

Keele University received the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2013 after submitting a Concordat Implementation Action Plan. This award was retained after the two-year review in 2015. This report, and the accompanying action plans, detail the progress which has been made, providing an update on the activities. The action plans for 2013-2015, 2015-2017 and 2017-2019 to support the Career Development of Researchers and the HR Excellence Award reviews can be found at: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/excellenceinresearch>.

Keele University employs 117 contract research/research only staff, 52 early career lecturers and has 679 registered PGR students.

### **How the Internal Review was undertaken**

The Keele 2015-2020 Strategic Plan sets out the goal of the University to position itself as a world-leading research-led institute with a vibrant research culture: our commitment to the Concordat is a core part of developing and enabling the potential of our research staff.

Keele University is committed to obtaining and responding to the views of all researchers. In 2015, researchers' views were obtained via an internal research questionnaire. This has been supplemented by the CROS<sup>1</sup> and PIRLS<sup>2</sup> surveys in 2017.

The action plan and the implementation of the Concordat is the formal responsibility of the University's Research Committee. The University Research Committee (URC) is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise and is responsible for all matters concerning research strategy and the management, monitoring and support of research. URC reports directly to the University Senate. Research Staff and Postgraduate Research Students are formally represented on URC by a member of Research Staff, the Chair of the Keele Postgraduate Association and the Keele Student Union Vice President for Education and Welfare. Updates to the action plan are reviewed annually by the URC, and new action plans have been published online in 2014, 2015 and 2017.

Evaluation of 2013-2015 progress was conducted by the Learning and Professional Development Centre (LPDC) by talking to major stakeholders, including HR, the Athena Swan team and Engagement and Partnerships and looking at key datasets available from across the University. Progress was measured against the original 2013 and updated 2014 action plan. Evaluation of the 2015 plan was conducted in Spring-Summer 2017. As with 2015, the major stakeholders listed above, along with PGR directors, the Keele Postgraduate Associate and the Postgraduate Officer, were consulted on progress and contribute to new actions for the 2017-19 plan.

### **Key Achievements and Progress for 2013-2017**

- The launch of the Research Strategy 2016 – 2020. Keele's performance in REF2014, where 97% of our research classified as world-leading or of international importance, demonstrated elements of world-leading research across all three faculties. The Research Strategy aims to deliver on Keele's ambition to improve our research performance and attract leading researchers at all career levels.
- The People Strategy was launched in September 2017. The strategy represents a commitment to support all people who work at Keele.
- The Internationalisation Strategy to 2020 was launched in 2015 and represents a commitment to Keele being 'international in outlook and character' and 'international in the reach and impact of its education and research programmes'.

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<sup>1</sup> CROS – Careers in Research Online Survey – run biannually by Vitae

<sup>2</sup> PIRLS – Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey – run biannually by Vitae

- A new Researcher Developer & two new Research Librarians have been appointed to support researchers at all levels across the University with their career and professional development.
- The number of research staff engaged in workshops offered through the LPDC has increased by 66% from 518 in 2013-2015 to 863 in 2015-2017.
- Writing retreats began at Keele in Summer 2014. They have grown in popularity and are now run across the University. Further information is available in the accompanying case study.

## Progress by Concordat Principle

More detailed information can be found in the updated Action Plan for 2015-2017 accompanying this document. In brief, the key achievements, by Concordat principle are as follows.

### *Principle 1: Recruitment, selection and retention of researchers*

- Recruitment and Selection policies have been reviewed and staff guidance and information is available online<sup>3</sup>. A new e-learning package for recruitment and selection has been created and is online. It is mandatory for all staff involved in recruitment to complete the training every 2 years. The training package includes information regarding the consideration of the research strategy when recruiting researchers, the importance of the Person Specification as an objective shortlisting and selection tool, guidance on structuring job descriptions around the requirements of the role and information on unconscious bias. The gender balance, of each recruitment panels is checked by HR. Guidelines are also provided on how to fairly assess a candidate at interview and panel composition.
- The relocation and removal expenses policy has been updated and includes an increase to the maximum reimbursement amount and guidance on eligibility.
- A new HR system has been implemented: "Keele People". All recruitment and HR matters are now centralised through this system. Researchers also have access to their learning record and can sign up for workshops and training events via the system.

### *Principle 2: Recognition and value*

- The launch of the People Strategy represents a commitment to support all staff at the University, including researchers, with five key aims and objectives designed to promote Keele as an employer of choice, empower staff, encourage and develop leaders, foster a culture of wellbeing, inclusion, innovation and engagement and promote the global outlook and impact of Keele staff.
- A key focus for HR in 2014-15 was the implementation of revisions to the Staff Performance Review and Enhancement (SPRE), the University's appraisal process. The University requires all individuals to participate in SPRE and sets out that discussions should take place between January and August. In 2015, 87.3% of SPREs were completed in this timeframe. In 2016, this rose to more than 93% and in 2017 reached 95%. The revisions were aimed at ensuring that SPRE reviewers provide clear, meaningful feedback that is helpful in enhancing the contribution of the individual. Feedback was sought on the revisions and recommendations have been made based on the feedback received. 99% of reviewers also found the reviewer workshop, held at the LPDC, to be helpful. Many researchers also now include research plans as a mechanism for discussion in their appraisal. Discussions are still ongoing about using development frameworks, such as Vitae's RDF within SPRE discussions.
- Researchers nearing the end of a fixed term contract can sign up to the redeployment register. The redeployment procedure was reviewed in 2015. Thirteen researchers who signed up to the redeployment register have been successfully redeployed or had their contract extended during the last four years.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/recruitmentandselectionsupportinformation/>

- In response to feedback received from researchers, a grant writing workshop was held on three occasions (once in each of two faculties and once centrally) during the last quarter of 2016. The course was attended by over 70 people and the content was very well received, with 90% of respondents to a survey conducted 3-6 months after the workshop, stating that they would recommend it to colleagues. The workshop will be repeated in Spring 2018.

