

January 2022: Bath Spa University: HR Excellence In Research Award- 10 Year Review

1. Internal Evaluation and Review

Bath Spa University signed up to the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in July 2020, and has spent the 2020/21 academic year in developing a gap analysis and action plan to address the obligations set out in the three sections of Environment and Culture, Employability and Professional and Career Development.

The development of the action plan has been led by our HR Excellence in Research Working Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) (PVCRE) and includes representatives of our academic, early stage researcher and contact researcher communities. Additional consultation has included:

- Discussions with Heads of Schools in relation to workload management and how research and enterprise can be better included as part of our staff development reviews;
- Discussions on how to support our research environment and culture with the Research Leadership community;
- All staff Town Hall meetings to discuss our 2030 research strategy;
- Annual Researcher Development needs analysis survey of our Early Stage Researcher and Research leadership communities;
- Termly meetings between the PVCRE and our fixed-term contract researcher community.

The Action Plan and our ten year review report were considered and have been approved by our Research & Ethics Committee (REC).

The development of our HR Excellence in Research documentation sits alongside and works in parallel with the University Equality & Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), with the Equality & Diversity working group that was put in place to support our REF 2021 submission; with the Graduate College in terms of our PhD student provision; and with our emerging work in support of the Knowledge Exchange agenda through the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), and the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC).

2. Key Achievements and Progress

The last two academic years have been both unusual, and busy, with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and with submission to REF 2021 and KEC. The University has also been embedding a new academic structure over this time period, and grappling with the financial implications of a drop in student numbers which has put enormous pressure on academic staff and limited to some degree, the amount of progress we had hoped to make. Key achievements and progress that have been made are as follows:

2.1 Research Environment and Culture

- A new 2030 Research strategy was developed over this period, involving extensive consultation across our academic staff and leadership community. Our strategic objectives for 2030 are focussed around the following four thematic areas:

- Strengthening our research environment and culture;
- Building our research enterprise and knowledge exchange profile and activities;
- Creating a distinctive international research profile, linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- Ensuring that our research underpins everything that we do.
- Actions aligned to the above themes have been included within our Concordat Action Plan. They were also embedded across our Institutional Research Environment and UoA Environment statements for REF 2021, confirming our commitment to an inclusive and supportive research culture across the organisation.
- In academic year 202/21, we collaborated with a Mindfulness Coach to create a series of podcasts for academic staff, and built on this in academic year 2021/22 by offering an additional three podcasts dealing with life after lockdown and living with Covid-19, supported by six facilitated drop-in workshops for staff to address the issues raised.
- As part of our support for the research environment across the University, we introduced an HEQR Seed fund programme in 2020/21, and have just launched our third round of calls for funding, with criteria focussed around demonstrable outcomes that are aligned to strategic priorities, and to the School and University research environment. All staff are eligible for funding, with a ring-fenced allocation for Early Stage (ESR) and Fixed-term contract researchers (FTCR).

2.2 Employment

- As a result of consultation with our academic staff community, HR and Heads of School, we launched a Research & Enterprise Development plan for academic staff to use as a tool to inform their Staff Development Review (annual appraisal) discussions.
- The Development Plan was developed to inform discussions around workload allocations, in parallel with the launch of the Workload Planning (WLP) tool pilot in academic year 2021/22. This will be instrumental in helping staff to ensure that time for research and enterprise activities are protected and incorporated into the WLP allocations each year.
- In academic year 20/21 we introduced our first Research & Enterprise Leadership programme, which culminated with a presentation to the Senior leadership Group in July 2021 setting out recommendations on how the university could use its emerging research and enterprise leadership community to support our unique offer at Bath Spa of close-to-practice research, innovation and collaboration.
- In response to the Black Lives Matters movement, we collaborated with the Black South West Network (BSWN) to offer a series of workshops around the topic of 'Delivering Inclusion in Research'. The overall goals for the programme were to:
 - Provide members of BSU with a working foundation on the concepts of race, racism, inclusion, diversity and epistemological decolonisation and how these concepts matter in their work.
 - Aid members of BSU in the development of action plans around enacting inclusive practices in their research to increase meaningful and sustained engagement with BAME communities and policy makers.
 - Create a space for exploration and provocation for members of BSU to question and learn as a way to enhance research skills.

2.3 Professional and Career Development

- We continue to support professional and career development of our staff through the Researcher development Programme (RDP).
- In 2020/21, in support of our Fixed Term Contract/Research fellow community, we put in place 'The Network' - a series of eternally facilitated workshops focussed around their needs and development. The success of the programme has led to an ongoing self-facilitation model for the group, supported by a small

budget to support additional development needs. We have also created for 2021/22 an additional network to support our wider Early Stage Researcher community - through a series of workshops externally facilitated and built on their needs.

- A survey of Research Leaders and Early Stage Researchers was undertaken at the start of the 2021/22 academic year, to understand their training and development needs, and to support the ongoing ESR mentor programme. The outcomes of the survey have been built into the RDP for 2021/22 and have informed the development of the Concordat Action Plan.

3. Next steps and the focus of the strategy for the next two years

Our Action Plan details the actions that we feel that we are able to achieve, given the context of a challenging financial position for the university moving forward, and the focus of the University’s activities around income generation, recovery and renewal; with a more targeted approach to research in specified areas of research excellence, rather than across the whole institution.

Concordat Area	Priority Actions	Success Measures
Research Environment and Culture	<p>Identify our core areas of excellent and world leading research and work with Senior Leadership to develop and embed new research governance structures, supported by more focussed research support initiatives.</p> <p>Participation in CEDAR survey 2023 0 results analysis to inform further development of Concordat work.</p>	<p>Successful review of research areas of excellence emerging out of REF 2021 results.</p> <p>New research governance structure aligned to Concordat objectives.</p>
Employment	<p>Embedding the research and enterprise development plan in the WLP allocation and SDR processes, and ensuring that time is ring-fenced and allocated appropriately to support research & enterprise activities, and staff development (working towards 10 days/FTE allocation for all researchers).</p> <p>Relaunch of the Research Equality & Diversity working group, to lead work on research inclusion practices across the University.</p>	<p>Agreement of WP tariff for all research and enterprise activities, including dedicated allocation for staff development.</p> <p>Active and engaged REDWG in place by March 2022.</p>
Professional and Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing training and development of our research and enterprise leadership community. • Ongoing support and development for our ESR community and for our contract researchers, including review of RDP based on needs of staff, and continued support to the ESR mentor programme; • Focus of HEQR income on support for the development of staff in research priority areas, mapped against Vitae RDF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of 2nd cohort of Research & Enterprise Leadership community • Evolution of the researcher network and ESR networks into supportive communities of practice. • HEQR funding ring fenced to support RDP in 2022/23 onwards.