

HR Excellence in Research Award September 2018

Progress Report - 8 Year Evaluation and Review

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Overview

The University of Edinburgh received the HR Excellence in Research Award in September 2010, one of eight Universities in the first tranche. We have retained the award through three reviews – a two year internal review in 2012 and then again in 2016, and a four year external review in 2014. This document, and the associated action plan, outline our eight-year external review process and progress to date in supporting and implementing the principles detailed in the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

How was the eight-year external review undertaken?

Internal evaluation of progress against our action plan is now embedded within core practices. Overall responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating progress sits with Nicola Cuthbert, Researcher Development Manager and Sara Shinton, Head of Researcher Development at the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), working closely and collaboratively with HR, Careers, Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and relevant Schools/Colleges and Support Groups. For the eight-year review, we have reviewed and evidenced progress against our 2016 action plan, and worked with University support groups to develop our two-year action plan for 2018-2020. In consulting with colleagues in HR and EDI, the actions in the HR Excellence in Research Award have been considered alongside other University initiatives (e.g. Athena Swan) and over the last two years, we have reviewed the plan as follows:

- An internal evaluation of progress against the 2016 action plan was undertaken, consulting with relevant colleagues responsible for actions and areas of work detailed in the plan. In addition, IAD reviewed the visibility of support and opportunities for research staff at the University, comparing with other similar UK institutions. Findings have been reported to the Researcher Experience Committee (REC) and plans are in place to improve support in this area.
- Our work with researchers is an ongoing process. We support and collaborate with Postdoc Champions and Research Staff Societies (RSS) regularly. For the purpose of this review, researchers' views were taken into account through engagement with the 2017 CROS and PIRLS surveys, through networking events and direct emails with RSS, Postdoc Champions and through our [IAD4Researcher](#) blog.
- A draft of the internal evaluation and action plan was submitted to REC for review and comment. The draft was also submitted to the University Research Policy Group (RPG), which is responsible for overseeing, directing and monitoring research strategy, policy and integrity matters.

The University is currently going through a large-scale review. [The Service Excellence Programme](#) (SEP) is a review of the key professional service functions and the building of effective and efficient services at the University. Part of SEP is a review of sub-programmes, one being the [Human Resources Transformation programme](#), which will only move into implementation phase in AY19/20. This will allow much more efficient data analysis, streamlined reporting and input, and the overhaul of policies, processes and systems. As a result of these reviews, setting success measures and reporting on specific data, for the purpose of this action plan and report, has been a challenge but we have aimed to provide information where we can, and have created success measures that we are confident we can report on in the future.

Key achievements and progress against the 2016 action plan

Full details of progress against the four-year review actions are provided in the updated action plan document. A summary of highlights from the last two years is provided here:

Key achievements and progress against Principles 1&2: Recruitment, Selection, Recognition and Value

- Our [Code of Practice for the Management and Career Development of Research staff](#) was comprehensively reviewed in 2016 to improve its accessibility and relevance. It has been disseminated widely to all relevant stakeholders and included in ongoing promotional activities and events. Awareness of the Code of Practice online document is highest amongst PIs and we plan to build on this to support research staff engagement.
- The number of researchers who have participated in appraisals at the University in the last two years has remained consistent (76% in 2017, compared to 75% in 2015, *CROS Survey 2017*), with 64% finding their appraisal 'very useful/useful' (62% 2015, *CROS Survey 2017*). The aim to improve completion rates is supported in the University with more information being made available online (open access), making it easier for these to be managed locally. There has also been a focus on indicators of a quality review. In addition to this, the central HR L&D team have created new webpages for academic staff that support them in preparing for their annual review (<https://edin.ac/2rxV2ze>). Annual Review will be evaluated as part of the [HR Transformation Programme](#).

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- A new Public Engagement Strategy for Supporting Public Engagement with Research has been created with a team in place to support the implementation of the strategy, along with new dedicated webpages. <https://edin.ac/2MHecLz>

