Swansea University
HR Excellence in Research Report 2018

Swansea University and Research:
Swansea University is a research intensive institution with 4,106 staff, of whom 419 are research-only staff. The results of the Research Excellence Framework (REF2014) placed Swansea University 26th overall and 22nd for Research Impact in the UK. 80% of our entire submission was assessed as 'world leading' 4* and 'internationally excellent' 3* which demonstrates that Swansea University delivers excellent research across all disciplines and that we are committed to creating a research environment and culture that supports strategic growth in staff, students, income, infrastructure and esteem indicators.

How we evaluated:
This evaluation was led through the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG) chaired by Professor Perumal Nithiarasu, Deputy Head of College of Engineering, Director of Research and Institutional Academic lead for Research Impact and nominated by the Senior PVC (Research) - Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott. The RSWG has been active since September 2016 with defined [Terms of Reference](#). Research staff representatives are members of this group. The group meets with the purpose of supporting personal, professional and career development aligned to the Researcher Development Framework and oversees the delivery of the Concordat Action Plan for Research Staff. This evaluation was conducted by the Learning & Development Manager, Rose Cooze, supported by the RSWG, and reporting into the Committee for Research and Innovation Strategy (CRIS). Oversight and strategic leadership has been provided by the Director of HR, Sian Cushion, and the Senior PVC (Research), who chairs both CRIS and the Athena SWAN Strategy Group, thereby demonstrating Institutional commitment to researcher support at a strategic level.

Evidence: CROS and PIRLS surveys, direct consultation with researchers and central support via the RSWG; and Institutional work on Athena SWAN, the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and the Race Equality Charter. The review has also been informed by the minutes from the RSWG and the Swansea Response to the Concordat Review. Feedback on the priority areas for the Concordat Action plan was gathered at the Swansea University Researcher Development Day (30th November 2017), and this has been used to inform our forward action plan. In 2017, CROS was sent to 372 Research Staff, of whom 146 responded (39%), more than the national average (24%). 111 PI's at Swansea (32%) responded to the PIRLS.

Key achievements and progress since 2016
Principle 1: Recruitment and selection

- **The number of research staff at Swansea has increased** with 152 new appointments made in 2017/18. In the academic year 2017-18, 153 research jobs were advertised to support the University's ambition to grow the quality, scale and impact of our world-class research.
- **The University has introduced a robust, five-stage recruitment framework applicable for all vacancies including research posts**. Embedded at each stage is a focus on attracting and selecting a high quality applicant from a diverse pool of candidates. To achieve this, we encourage the use of positive action statements and the use of wholly inclusive language in our job descriptions and adverts. The framework supports gender balanced panels for shortlisting and interview panels and selection decisions are evidence based in respect of transparent work-related criteria to ensure we select only on merit.
- CROS survey data (2017) showed Swansea researchers as more likely to believe that our recruitment and selection process is fair (67% compared to 65% nationally). This has increased since the last CROS survey (63%)
- Promotion guidelines are provided for research staff and the processes are displayed on the [University's webpage](#). **40% of Swansea Researchers believe they have opportunities for promotion and progression compared to 34% nationally** (CROS, 2017). Since the last submission, 29 Researchers have been promoted.
- With the help and support of Research Hubs, Colleges and HR, the number of prestigious **Fellowship appointments at Swansea has increased greatly**. 18 Research Fellows were appointed over the previous period (2014 to 2016). This grew to 37 appointments during 2016 to 2018. During 2016-18, four members of our research staff have been awarded Sêr Cymru II Fellowships (part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Welsh Government) plus one has been awarded a Sêr Cymru II Rising Star Fellowship. In March 2018, Professor Hilary Lappin-Scott launched the Florence Mockeridge Fellowship Group. Seven researchers across the Institution are being provided with support and mentoring to grow their research and reach their potential.
- The Learning and Development (L&D) Manager attends all University Inductions to raise awareness of the University's commitment to research through the Concordat and the HR Excellence in Research award, as well as highlighting to research staff the wide range of support available.

