

University of Salford HR Excellence in Research Award Six Year Report

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents progress on the University of Salford's implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The 2014 action plan focussed on increasing the capacity and capability of early career researchers (ECRs) through recruitment, improved research structures, academic support, comprehensive researcher training, bespoke training in bidding and publication, resources and opportunities for leadership. Progress on these activities is shown by relevant Concordat Principle heading.

How this evaluation was conducted and how researchers' views were taken into account

This review was undertaken by the Concordat Working Group, led by the Associate Director Research. Progress and future priorities were discussed at the Research & Enterprise Committee (REC) meeting in April 2016. Progress on the 2014 action plan, and priorities for further development of the plan were discussed at a symposium of early career researchers (ECRs) from across the University in August 2016. Opportunities and challenges facing ECRs were identified, in particular support for research bidding and publication, protected time for research and mentoring. The University participates in the annual Best Companies staff survey, and R&E works with Schools and the Organisational Development (OD) team to identify data of relevance to researchers and define future recommendations and actions

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2014-2016

- Consolidation of the University's research structures into 9 research centres, supported by strategies
- Launch of updated Research Centre websites with increased visibility for ECRs (example in link¹)
- Creation of twelve 5-year Research Fellow/Research Assistant career development posts
- Creation of 50 new Pathway to Excellence and 7 industrial CASE (iCASE) PhD studentships
- Investment of £114,000 in research equipment for new early career researchers
- Achievement of an institutional Athena SWAN Bronze Award
- Enrolment of four PhD students into the University Alliance Doctoral Training Alliance (DTA)
- Creation of a new programme of PGR supervisor training, attended by 181 staff between 2014 and 2016
- Launch of a Researcher Development Programme with the Brilliant Club²
- Pilot of a 6-week training programme for ECRs who teach, delivered to 40 ECRs in 2016

3. PROGRESS SINCE 2012 – BY CONCORDAT PRINCIPLE

A. Recruitment and Selection

- To enhance the organisational research culture and grow research capability and capacity a policy was introduced in 2014, requiring that all new appointments to academic posts are research active. Interview panels should include School Associate Deans (Research & Innovation) or their nominees.
- Twelve new strategic 5-year Career Development Research Fellow (RF) and Assistant (RA) posts have been appointed. Schools must support and develop the RF or RA and embed them into the Research Centre, rolling this support model out to wider RF and RA communities.
- Fifty new Pathway to Excellence 7 industrial CASE (iCASE) PhD studentships have been created.

B. Recognition and Value

- Measures have been implemented to support ECRs to increase visibility and quality of their research outputs. Training was delivered by REF2014 panel members on writing and assessing 3* and 4* papers to 129 staff, primarily ECRs. The University's Open Access (OA) policy was launched in April 2015³, and the Library actively supports researchers to upload papers to the University's research repository. The University allocated over £40,000 for OA article processing charges in 2015/16.

¹ <http://www.salford.ac.uk/research/care/meet-our-team>

² <http://www.thebrilliantclub.org>

³ <http://www.salford.ac.uk/library/research/openaccess/policies>

- A model to standardise workload allocations for research was piloted in the Schools of Computing, Science and Engineering, and Health Sciences, with the aim of ensuring consistent and effective research workload allocation and increased researcher productivity and satisfaction.
- New Research Centre websites have been launched, with greater visibility for ECRs, and a dedicated programme of development sessions for ECRs established, including training on social media and working with the media. Seven PGR students contributed to the national Three Minute Thesis (3MT), with competitors supported by coaching. Fifteen researchers have been supported to produce 60 second videos about their research using the expertise and facilities at the MediaCityUK campus⁴.
- Since 2014, 8 Innovation Fellowships of £5,000 each have been awarded to PGR students and ECRs to pump prime new technologies and opportunities for commercial products. The Vice Chancellor's Research Excellence award was revised in 2016, with awards now focussed on individuals or groups of ECRs (first prize £2000, second prize £500), and prizes given at the University Day ceremony.

