

## HR Excellence in Research: 2013-2015 review and progress report

Full details of progress against The University of Kent (Kent) 2013–2015 HR Excellence in Research Action Plan are available [here](#). We have added three columns to the original Action Plan: **Progress since 2013**, **2015-2017 actions required** and **2015-2017 timeline**. This report summarises (a) how the internal review was undertaken, (b) key achievements / progress to date and (c) next steps for 2015–2017.

### A. How the internal evaluation was undertaken

**1.1** Internal evaluation is a continuous process at Kent. Implementation of Kent’s Action Plan is co-ordinated by the [Researcher Development Working Group](#) (RDWG) - an established set of [representatives](#) with a remit to ensure that actions are implemented and reviewed consistent with the principles of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) (Concordat). Specific actions under each Concordat principle were assigned to departments and centres within the University. Progress is **evaluated by RDWG** and monitored between meetings by the RDWG Secretary.

**1.2** RDWG and HR Excellence in Research are **fully integrated** with existing QA and other implementation/monitoring mechanisms at Kent. RDWG meets four times per year and is responsible to the [Research and Innovation Board](#) (RIB) within the established governance structures of the University. RDWG submits a quarterly summary report of progress to RIB and through RIB reports to Senate. Further details, including on the governance and structure of RDWG, can be found in the [original plan](#).

**1.3** The RDWG summary report is shared with each Faculty Research and Enterprise Committee (REC) by each Faculty researcher representative on RDWG. All RDWG papers are available on [SharePoint](#) and regular [updates posted](#).

**1.4** Alongside these regular monitoring mechanisms – RDWG has carried out an extensive programme of consultation and involvement to ensure that researcher views have been taken into account throughout 2013 - 2015. Ongoing researcher involvement has built on what was started in 2013. That initial review enabled the development of a number of new researcher networks in schools and the encouragement of the ‘**researcher voice**’. Building on this, since 2013, we have:

- Held regular researcher forums across all three Faculties at the Canterbury and Medway campuses. RDWG’s focus has been on setting up a **comprehensive researcher on-line resource centre** at Kent (see below) and the ‘researcher voice’ has been central to scoping this provision. An important element of researcher involvement and evaluation has been during the initial design phase and the upcoming beta testing phase of the on-line resource centre
- Received written submissions through forum participant feedback forms
- Conducted a more detailed follow-up [questionnaire survey](#) to that reported on in our 2013 submission. This survey will be re-run annually to assess the impact of the researcher on-line resource centre and other initiatives
- Involved researchers in developing the new University People Strategy through questionnaire surveys and a focus group

### B. Summary of key achievements and progress linked to Concordat principles

**2.1** The cornerstone of progress at Kent has been the establishment and successful working of RDWG. [Researchers form the core of RDWG](#) with one research leader and one researcher representative from each of the three faculties. Other RDWG members are Research Services, Graduate School, Unit for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching and HR Learning & Development. Guest speakers and experts who have joined RDWG meeting as appropriate include HR Employment Support & Resourcing (ESRT); Equality; Diversity & Inclusivity (EDI); the Careers & Employability Service (CES).

**2.2** RDWG has achieved excellent connectivity across the breadth of departments that support researchers and has raised the profile of the Concordat, HR Excellence in Research and researcher development at Kent (for example: 71% awareness of Early Career Researcher Network, increased awareness of Vitae RDF - 2015 survey: 31% aware, 2013 Survey: 18% aware). RDWG has promoted synergy between HR Excellence in Research and other staff and organisation development initiatives that have an impact of the development of research careers. For example: Athena SWAN, Research Impact events, Enterprise & Innovation and the Higher Education Academy Professional Standards Framework.

**2.3** RDWG is the forum for ensuring best practice follow-through across The Concordat, HR Excellence, Researcher Development, funder requirements and the REF (Environment Template REF 5 Section c. People, i. Staffing strategy and staff development). RDWG is currently exploring possible correlations between reported staff development activity and REF outcomes for Schools.

**2.4** Kent was ranked joint 10th in terms of submission percentage in REF 2014. Kent submitted a high proportion of eligible staff and, based on data available, our [Equality Impact Analysis](#) shows that submission rates for men and women were much closer; part-time much closer to full-time; BME inclusion has remained on par with the overall rate and disabled inclusion now exceeds overall inclusion. The inclusion rate for women with an allowance for maternity leave was comparable with the overall inclusion rate. Kent is focused on improving institute-wide research quality by supporting and developing a wide and diverse group of researchers.

**2.5** We are confident that Kent is addressing the challenges identified at the **first meeting of the new Vitae South East Region** (23 March 2014). For example: researcher development is on the agenda at a high level (1.2 above); connections are being made between REF outcomes and researcher development (2.3); mentoring support is being extended and a new on-line resource centre “pulls together” the breadth of researcher development provision at Kent and externally.

**2.7** In our 2013 Plan specific actions under each Concordat principle were assigned to departments and centres within the University. Progress against these is set out in full in the [updated plan](#). **In summary, key achievements are:**

Principle 1: (1.1) Successful working of RDWG and wide understanding of how HR Excellence in Research supports research excellence; (1.2) Diversity and Equality **inputs** such as the Valuing Everyone Programme and REF Equality Impact programme and **outcomes** in terms of REF inclusion and Athena SWAN awards; (1.3-1.5); increasing awareness among researchers (2015 survey) of the opportunities for career progression and promotion underpinned by support from HR and Research Services.

