to lead on the process re. award retention.</p>	<p>The reviewers clarified with the University that the target audience for the Concordat was the whole of their research staff community, with the exception of Professors, who have their own routes for communication in the University structure.</p> <p>The evaluation processes commenced 18 months prior to submission, and a sub-group of research staff was created to develop the documentation 6 months after this.</p> <p>OxRSS has been fully involved in the process as have representatives across all academic divisions.</p> <p>The new University Advocate has been put in place to ensure that there is continuity and equality of process and procedures across the university, and to provide researchers with a single point of contact to feed their views into the management of the University.</p>
Shows how researchers' views were taken into account during the review	Y	<p>There is good description of consultation with different researcher groups, i.e. research staff association and research staff working group.</p> <p>This is stated in the report as being via the Oxford Research staff society, and also the Research Staff Working Group. Use was also made of the 2018 staff experience survey (which ran across all departments).</p>	<p>The need for a University Advocate was driven by the researcher community, and over the last year there has been a reorganisation of the committee structure to ensure that researchers views and that research staff representatives are incorporated into all levels of the University community, including Council.</p> <p>Representation across academic divisions has increased over the last year, and the research staff members on the review call were able to confirm that their views are sought</p>



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			<p>and listened to, and that there has been a great deal of progress made in this area.</p> <p>A new system of providing bursaries for research representatives has ensured that the researcher community is engaged in the process more effectively, and that this role is recognised and rewarded.</p>
Indicates how review links with existing QA and other implementation mechanisms (this is not a requirement to retain the award)	N	<p>Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter are both mentioned, but not how these interlink with the concordat activities.</p> <p>The newly appointed 'Advocate' reports to the PVC (Research) and university's main research committee.</p> <p>Other EDI initiatives are discussed, but it is less clear how they interconnect.</p>	<p>The Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU) were involved in the evaluation process, and there are a number of researcher representatives on EDU committees and groups.</p> <p>There does not seem to be any mechanism as the current time for there to be a joined up approach of the HR Excellence Award to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity or to support the Athena Swan process.</p>
Provides details of key achievements	Y	Key achievements are detailed in the report, and also in the action plan documentation.	Key achievements over the period have focussed on developing the researcher voice and ensuring that this is embedded across the University community. This has had a positive impact on researchers and has had an exponential change on the culture of the University.
Shows progress against the original strategy outlined in the original action plan and 2 year review, including indicators and metrics where appropriate (i.e. to what extent is the strategy set out implemented?)	Y	<p>The action plan is confusing. It is hard to understand exactly what is happening because they have combined the principles together.</p> <p>A report is given on progress against the previous action plan but the documentation could have made this easier to follow for the reviewing panel.</p>	The bi-annual staff survey has been used to evaluate success against the action plan and there has been positive progress made against most principles. In particular, there has been a 10% increase in awareness of OxRSS and its work, which has enabled the university to reach their research staff community more effectively.



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			<p>Substantial progress has been made in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Induction processes, following feedback from researchers -Career Development Reviews - a process has been put in place to ensure that all research staff have a CDR within 6 months of appointment to focus on the next stage of their career -Development of the Research hub and resource library for researchers to access more easily -Fellowships to recognise the contribution of researchers and to develop leadership skills -Better representation in key groups across the university such as the housing and childcare and wellbeing groups
Identifies progress against all Concordat principles	Y	This is not clear, and could be improved. All achievements in the report document appear to relate to every Concordat principle. This could be improved. There are some very positive achievements noted.	<p>As set out above there are key achievements and progress against all elements of the Concordat.</p> <p>The review of Open Ended contracts has taken place but no new actions have been identified due to the difficulties of HR legislation in this area. The focus is therefore now on redeployment and other opportunities being made available to staff coming to the end of Open Ended contracts, and these are addressed as part of the Career Development Review process.</p>
New action plan provides clear actions, specific accountability, specific deadlines	Y	Action plan sets out a very extensive list of activities. The structure for this is slightly confusing, in that it attempts to blend the old and new concordat,	A research staff hub is in the process of being made available for the use of all researchers to strengthen the researcher community and bring