Principle 2: Recognition and Value

- The University is committed to a culture of Performance Enabling which aims to support and enable employees to achieve their potential, succeed in their roles and thereby deliver the University's key strategic outcomes. All leaders at Grade 7 and above, including Research leaders, are expected to participate in the University's leadership skilling framework and those at Grade 9 and above are given the opportunity to engage in 360 leadership feedback, based on our leadership values. 381 leaders have completed at least one module of the skilling programme, and 420 have participated in 360 feedback this year (Leaders include colleagues that line manage researchers). The Directors of Research from each of our seven Colleges are currently engaged in the programme

- The uptake of open-ended contracts has increased significantly since 2016. **In 2016, 53 members of research staff were on fixed-term contracts with 4+ years of service, this has been reduced to one in 2018 (as of 15th June each year).** With effect from May 2018, monthly compliance reports ensure this process is transparent and embedded across the Institution.

- The University continues to operate a redeployment process, which gives staff approaching the end of a fixed-term contract prior consideration for roles within the Institution before wider advertisement. In response to feedback at the Researcher Development Day (November 2017), a new session – **'Successfully Obtaining and Securing your new role – CV and writing workshop' has been introduced into the University L&D programme**. 20 Researchers have attended to date. The newly appointed Chief Operating Officer and Registrar has personally delivered a session on 'Job Application and Interview Skills' to support all staff at Swansea, including research staff.

- In recognition of their important and influential role at the RSWG, three members were supported to attend the Vitae Research Staff conference in September 2018 and the learning from this conference was used to feedback to the research community via the RSWG and inform the future Concordat Action Plan.

- Every year, 30 highly promising early/mid-career researchers from across Wales are selected to take part in Welsh Crucible, via a highly competitive process, managed by the six Partner Institutions. **Over the last two years, Swansea has been successful in obtaining 15 of the 60 places on offer** (8 in 2017, 7 in 2018). 27 % of those places went to research only staff (3 in 2017, 1 in 2018). Swansea was the only Partner Institution in 2018 to send a post-doctoral research assistant.

- Work continues to promote the role of researchers and help raise the status of research staff as key members of the academic community. Researchers have been represented in the prestigious **University Research and Innovation Awards** where we celebrate a wide range of the exceptional research and innovation taking place, and the impact this has across the world. Each year throughout this period, we have showcased a range of successful and inspiring women that work, study and support Swansea University, both past and present. The 2018 theme was "lift as you climb", demonstrating how our inspiring women have used their success to help others achieve, or to affect positive change.

- **More researchers than ever are familiar with Swansea's HR Excellence in Research Award Recognition** (66% in 2017 compared to 36% in 2014; CROS 2017).

- Research hubs are embedded at College level to support local research needs, and are populated by knowledgeable professional services staff including bid writers, research development officers and impact and engagement officers. These professionals understand the purpose and strategic aims of the University and College and support researchers in finding funding and developing bids, writing them and helping with post-award functions.

Principle 3 and 4: Support and Career Development

- Annual Performance Development Reviews (PDR's) are embedded across the Institution. In 2016 and 2017, 99% of eligible staff took part in a PDR and interim reviews across the period. The majority of Research staff (62%) rate their PDR as either useful or very useful, which is comparable to the national average. PIs at Swansea are slightly more confident in conducting appraisals (73%) than the national average (70%).

- L&D has reviewed and updated its core offer of development opportunities. At the request of the RSWG, research staff now receive a dedicated monthly bulletin highlighting the range and depth of development on offer. 59 courses are available for research staff, including 14 new courses for this year.

- Centrally organised training is recorded on the University's learning management system and 75% of Researchers at Swansea maintain a formal record of development activities compared to only 60% nationally (CROS, 2017).

- **Researchers have the opportunity to enter the Research as Art competition which provides a platform for students, researchers and staff at Swansea University to convey the importance of their research.** The winner in 2017 was a member of research staff.