Key achievements and progress against Principles 3&4: Career Development

- Support for coaching has increased in 2018 with two IAD staff becoming Acorn Accredited Coaches and new working partnerships with other University coaching colleagues, has allowed us to increase our support and coaching opportunities to researchers. Nine Ingenious Woman participants accessed coaching in 2018 and the capacity to offering coaching will continue. IAD staff will continue to do a certain amount of continuing practice, CPD and supervision to move on to the next levels of certification.
- HR L&D have reviewed and updated their core offer of central development opportunities – reducing the number of face-to-face courses and focussing these on specific topics and target audiences and increasing the signposting to relevant online resources - for all staff at the University. The focus of this is to ensure that staff can easily identify the relevant support to meet their development need and more support is available online as and when this is needed. Face to face support then focusses on skills practice and discussions relevant to the audience and topic; this will ensure there is specific support and guidance for academic leaders.
- The IAD have developed a [Research Staff Brochure](#) that has been distributed to different Schools, Research Staff Societies and support groups around the University. Thus allowing the IAD and the support we offer to become more visible. Print runs and distribution have increased each year, as more people in the University become aware of the resource. In 2016 we printed 250 copies (178 requested/used for events). In 2017 we printed 500 copies (500 requested/used for events, following an increase in requests from Schools). In 2018 we have increased the print run to 750 and the success of the brochure means it will continue to be updated and re-printed each academic year.
- We have made great strides in improving our online support for researchers, introducing two online workshops in A/Y 17-18 and an additional one in A/Y 18/19. From August 2017 – August 2018 we developed 15 online guides/resources/infographics. Developing this support will help researchers who find it difficult to attend our face-to-face support, access to the same information. It will also allow us to increase our support and diversify into new areas. The University also supports online learning with [Lynda.com](#) and [Online Development Toolkit](#).
- In consultation with GASP, IAD developed new webpages '[Producing research outputs](#)' to support researchers develop quality publications and prepare them for REF2021. The webpages signpost to support in the IAD and more widely.
- Support and training for research supervisors is part of a REC led programme of work (Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development programme). This programme has led to a research supervisor's network, the rollout of an enhanced network of workshops and events for supervisors and dedicated webpages.

Key achievements and progress against Principle 5: Researcher Responsibilities

- The College of Science and Engineering has created new Postdoc Champion roles. The focus of these roles is to support researchers in the each of the seven Schools. The roles have developed over the last two years and have been putting in place actions to support researchers, by way of example there has been a '*careers symposium*' (Engineering) and focus groups to identify targeted support, with recommendations that will be taken forward to support researchers in the School (Biology).
- The IAD continue to support researchers with their writing. Writing retreats are run as part of the core programme and in 2017 '*Summer Writing Retreats*' were piloted; 11 retreats ran with 72 participants (31 people) attending in total. We repeated this event in 2018 running 23 retreats, with 189 participants (43 people). A key development aspect of these retreats is asking researchers to volunteer to be facilitators, with support and guidance from the IAD. Volunteers were received for all session we ran. High attendance and feedback mean our summer writing retreats will run each year.
- The IAD have streamlined their funding support to offer three funding schemes. The IAD Action Fund, the Festival of Creative Learning and PTAS (<https://edin.ac/2L2NKey>). All schemes aim to enable people at the University to develop their own projects and initiatives. The IAD Action Fund has two levels of funding; researchers can apply monthly for up to £500 through Small Grants fund and annually for up to £3000 through a Regular Grants fund. Since August 2017, 19 regular awards have been funded and 30 small awards, totalling just under £47k. This comprises £37k of funding for staff related projects and initiatives.
- IAD continue to support research staff associations and have created a suite of video resources (nine different videos). These involve RSS members discussing their experiences and insights into being part of a society, with practical advice and tips. These videos have been added to the IAD webpages as another online resource. (<https://edin.ac/2LbmFor> / <https://edin.ac/2Oyzxrc>)
- We are signatories of the [Technicians' Commitment](#), which aims to ensure visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in HE and research, across all disciplines. IAD has representation on the

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Technician Support Steering Group, and has presented at local and national Technician development conferences. All research staff workshops and opportunities (including the IAD Action Fund) are open to technical staff.

Key achievements and progress against Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

- The University continues to work towards Athena Swan renewal and developing a set of priorities with our BME Staff network, to deliver over the next 3 years.
- The IAD, in collaboration with the University of Glasgow, were successful in applying for Scottish Government funding to support women's leadership development. '[Ingenious Women Scotland](#)' has so far supported over 100 women in STEM roles from companies, public sector employers and 11 Scottish Universities.
- A project on supporting a more gender balanced working environment in higher education was carried out in the University, involving staff and students from different areas. *Equal Bite: Gender equality in higher education* is now freely available online as an open access book.
- The IAD completed the work on collating information on relevant policies, codes of practice, training, guidance and support on research integrity relevant for all researchers at the University of Edinburgh, making them available in one webpage. <https://edin.ac/2JopBxJ>
- The IAD responded ahead of the increasing national concerns about researcher wellbeing (<https://bit.ly/2vWUbdz>), having developed a guide to support staff thrive in their postdoc with a focus on being resilient, in 2017. This guide was produced in consultation with a selection of research staff working across the University of Edinburgh, has practical advice and case studies, and is available on our webpages. <https://edin.ac/2Kf9F1V>

Key achievements and progress against Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- The IAD continues to work closely with and feed into different committees – Researcher Experience Committee, Research Policy Group, Research Ethics and Integrity Reporting Group, Equality and Diversity Support Groups Committee – ensuring that our areas of work and ideas are part of University strategy and policy
- The IAD have been part of a group of researcher developers who have been instrumental in feeding into initiatives and researcher development policy and practice. The group were able to feed into the Concordat 10 year review as a collective voice.

