

## HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

### Two-year internal review: Progress Report

#### January 2015

Nottingham Trent University received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in January 2013. As a recipient of this award we are required to undertake a two-year internal review of progress on the implementation of our 2013-2015 *Concordat*<sup>1</sup> Action Plan. This report is a record and summary of that internal review.

#### How was the internal review undertaken?

Review of progress against our original action plan was led by members of the University's Concordat Management Group (CMG). This Group is comprised of the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, the three Associate Deans for Research (acting as rotating Chairs for CMG), cross-University representation from our career researchers and our senior academic researchers (including those who manage career researchers) and representatives from the Centre for Professional Learning and Development, Human Resources and Equality and Diversity.

From the establishment of the NTU CMG in 2012/2013, our approach has been to track and review progress against the action plan at each CMG meeting<sup>2</sup>, rather than us seeing the internal review as an 'end-point' to the two-year cycle. This has led to discussion of key actions, action plan progress and next steps by all members of CMG on a regular and on-going basis. This approach has entailed that all members of CMG have had an input into our two-year review.

Following this two-year action plan tracking activity, the documentation making up this review has been collated and distilled by a sub-set<sup>3</sup> of CMG members, using a range of sources including CMG notes and minutes between November 2012 and November 2014, data from CROS and PIRLS surveys in 2013 and outcomes from University-wide Concordat briefing sessions.

Activities of CMG are reported to the University Research Committee (URC) through its Chair (all ADRs are members of URC). The URC, via its Chair (the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research), reports its activities, including those relating to the CMG, to the University's Academic Board.

#### Key achievements and progress against our original action plan

Full details of progress against our 2013-2015 action plan are provided in the updated document, which is available to view online [here](#). A summary of highlights is provided below.

An overarching achievement has been the establishment and subsequent embedding of the Concordat Management Group itself, which has served to bring together at regular intervals a wide range of staff from all relevant areas across the University, working together to champion, support and progress activities relating to the career development of our researchers. The establishment of this group, along with the on-going support of the University, through its URC and Academic Board, entails that we can continue to ensure alignment with all principles of the *Concordat* and also that we have a robust and sustainable future in terms of supporting our researchers.

Key progress against **Principles 1 & 2** has seen the introduction of open-ended contracts for researchers and a limitation of the use of fixed-term contracts. Introduction of a new e-recruitment

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the term *Concordat* will be used as a reference to the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (available via: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat-to-support-the-career-development-of-researchers>).

<sup>2</sup> CMG meetings were scheduled twice a year for the academic years 2012/13 and 2013/14.

<sup>3</sup> Comprised of the CMG Chair and representatives from the Centre for Professional Learning and Development, Human Resources and Equality and Diversity.

system for NTU staff and a review of the redeployment policy for researchers has ensured that processes, procedures and systems in place for our research staff are in line with those for other staff. Data from the 2013 CROS<sup>4</sup> evidences that our researchers found our recruitment and selection processes to be informative (73-79% respondents indicated they had received good information in terms receiving job descriptions, details of required qualifications, details of specialist and transferable skills), and also that recruitment processes were fair (81.5% of respondents reported that they were treated fairly regardless of personal characteristics such as age, ethnicity, disability and gender). Our redeployment policy for research staff has been reviewed to ensure it is in alignment with the *Concordat*.

In addition to the annual cycle of individual staff review/appraisal<sup>5</sup> meetings that researchers undertake with their manager, their reviews have now been brought into line with other staff and they are now also invited to take part in a 6-month review meetings. Data from CROS evidences that 37% researchers participated in a PDCR meeting over 2011-2013 but also that 33% of non-participants stated that they had only recently been appointed. Monitoring the participation of research staff in PDCRs will be an area of focus over the next 2 years.

Our researchers have also reported (data from 2013 CROS) that they believe themselves to be well integrated into their departmental, Institutional and wider research communities (88.9%, 70.4% and 77.8% respectively).

Key progress against **Principles 3 & 4** includes further developmental work on our Researcher Developmental Gateway (RDG; a researcher developmental tool based on Vitae's Researcher Development Framework) and this will be rolled out to researchers during Spring 2015. The tool is updated with current information on developmental opportunities and details are disseminated to staff via their review meetings and cross- NTU emails. Our NTU mentoring framework has been piloted/evaluated and following this work our CPLD Academic Practice Development Team are working with Schools to look at appropriate developmental schemes for researchers, including mentoring.