*Principle 3 & 4: Support and Career Development*

- The first PGR Summer School ran in 2016 to enhance the professional skills required by all postgraduate research students. In 2017, the offering was expanded, with the Researcher Summer School<sup>4</sup> open to all active research staff and students at the University. Sessions included: Critical reading, exploring impact factors in your research, Vitae and the RDF, presenting, mapping your digital presence, blogging, managing anxiety, project management, assertiveness and personal resilience. The week ended with a full-day structured writing retreat. The event was attended by fifty-four people from across the University, including twelve members of research staff, 37 PGR students, two teaching fellows considering research and four research support staff.
- New courses have been added to “The Essential Skills for Researcher Programme”. Additionally, new working relationships have been established with four new external facilitators to expand the range of workshops on offer. In 2013-2015, 518 research staff engaged in workshops offered through the LPDC. In 2015-2017, this number rose by 66% to 863.
- Leadership and management development has been a key investment by the University in recent years and is one of the aims of the People Strategy. Events and strategic conversations have been held with future leaders, academic leaders and senior leaders. This is scheduled to continue with further events already scheduled for 2018.
- Formal mentoring guidance and coaching frameworks have been under development and are scheduled to be launched by the end of 2017. In addition, activities and resources are being developed to improve the levels of engagement with and the quality of mentoring for researchers at the University. A mentoring masterclass is also scheduled for December 2017.
- The Recognition and Induction Framework (REIF) is currently being piloted with all newly promoted staff on research contracts.
- Writing retreats are held around the University and have grown in popularity over the last couple of years. They provide a dedicated space for researchers to sit and focus on their writing in a supportive environment that encourages creativity and productivity (see Appendix C – Case Study: Writing Retreats for more information).

*Principle 5: Researchers share responsibility for their own personal and career development*

- The Learning and Professional Development Centre webpages have been updated in order to provide researchers with information about Vitae and the RDF to assist their Professional Development<sup>5</sup>. These complement existing resources already online<sup>6</sup>. Information has also been added about leadership development and mentoring<sup>7</sup>.
- The workshop on research ethics continues to run three times a year. In addition, various guidance, including a leaflet on research ethics has been added to the Research Support website<sup>8</sup>.

*Principle 6: Equality and Diversity*

- The University has placed significant effort and resources into promoting its equality and diversity agenda. A new equality and diversity strategy was published in 2015 for 2015-2020. A variety of events are held on an annual basis including Health and Wellbeing Week, LGBT Month, Refugee week and

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/lpdc/research/summerschool2017/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/lpdc/research/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/lpdc/resourcesarchive/researchers/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/lpdc/keeleleadership/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/>

International Women’s Day. The University has completed submissions for the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, is Disability Confident Level 2 and made progress against its Athena SWAN actions, both institution wide and at individual School levels. The Dignity & Respect Framework<sup>9</sup> still forms the basis for the required behaviour of University staff and students.

- Maternity and paternity policies were reviewed by HR and a new Shared Parental Leave Policy<sup>10</sup> introduced.
- In the last year, the success rates for female applicants applying for promotion has been higher than for male applicants at Professorial, Readership and Senior Lecturer level. This evidences that current activities are beginning to have success in reducing historical trends.

## Strategy and success measures for the next four years

Keele University is committed to realising its ambitious research plans, as outlined in the Research Strategy and University Strategy to 2020. The academic year 2017-2018 will see the implementation of the RAISE (Research and Innovation Support Enhancement) project, an initiative to enhance the support for research development that will include creating new research support hubs and implementation of a new online research management system. It will also focus on increasing academic and administrative staff time for research through greater efficiency of teaching delivery and developing better support for interdisciplinary research. The new action plan sets out a focus for the next two years, identifying actions that need to be implemented.

In addition to the RAISE project, key objectives of our 2017-19 action plan include:

- Establishing a Concordat Reporting Group made-up of key stakeholders and researchers. Researcher membership will be an important element in reviewing the progress of the plan. (Principle 7)
- Implementing a postdoctoral fellowship scheme which will provide key facilities of the University for postgraduates for up to 2 years after they graduate, assisting the transition from education to employment, allowing them to publish through Keele and build their networks. (Principle 2)
- Fulfilling Keele University’s pledge to deliver on the Technicians Commitment. The commitment is applicable to all technicians, including those which carry-out and support research. A working group has been established and met for the first time in September 2017. The group will establish priority actions in order to respond pro-actively to the commitment. (Principles 2, 3 and 4)
- Encouraging increased public engagement from researchers, though, for example, publishing in The Conversation, using the new TV and radio studios and engaging with the NCCPE development programme. (Principle 5)
- The University has started preparing its submission for the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award. In addition, it will submit for renewal of the University’s Athena Swan Bronze award and various other applications for new awards and renewals over the next two years. The University is committed to its Equality and Diversity Agenda. (Principle 6)

As well as measuring success against the achievement of the actions set out in the action plan, we will also use the following indicators:

- Submission of School Athena Swan awards, renewal of the University Bronze award and implementation and success of the actions from current University/school action plans.
- Positive feedback and increased participation rates at training and development workshops and events.
- Higher response rates to CROS and PIRLS in 2019 and improved researcher satisfaction compared to the 2017 survey.

Appendix A: 2017-2019 Action Plan to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Appendix B: 2015-2017 Updated Action Plan to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Appendix C: Case Study – Writing Retreats

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/equalitydiversity/dignityandrespectframeworks/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/policiesproceduresandguidance/> - Family Friendly section