Strategy and Success Measures beyond 2018

We have developed an updated action plan that sets out the focus of our strategy for the next two years. The plan identifies areas where actions are now completed and in progress. IAD and HR will monitor progress, reporting to REC and the RPG. A brief summary of the strategy and actions is provided here:

Strategies to support Principles 1&2: Recruitment, Selection, Recognition and Value

Our previous action plan identified a range of measures designed to improve the support around annual review processes. Over the last two years, these measures have been successfully implemented. Annual review figures continue to be monitored with a focus on embedding it locally in Schools. Specific activities for 2018-2020 will include:

- Supporting researchers by promoting the updated Concordat (2018/19) and the Edinburgh Code of Practice (CoP), with a focus on supporting PIs using the documents with their researchers, providing advice and guidance on how to effectively do this.
- Support around the new Public Engagement with Research strategy via new University webpages. The aim is also to integrate PE into the academic workload model and influence the development of PURE to facilitate the capture of PE activity.
- HR L&D will carry out a review of University Induction Provision, coordinating other induction reviews across the University, to ensure a consistent approach is taken. The aim is to move content online to support staff that join the University at different times.
- The University will be launching a new research fellowship programme in A/Y 2018/19. TRAIN@Ed will be for 25 experienced researchers, for a 3-year period, and will focus on providing them with an international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility experience. TRAIN@Ed fellows will have access to research and transferrable skills training at the University and will spend time in industry, with the aim of being equipped at the end of the fellowship to for a career in either academia or industry.

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Strategies to support Principles 3&4: Career Development

The University commitment to support the personal, professional and career development needs of researchers is implemented through a variety of established mechanisms, services and activities. Specific activities for 2018-2020 will include:

- Develop four online careers resources to support academic and non-academic career development and progression.
- The IAD will continue to develop the online support for researchers, through the development of 10 further online guides/resources, on popular workshops and hot topics, to ensure research staff are supported in key areas.
- Support for supervisors through a short life task group, and a larger Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development programme, focusing on the creation of a continuing professional development framework of research supervisors.
- Working with CMVM, the IAD will work on creating a follow-on programme to a PI management course, which will focus on managing complaints, absence, performance and difficult behaviour. Pilot course to run in Academic Year 2019/2020.
- Development and embedding of wellbeing information for researchers in all workshops and included in the research staff brochure.

Strategies to support Principle 5: Researchers Responsibilities

The University continues to take a proactive approach to improving frameworks and support structures for researchers, in order to encourage greater engagement in their own development. Examples of this include the established role of the IAD as a central point of contact and sharing of practice for RSS. Specific activities for 2018-2020 will include:

- The IAD will continue to support researchers at Edinburgh by becoming a partner institution for WriteFest2018, raising awareness, discussion, and sociability in academic writing. Taking the support we already offer and developing a month long festival, with writing retreats, videos and online resources.
- We will continue to promote and develop our IAD Action Fund to allow researchers access to funding to support their interdisciplinary networks, projects and initiatives and their professional development activities. Increasing applications over the next two years by 20% overall.
- Working towards the Technicians Commitment, supporting technicians' CPD and development of action plan.
- Provide a system to allow staff, students and alumni at the university to have control over their own mentoring partnerships, and from a wider pool. It is hoped that there will be more than 100 partnerships made and that the timescale to match will be reduced to seven weeks or less.

Strategies to support Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

The University has an ongoing commitment to E&D and this is at core of the draft Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and is also evidenced by the award of Institutional Athena SWAN silver in 2015. Specific activities for 2018-2020 include:

- Continue to support the work around Athena Swan and other University strategies and implementation mechanisms, which impact the professional development opportunities and support for researchers.
- Following the subscription to the online module '*Introduction to Research Integrity*', the IAD will work on replacing this with a University of Edinburgh resource.
- Following the run of two Ingenious Women programmes in 2018, a review will be carried with key recommendations for future programmes

Strategies to support Principle 7: Implementation and Review

The IAD and HR, in consultation with other central services, Colleges, Schools and researchers, lead on regular review of activities. Implementation of activity is embedded in core practice and linked to other institutional initiatives. Reviews are endorsed by REC and RPG and published online. Researchers are consulted through Societies and surveys. Specific activities for 2018-2020 include:

- Supporting our researcher wellbeing through improved visibility of support services, the introduction of a short wellbeing strand into all workshops and coverage of wellbeing and resilience topics through our blog.
- In 2018 the University was awarded a MSCA Actions COFUND programme, TRAIN@Ed, that will develop an innovative approach to research fellow development, with a focus on international, interdisciplinary and intersectoral training. The TRAIN@Ed Project Manager will be based in IAD to ensure these developments are cascaded into our wider support for research staff and embedded fully.