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<p>covering the next, at least, 2 year period.</p>		<p>but without referencing the sections of the new concordat, and not all actions actually appear to 'fit' the new concordat point which they are aligned to in this document.</p> <p>It is not clear which are new actions, or which actions were already in place and are being built on the strengthen the research community.</p>	<p>research staff from all academic divisions together in one space.</p> <p>There are a number of new evaluation strategies which will be put in place to evaluate success, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -feedback on training and development programmes -longitudinal studies on the impact of new and refreshed initiatives such as fellowships, induction, CDR and mentoring on the researcher community -focus groups of different research staff communities <p>The 10 days for research staff development have been agreed across all academic divisions and Colleges in line with the new Concordat requirements</p>
<p>Report outlines focus of strategy for next four years, inc. success measures</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Next steps are included in the report.</p> <p>Success measures are not clearly defined in the report.</p>	<p>The evaluation strategies mentioned above should be used to inform SMART success measures over the next two years, and incorporated into the Action Plan for the new Concordat.</p>

<p>The following were supplied</p>			
<p>Context (institutional profile - confidential)</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>This was not provided and would have been helpful to inform the review</p>	<p>Context information was discussed as part of the review call. Given the complex nature of the University structure, this would have been helpful to have had in advance. Also, an explanation of Oxford specific terminology used such as term dates would have been useful.</p>
<p>Original action plan online</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/hr-excellence-in-research</p>	
<p>Two year action plan online</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/hr-excellence-in-research</p>	



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Two year report online	Y	https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/hr-excellence-in-research	
Four year report online	Y	https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/hr-excellence-in-research	
New Four year action plan (covering at least 2 years) online	Y	https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/hr-excellence-in-research	
Case study supplied (optional, not required for review – requested to share practice)	N	An appendix was supplied giving examples of difference initiatives that have been put in place across Academic Divisions.	

The peer reviewer team concludes that:	Y/N	Comments (to be completed)
The evidence provided meets the requirements of the four year process	Y	Despite the difficulty in navigating the paperwork and mapping it against Concordat principles, the reviewers felt that the University has made significant progress, particularly in the area of researcher representation and value.
The evidence provided meets the requirements, but you would like to see the following changes made within 3 months (by X date)	N	
The evidence provided will meet the requirements ONLY if the following changes are made	N	
The evidence provided does not meet the requirements and extensive changes are required. You recommend putting on hold until these are addressed	N	
Peer reviewer summary, comments and recommendations		<p>This was an interesting review call and it was clear from the contributions of the researchers in particular that significant progress has been made and that there is a change in attitude and pace across the University of Oxford on how their researcher community is recognised and valued. The appointment of the Advocate has been key to the success of these changes.</p> <p>Given the key role that the University of Oxford plays in the leadership of the HE community, it was disappointing that the paperwork did not reflect the progress that has been made, and the positive initiatives that have been put in place for the future.</p>



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	<p>We would strongly suggest the UK panels requires them to map their actions against the Concordat moving forward. The format they are using makes reviewing their paperwork incredibly challenging for reviewers, and also does not reflect a true commitment to ensuring actions are driven by the Concordat Principles. If we do not encourage them to make these changes now, it is likely they will continue to do this as they transition into using the new Concordat.</p>
<p>The UK panel concludes that:</p>	<p>The UK HR Excellence in Research Panel have subsequently reviewed this external review report along with your institutional eight year report and can confirm that there is evidence that the review process has been followed correctly. The UK panel agree with the peer reviewer team that your institution has met the criteria for retaining the Award, however the UK panel has also confirmed that they would like you map your actions to the Concordat for future submissions.</p> <p>The members of the UK Panel that reviewed your submission and this report were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Phillippe Martin, Policy Officer, European Commission • Dr Rob Daley, Director of Researcher Development, Heriot Watt University • Dr Andy Dixon, Deputy Director (Research and Innovation, Environment and Strategy), Research and Innovation Services, University of Portsmouth • Mrs Sue Midha, Director of Human Resources, Cardiff University and Chair of UHR Wales • Dr Louise Stephen, member of the UK Research Staff Association