Key progress against **Principle 5** includes *Concordat* awareness-raising via Campus-wide briefings. One issue coming of this approach was that attendance at these sessions had been 'patchy' during 2012/13. A key outcome and action from our CMG discussions as a result of this was to include 'Concordat stands' at upcoming School Research Conferences during the Summer/Autumn of 2014. This initiative worked well and we will be rolling it out and monitoring it across more School conferences over the course of 2015/16. From our CROS data, evidence suggest that our researchers think positively in terms of them being encouraged to engage in personal and career development (73.1% respondents agreed or agreed strongly that this was the case), 85.1% respondents reported that they took ownership of their own career development, 55.5% respondents stated they had a career development plan and 63% stated that they maintained a formal record of their CPD activities.

Key progress against **Principle 6** has comprised mostly of undertaking reviews of equality and diversity issues and investigating/discussing specific researcher challenges. We have applied for membership of the Athens SWAN Charter and are now working towards submitting for our Bronze Award. Actions related to this Principle will be a major focus for us in 2015-2016/17.

Key progress against **Principle 7** is that we participated in both CROS and PIRLS in 2013 and have found the data from these two surveys to be incredibly useful for identifying both areas of strength and any particular challenges and therefore in guiding us in our discussions concerning outstanding and future actions. We have identified CROS and PIRLS as being crucial tools for us to continue to use.

### **Next Steps: Focus of strategy for the next two years**

We have updated our action plan [here](#) and this sets out the focus of our strategy for 2015-2017. This plan includes continuing actions from our previous action plan and further actions that will build on

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<sup>4</sup> Note that we had an overall response rate of 30% for CROS and that this was from a total population of c90 researchers.

<sup>5</sup> Performance, Development and Contribution Review (PDCR).

progress achieved to date. The CMG will continue to monitor progress against our action plan, with a reporting line to URC. A brief summary of updated actions, along with their success measures are reported below.

Principles 1 & 2: We will review and update our Recruitment/Selection Policy and Managers' Guide as part of our action around production and implementation of resources to inform recruitment and selection of research staff. As a result of CROS data relating to researcher PDCR/review, we will review the participation of annual PDCRs by our researchers and undertake briefings for researchers. We will also be undertaking a series of actions relating to support for managers of research staff (induction, annual and 6-monthly reviews, training and development). We will continue to produce and disseminate resources (e.g. presenting typical career journeys) to staff.

*Success measures: reviewed/updated Recruitment/Selection documents in place and updates disseminated to relevant staff. Better data/intelligence on participation of researchers in the PDCR process and actions in place coming out of this data (e.g. evidence from HR records and from CROS 2015, where we would expect to see an increase in proportion of researchers participating in the PDCR process).*

Principles 3 & 4: We will continue to develop and disseminate career and professional development opportunities to our researchers by promotion and monitoring of use of our RDG tool throughout 2015/16, as it rolled out to researchers (in Spring 2015). The tool itself will continue to be reviewed and updated with new content, as more developmental opportunities become available. We will work with each School to determine optimum developmental needs.

*Success measures: RDG in use for researchers, evidence of it being used by researchers (i.e. via usage data and from researcher PDCRs). Updated individual School Research Plans will include items to evidence the development activities of their research staff.*

Principle 5: We plan to continue with another round of Campus-wide *Concordat* briefings and following its success in 2014, we will continue to have a '*Concordat* presence' at our annual School Research Conferences throughout the next two years.

*Success measures: Briefing events in 2015/2016 to have taken place, feedback gathered and used to inform progress on actions/activities via CMG meetings. Evidence from CROS 2015 data demonstrating that researchers in have increased awareness of the Concordat and other UK initiatives in comparison with data from CROS 2013.*

Principle 6: Work will be undertaken to better ascertain the special challenges faced by researchers as an identified group and once completed this will inform our Equality and Diversity briefings, training and resources for researchers. Our focus for the next year will be to prepare and submit an application for the Athena SWAN bronze award.

*Success measures: Updated E&D resources in place that take account of any recognised challenges faced by researchers as an identified group. E&D briefing sessions for managers of research staff in place. University submission made for Athena SWAN bronze award.*

Principle 7: We will be participating in CROS and PIRLS in March-May 2015. Data from those two surveys will be analysed and used by CMG to inform and guide discussions and to inform and scope investigations and further actions.

*Success measures: NTU-wide participation in CROS and PIRLS. Analysed data from CROS and PIRLS presented at CMG and used to inform further activities and actions.*