C. Support and Career Development

- The University's updated structure of nine Research Centres was launched in 2015, supported by strategies, websites¹, and a dedicated R&E Research Centre support team.
- ECR and PGR training programmes now provide a thorough package of training aligned with the Researcher Development Framework (RDF)⁵. Between 2014 and 2016, the Salford Postgraduate and Staff Research Training programme ran 262 workshops, with a total attendance of 2,432 by 761 unique users. In 2016 130 researchers presented at Salford's annual research conference, SPARC.
- A 6-week training programme for ECRs who teach (PGRs, contract researchers, hourly paid lecturers) was piloted in 2016 and to 40 researchers. A programme of supervisor training was introduced in 2013, aimed at new supervisors; to date 181 staff have attended training sessions. In January 2015, training for independent PhD viva chairs was introduced. This has so far trained 58 members of staff.
- Access to more flexible online training resources has been increased, including licenses for Angel Productions films on research processes and face to face training sessions recorded through Blackboard Collaborate. These are available through the University's video platform, Helix.
- In 2015 a bidding competition⁶ was introduced to encourage researchers to network and practice bid writing across disciplines. The research development team has co-created bidding strategies with Research Centres, and delivered two bespoke bidding ECRs workshops to a total of 55 staff. The research development team has initiated group working with the Enterprise and Advancement team to increase contract research and charity/trust/philanthropic funding opportunities. 2015/16 saw a 41% increase in research awards from 2014/15, the highest value in 5 years. Research Council UK award success rates were the highest in 8 years, with notable successes by ECRs.
- In 2015-16 a Researcher Development Partnership was initiated with the Brilliant Club². Eight PGRs have been trained and have tutored 84 state school pupils in the North West during 2015-16. In June 2015 Salford and Manchester EPS faculty co-hosted two days of Vitae Effective Researcher training. In May 2016, Salford sent 8 researchers to Manchester's GRADSschool on 'The Developing Researcher'. The University is a founder partner in the University Alliance Doctoral Training Alliance for Applied Biosciences for Health. To date 4 DTA PGR studentships have been awarded.
- University Schools have set up supervisor forums to share best practice. Careers Consultants have contributed to these sessions to raise the profile of careers support for researchers. A researcher training working group was set up in May 2016 to enhance training provision, coordinate school and central training, and enhance accessibility of in-demand training by improving online resources.

D. Researchers' Responsibilities

- The University appointed an academic Director of REF in June 2016 to lead development and implementation of the REF strategy, with a strong focus on developing ECRs for the next and future REF exercises. A new Impact Coordinator was appointed in November 2015.

⁴ <http://www.pg.salford.ac.uk/page/sparc2015>; http://www.pg.salford.ac.uk/sparc_conference

⁵ <http://www.pg.salford.ac.uk/page/sport>

⁶ <http://www.pg.salford.ac.uk/bidding-comp>

E. Diversity and Equality

- The University achieved an Athena SWAN Bronze award in May 2016, and a management framework to deliver the action plan is in place.
- An Inclusive and Accessible Teaching Framework has been implemented, providing dedicated guidance for research supervisors to support all PGR students, including those with declared needs.
- A Research Governance Working Group has been established, to review and update the University's processes and procedures. This group comprises researchers at all levels and reports to the REC.

F. Implementation and Review

- Oversight of the University of Salford Concordat Action Plan has been transferred to the Senate Research & Enterprise Committee, which includes postgraduate (PGR) representation. Updates are provided at quarterly meetings and progress on the full action plan is reviewed on an annual basis. Actions relating to PGRs are managed by the PGR Forum. The Research & Enterprise Division is responsible for the implementation and development of the Concordat and Action Plan, working closely with researchers and professional services colleagues.

4. NEXT STEPS – 2016-2018

The University's strategic priority is the development of Industry Collaboration Zones, which will drive interdisciplinary research, enterprise and teaching in partnership with industry, supported by the expansion of iCASE PhD and iMRes studentships. The research strategy focus will be research excellence, supported by researcher career and leadership development, with a particular emphasis on building PGR and ECR research capacity and capability. Following publication of the Stern Review into REF, we are updating REF and research centre strategies to ensure ECRs are supported to be returned to and involved in REF2021. The University of Salford has a vibrant organisational development (OD) programme, and leadership framework and pathway, and we will work to ensure that research is fully embedded into this. The key actions over this time period will be (see also full 2016-2018 action plan):

Action	Success Measure(s)
Review and update research workload recognition and allocation	Fair and equitable allocation of research time, including investment At least 20% research allocation for Vice Chancellor's ECRs
Support researchers to develop a higher profile for their research and engage with interdisciplinary research and ICZs	Increased ECR external networks and partnerships Increased volume of researcher outputs and citations At least 4 new PGR students enrolled in University Alliance DTAs Up to 10 industrial iCASE PhD and 5 iMRes studentships per year Increased PGR and ECR interdisciplinary and industrial engagement
Review and implement researcher career pathways	Formalise promotion route to Senior Research Fellow Embed research in the Leadership Capability Framework ECRs represented on University research committees/working groups Establish an academic working group for researcher development
Increase ECR bidding capacity and capability	High attendance at ECR bidding training events Increased bids and awards for ECRs
Continued innovation in researcher development	Development of joint research and enterprise training events New and updated funding schemes to support ECRs
Effective research support structures	Updated Research Centre strategies in line with REF and ICZs Procurement and implementation of a research information system
Deliver Athena SWAN (AS) research actions	Delivery against action plan metrics ECR representation on AS committees and task groups
Embed ECRs into REF processes and submission	Appoint ECRs as Deputy REF submission Coordinators Inclusion of ECRs in modelled REF submissions
Implement a new Research Governance Framework and processes	Overarching Research Governance Framework established Updated Research Governance policies and procedures in place