- College research hubs have implemented **networking 'Sandpit' Events** - bringing colleagues together from across the University to learn about the research strengths across the University, share ideas and generate inter disciplinary and multi-disciplinary proposals to submit to funders. 170 researchers have attended sessions from

February to November 2018. There have been successful outputs from the EPSRC Healthy Nation and the ESRC Mental Health Cross-Disciplinary Network.

- Researchers at Swansea are able to access development across the University via Professional Services Directorates (including HR L&D, REIS, ISS, Estates and Academic Services), including, where appropriate, development via the postgraduate-research (PGR) led [training and skills programme.](#)

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

- Researchers share the responsibility for their personal and career development – the vast majority of respondents to CROS 2017 (90%) agreed or strongly agreed that they take ownership of their career development.
- Research staff continue to be represented on University committees, including committees to support Women in Research and Athena SWAN to help deliver the research actions.
- The Researcher Development Day (November 2017) was designed by researchers for researchers.
- This year 60 applications were received from our staff, including researchers, for the annual Swansea Science Festival, which acts to showcase and celebrate the research and the researchers at Swansea University, resulting in over 40 interactive exhibitions at a family focused festival, which attracted over 6000 visitors.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

- The University's commitments to equality and diversity are set out in our [2020 Strategic Plan](#). Researchers were positive about how the University demonstrates that commitment, with **42% agreeing strongly that Swansea is committed to equality and diversity compared to 38% nationally** (CROS, 2017).
- In recognition of its efforts to advancing women's careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research, the University was successful in gaining the **Athena SWAN Silver award in 2017**, one of only 13 Universities in 2017 to hold a silver award. Four Colleges currently hold individual awards, with an ambitious plan to increase this by 2020. Biosciences achieved the Bronze award November 2018. The School of Management submitted in November 2018 for the Bronze award.
- The University continues to champion equality initiatives beyond Athena SWAN by engaging in the **Stonewall Equality Index**. In 2018, Swansea was recognised as a top 30 employer for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and is 6th in the UK HE Sector.
- **Researchers at Swansea strongly agree that they are treated equally with other types of staff when it comes to requests for flexible working** (40% at Swansea compared to 28% nationally; CROS, 2017). 24% of Researchers surveyed in CROS 2017 agreed strongly that Swansea promotes better health and wellbeing at work (compared to 13% nationally).

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- Progress on the Swansea Concordat Action plan has been overseen by the CRIS, Chaired by the Senior PVC Research
- The RSWG has met on a biannual basis in the run up to submission in order to monitor progress against the action plan and to highlight any concerns and priorities in a timely manner. Members of this group were able to feed into the Concordat 10 year review.
- Specific actions within the 2018-20 plan are assigned to Professional Service Directorates and Colleges. Implementation of the activities and timescales specified in the action plan will continue to be reviewed by the RSWG, and will be overseen by the CRIS.
- Swansea will participate in CROS 2019, in addition to running its own in-house Cultural Survey.

Priorities for action (2019-21)

Principles 1 & 2: Recruitment, Selection, Recognition and value

- Continue to sustain 100% PDR participation rates - enabling all staff to have meaningful professional development conversations.
- HR L&D will carry out a **review of existing University induction**, investigating perceived barriers to induction with Researchers and PI's, and implement improved provision for Researchers. HR to develop a process to monitor and ensure all staff complete staff induction within the first month of employment (December 2019). 100% of researchers are satisfied with the quality of induction (June 2020).
- Increase the number of research fellowships 2019-2021 by 20% (from baseline of 37 2016-18).
- HR will embed the new recruitment process and monitor the number of researchers being recruited and appointed to a written job description. CROS 2017 indicated that 11% of Researchers had not received a written summary of what the job entailed (compared to 6% nationally). Investigate reasons why this is the case and monitor compliance via new recruitment process for all appointments, including research (September 2019).