Principle 2: (2.1) 2015 surveys shows an increase (from 44% to 63%) in those who have had an appraisal or review interview and high awareness (65%) of the University Reflect-Plan-Develop (RPD) process. Links to the Vitae RDF are now built in to RPD; (2.2) increased opportunity for researchers to be employed on open-ended contracts where appropriate and programmes (for example Eastern ARC Fellows) to support development into academic roles; (2.3–2.4, 2.6) comprehensive and clearly signposted development and career support through the new **‘researcher development’ on-line resource centre** to be launched in June 2015; (2.5) career pathways, pay and progression information supported by briefing programmes. School Planning Meetings with the HR Managers include a specific focus on researchers – promoting a more personalised approach to managing research careers. 2015 survey shows an increasing number of researchers progressing through the grade scales (from 26% to 39%).

Principle 3: High awareness of the Early Career Researcher Network (71%) and Grants Factory programmes (82%); career development and training provision is integrated through the new ‘researcher development’ on-line resource centre; increased participation in induction (43% to 49%); University mentoring programme rolled out to (and adapted for) researchers; learning from best practice career support in Schools and extended Careers and Employability Service support including a successful ‘Careers outside Academia’ pilot; research prizes launched; Researcher Development Fund launched (2015 survey: 43% awareness).

Principle 4: As above with an emphasis on the promotion of personal and career development opportunities. Researchers have been extensively consulted and involved in scoping the new

`researcher development' on-line resource centre; input into policy and practice particularly through RDWG and RIB; increase (30% to 45%) in researchers reporting that they have had a career development discussion; extended enterprise training and `maximising your research impact' event.

Principle 5: As above plus: the on-line resource centre includes `user journeys' that map each stage of a research career (5.4). The website is designed to support researchers in taking individual responsibility for identifying their training needs and finding opportunities to address them (5.5). The 2015 survey reported that more respondents have written PDPs (14% to 22%).

Principle 6: High uptake and positive response to the REF 2014 Equality and Diversity training (Kent submitted a high proportion of eligible staff and was joint 10th in terms of submissions percentage); REF Equality Impact Analysis and Action Plan; Stonewall Workplace Index 15<sup>th</sup> out of 47 HE institutions; Pay Audit in process; Valuing Everyone programme; (6.4) positive 2015 survey feedback on the Kent maternity leave programme; (6.10) Athena Swan Awards (University award and six Schools).

Principle 7: (7.1) Integration of researchers into the mainstream management and career development structures at Kent is achieved (for example) through role profiles and grading structure, RPD, access to core L&D programmes in addition to researcher-specific development and RDWG / HR Excellence in Research being fully integrated into core processes at Kent. Kent has increased its participation in Vitae activity (7.4)

### **C. Summary of next steps 2015 -2017**

In the context of changes outlined in the endnotes to the full [Action Plan](#) , these next steps may need to be adapted in-line with new strategic commitments made by the University.

Principle 1: New University Research & Innovation Strategy and new University People Strategy to align with the significance accorded by the University to the development of research staff, the Concordat and HR Excellence in Research; roll out and development of the new `researcher development' on-line resource centre [**assess** through website analytics and researcher surveys]; develop researcher profile monitoring following the launch of Staff Connect; respond to the findings of the REF Equality Impact Analysis.

Principle 2: increase researcher use of RDF, RPD, induction, mentoring and careers / end of contract support [**assess** through participation numbers, Staff Connect and researcher surveys]; explore options for specialist researcher career surgeries using external experts; encourage the use of the `researcher development' on-line resource centre and associated programmes / on-line resources [**assess** through website analytics, participation numbers and researcher surveys]; share best practice across Schools.

Principle 3: as above plus extend pilot programmes such as `Careers outside academia', mentoring and the development fund [**assess** through participation numbers and researcher surveys]. Further analysis of REF Environment Template (REF 5) Section c. People, i. Staffing strategy and provide support to individual Schools as required [**assess** through next REF]. Explore options for placements to broaden awareness of other fields.

Principle 4: as 2 and 3 above with the emphasis on ever more visible and successful **promotion** of personal and career development opportunities through both the on-line resource centre and continued development of networks such as the Early Career Researcher Network [**assess** through website analytics, participation numbers and researcher surveys].

Principle 5: Develop more semi-structured `bite size' programmes modelled on the Kent Enterprise and Innovation Network [**assess** through participation numbers and Staff Connect]. Work with researchers to take ownership of setting up UKRSA at Kent.

Principle 6: Monitoring of protected characteristics through Staff Connect. Respond to the findings of the REF Equality Impact Analysis and the Pay Audit. Support the extension of Athena SWAN to other Schools [**assess** through Athena SWAN awards].

Principle 7: Promote the sharing of good practice: explore links on Researcher Development with [Eastern ARC](#) partners and [Universities at Medway](#). Continue to build Kent's engagement with Vitae.