

Bath Spa University – 4-year review of HR Excellence in Research Award

Background

Since achieving Research Awarding Powers in 2008, the University has grown from a teaching-led university, to one which rewards and encourages staff to develop excellence in research. The 2020 strategy has research at its core. Information relating to the size and research activities of Bath Spa University academic staff can be found in Appendix A.

Evaluation of Concordat at Bath Spa

The University's Action Plan for the implementation of the Concordat is an evolving document that is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, through regular meetings between the Research Support Office, Researcher Development Officer, HR and the Graduate School Manager.

In preparation for the University's 2-year review, the action plan was rewritten and new success measures adopted – progress against these success measures can be found in Appendix B. Since that date there have been two further reviews – one in July 2014 and again in November 2015 by a working group in preparation for the 4-year review process. Membership of this group can be found in Appendix C.

One of the key challenges has been how best to engage with our research community in an effective way, in an institution with a small contract researcher community, and PhD students who are predominantly part-time and practice based. Dissemination and consultation is generally through the University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Consultancy Committee (RKECC), and onwards to School Research Committees, where these research communities have a more active role.

Other initiatives that have enabled us to better engage with our researchers are as follows:

- The launch of the Early Stage Researcher (ESR) programme has enabled this community to establish a peer group, facilitated by our Researcher Development Officer, and they have used this as a forum to give feedback on their research development needs.
- The membership of the University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Consultancy Committee was amended in July 2014 to include representatives for the ESR, PGR and contract researcher communities, as well as mid-career researchers, Readers and Professors. A newsletter approach has been adopted, circulated to all staff, to disseminate the work of the Committee.
- There has been an increase in the number of contract researchers appointed at the University, and we have invited them to form a Bath Spa Research Staff Association, supported by our regional UKRSA representative.
- The Principal Investigator and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) was run for the first time in 2015 and an action plan developed to address the issues raised by that Community (Appendix D).
- The Graduate School Manager is now an active member of RKECC and appointed to the HR Excellence in Research working group, to ensure that the needs of our postgraduate student community are addressed.

Key Achievements and Progress

A. Recruitment and selection

The University has agreed a new University vision and strategy up to 2020 ([here](#)) and this includes a continuing commitment to support high quality research and research staff across the University. In addition to this, since our 2 year review, we have taken the following actions:

- Delivery of Effective Researcher Programme
- Development of the induction programme and recruitment and selection training for all staff

B. Recognition and Value

As stated in our Action Plan, all staff are treated equally at BSU. Both staff and student researchers have the same rights of membership to Research Centres, and all staff have access to staff development programmes and other benefits. In addition to this, since our 2-year review we have taken the following actions:

- Launch of a Researcher Development Programme designed around the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF).
- Review of University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Consultancy Committee to include membership from researcher communities.
- Launch of Early Stage Researcher (ESR) Programme and the appointment of research mentors for ESRs. The evaluation of the 2013-14 programme was very positive with ESRs who attended valuing the opportunity to form a network of peers and share experience and practice (see Case Study 1). A summary of activities undertaken by the ESRs since they completed the course can be seen below, it highlights the highly effective value of the programme on the research development of those involved:

Activity	% of participants
Promotion (internal)	9%
Promotion (external)	18%
Research grant application submitted	50%
Research grant awarded	40% (67% success rate)

- Review of research bidding process and the appointment of peer reviewers and mentors to support staff through the application process.
- Creation of an Internal Peer Review College.

C. Support and Career Development

The University undertook a pilot of the Vitae RDF planner in the 2014/15 academic year and ran one-to-one support for academic/research staff and PGR students as well as developing a programme of workshops and training sessions that address the four skill sets identified in the Researcher Development Framework. In addition to this, since our 2 year review we have taken the following actions:

- We have now subscribed fully to the RDF planner, and completion for PGR students is strongly recommended.
- The annual Staff Development Review process for all staff now includes reference to the Vitae RDF as a tool for staff to discuss research development needs with Line Managers.
- Research project funded by HEA to look at the professional development needs of creative writing PhD students (see Case Study 2).