Principles 3 & 4: Career development

- Feedback from RSWG highlights that some ECRs are not familiar with the opportunities for promotion or other career routes. The University (HR, REIS) will monitor the number of successful promotions, applications for fellowships and other career progression opportunities. Workshops on the promotion process to be delivered and evaluated (June 2020). 100% of researcher promotion applicants are given feedback on their performance.
- Continue approach for PIs in terms of core leadership development, with 100% eligible staff having engaged or completed the programme by December 2020.
- Package the University researcher support (training, online resources, coaching, mentoring and research guidance) in one clear communication and use the research hubs and RSWG to disseminate (March 2019).
- Although mentoring is supported by the University - not all researchers are aware of it. Review implementation of mentoring within Colleges and make recommendations for increasing uptake by March 2019. Ensure mentoring contacts for each College are identified by July 2019. 100% of new research staff offered a mentor as part of their appointment and induction process. HR L&D to deliver 8 mentoring skills workshops across the reporting period. Establish a baseline percentage of respondents who have a mentor in CROS 2019 and increase by 10% in 2021.
- PGR Office to monitor engagement with the suite of four training modules specifically to **support PGR supervisors**. All new to supervision or new to supervising at Swansea complete 'PGR Supervision at Swansea University.' Aligned to the introduction of new University funded-scholarship schemes, including Research Excellence Scholarships, all supervisors holding these types of scholarship to undertake the PGR Supervision training.
- Continue to offer **flagship public engagement events** such as the Swansea Science Festival, Three Minute Thesis (3MT), Fame Lab and Research as Art to provide researchers with an opportunity to develop their communication skills.
- Continue to support PIs in providing advice to research staff on the range of career opportunities by developing and implementing a checklist for PIs to discuss with their researchers about career development at review meetings (in support of recommendation 13 of the Concordat). PIs continue to feel confident in providing this advice (PIRLS 2019 confidence measure of 70%) and researchers feel that their PDR discussions are useful or very useful in focusing their career aspirations (greater than 60% in CROS 2019).
- CROS 2017 responses indicate that 12.5% of researchers had not participated in training or other CPD activities. Although this is less than the national average (13.93%), researches at the Researcher Development Day 2017 felt that the capacity to attend training and development opportunities remains an issue. Increase the number of online and short courses available to researchers by 10% (September 2019).

Principle 5: Researchers Responsibilities

- HR to implement a system to allow staff at the university to engage with mentors as part of their continuing professional development.
- Review role, function and membership of RSWG (March 2019).
- Researchers are responsible for the integrity of their research and for ensuring it is conducted in an honest and ethical manner. Monitor and review researcher engagement with the online training module for 'Research Integrity' – 100% completion for new research staff and increase % completion of existing staff involved in research.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

- Continue to engage with the Athena SWAN Charter as a means to identify and embed best practice. Colleges and Academic Departments to gain an award by 2020.
- Using 5 stage recruitment process and Management Information, monitor and review recruitment success rates by gender for all appointments, including research staff. Establish baseline data and take positive action to ensure year on year improvement in numbers of females progressing through all stages of the framework.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

- Continue to engage in CROS, PIRLS and PGR Student Experience Survey (2019) and enhance amount of engagement with researchers post survey to better understand views raised. Ensure that the experience of researchers at Swansea is understood and appropriate actions developed.
- Ensure alignment between the actions relating to the Concordat, Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charters and PGR Matters. Work with the REF Manager to ensure that these support the development of the Swansea REF Environment Statement and our Research Strategy.
- Ensure researcher development and progress on the HR Excellence in Research Action Plan progress continues to be regular items at CRIS.

Abbreviations: CRIS - Committee for Research and Innovation Strategy; CROS – Career Researchers Online Survey; ECR's – Early Career Researcher; PI – Principle Investigator; PIRLS - Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey; PGR – Postgraduate Research; PVCR – Pro Vice Chancellor for Research; HR – Human Resources; L&D – Learning and Development; HoD – Head of Department; ISS – Information Services & Systems; REIS Research, Engagement & Innovation Services; SEA – Swansea Employability Academy; HRER - HR Excellence in Research; RSWG – Research Staff Working Group