D. Researcher's Responsibilities

As well as the above, the Research Staff Development Programme has been enhanced to match the domains of the Vitae RDF and researchers have access to the RDF to help identify development needs. Research staff at all levels of their careers have now been given a voice on the University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Consultancy Committee (RKECC) and other actions taken since the 2 year review include:

- Launch and support for a Bath Spa Research Staff Association

- Principal Investigator and Research Leaders survey (PIRLS) run in 2015 and action plan developed as a result of this. The action plan (Appendix D) was circulated to all those invited to undertake the survey in December 2015, in order to close the feedback loop.

E. Diversity and Equality

The University continues to develop its Equality and Diversity Training Programme, and runs a number of events to showcase this work across the academic year. It achieved Stonewall recognition in 2014. The 2015 PIRLS survey analysis raised a number of issues surrounding this area which are being addressed by the University Equality and Diversity Committee.

F. Implementation and Review

The Concordat Action Plan is a live document and a formal evaluation is undertaken annually by RKECC, informed by regular meetings between the Research Support Office, the Researcher Development Officer, HR and the Graduate School Manager. The Vice-Provost (Research and Graduate Affairs) has responsibility for implementing and reviewing action across the year, in consultation with HR and members of the Research Support Office, and a working group with representatives across the academic schools and researcher community was set up to undertake the 4 year evaluation process. This group will remain in place to monitor progress against actions identified at bi-annual meetings.

Future strategy, next steps and success measures

<i>Strategic Goal</i>	<i>Next steps</i>	<i>Success Measures</i>
We will significantly enhance the amount of world leading work submitted to REF 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Line Managers discussing development of outputs and impact activities with all research staff - RKECC monitoring progress and reviewing quality of outputs on an annual basis - Trial of Plum Analytics on-going to develop metric data available to University to help evaluate progress - External peer mentors in place to work with academic units on evaluation and on-going plans for next REF 	<p>RKECC annual monitoring of output and impact July 2016 and annually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - target to increase number of REFable 2* outputs of each researcher from 3 to 6 by 2020 - target to have 5 impact case studies developed for each UoA by 2020
We will increase our research and enterprise income, in particular as part of research networks with other UK and international HEIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Research Bid Development Officer working with researchers to improve quality of bids, alongside internal and external mentors and internal peer review college - External workshops and training put in place for PIs and lead applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target of £886K by 2017 and £1.06M by 2018

Strategic Goal	Next steps	Success Measures
We will create research themes that shape and inform the work of our researchers – including environmental humanities (art, science, culture and environment), transnational creativity and education, and creative and cultural industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current Research Centres and groups are being dissolved and new centres developed in line with University Research Strategy themes and new College of Liberal Arts - Inter- and multi-disciplinary workshops, seminars and events held to foster greater research collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Research Centre plans to be considered by RKECC in May 2016, for establishment from 2016/17 academic year - 1 themed event to be held each semester in 2016/17 (3 in total)
We will be a collaborative, entrepreneurial partner in the UK's creative and cultural economy – our research creates impact by shaping practice, triggering innovation and informing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KE and consultancy champions in place in each school to mentor staff and lead collaborative initiatives - Research leaders supported to attend external events and policy forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RKECC to review impact of activities May 2016 and on an annual basis - 6-10 staff to attend national policy events each year
We will be the UK gateway to a global network of partner research institutions working in our fields of professional, creative and critical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research staff actively encouraged to take part in GALA network activities, particularly ESR colleagues - EU and International Officer continues to highlight funding opportunities for future collaborations and to support attendance at networking events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 new partnerships to be set up by 2017 involving ESRs – review annually at RKECC
We will be a university of choice for early stage researcher staff (ESR) and postgraduate research students in our research specialisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESR staff to be supported through an ESR research development programme and through a forum and networked events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target of 80% of ESRs to attend at least 2 researcher development sessions each year, and all to have attended the RSO/Library research induction programme.

Progress against success measures will be monitored by the HR Excellence in Research Working Group on a bi-annual basis, which will report achievements to RKECC.