University of Chichester: EC HR Excellence in Research Award
four-year review (November, 2017)

Introduction
The University achieved the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award in November 2013, and successfully retained the award at the two-year review point. We have continued to work hard to enhance and improve the support, guidance and infrastructure to facilitate the continuing development of our researchers. In the original application we described how we extended the definition of researcher to include all of our academic staff, contract research staff and PhD students; this reflects the University’s collegial ethos and its commitment to sustaining a flourishing community of researchers. The total number of academic staff has grown from 244 (211 FTE) in 2015 to 266 in 2017 (228.6 FTE). The number of contract research staff has also grown from 3 staff in 2015 to 10 in 2017 all of whom are on fixed term contracts within the same department and working on a large government funded project. During the last year there were a further 2 research assistants on hourly paid contracts which came to an end during the year.

The University’s strategy 2020 Vision has been in place since 2013/14, and the new Research Strategy was consulted upon and then launched at the start of 2016. The strapline of the Research Strategy 2015/16 to 2020/21 is ‘Growing areas of excellence in a research community where everyone makes a contribution’. Whilst there was no specific mention of contract research staff there is a strong emphasis on a research community that embraces and extends beyond academic staff. An interim review of the Research Strategy has just been undertaken and is feeding into a series of strategic discussions amongst senior management instigated by the new leadership team during the first semester of 2017/18.

Another significant development that will, in time, provide more opportunities to grow our research portfolio, as well as specifically our contract researcher community, is the creation of a new department of Engineering and Design. This will be a new addition and direction for the University as it enters into these disciplines for the first time. The initiative has received substantial support from the Local Enterprise Partnership, HEFCE and local industry.

Lastly, and significantly, since the 2 year review the University now has a new leadership team (new Vice-Chancellor, and two new Deputy Vice-Chancellors). Despite this period of change research continues to be a priority for the University’s development. The data below indicates the University’s progress in that regard:

- The University now has 126 PhD students, doubling in the past 5 years;
- Research income is at its highest level ever;
- The number of research articles on Web of Science has increased by 51% in the period 2011-2016; and the rate of production has increased by 38% since 2011.

Undertaking the internal review
At its meeting of December 2016 the University’s Research Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, commissioned a Concordat Working Group to monitor progress against the University’s action plan. The group was led by the Research Development Officer (Research Office) and included a senior academic, a member of the Research Committee, a contract researcher and a representative of the HR team nominated by the Director of HR. The group met once as a group, once with the HR Officer and consulted via email during the period and reported back its findings to the Research Committee in October 2017 who then discussed...
the final report. The views of the different constituencies of the University's research community (as defined above) were taken into account in a number of ways as described below.

The concordat working group included representation from contract researchers and senior academic staff.

The Research Committee extended its membership on 2016/17 to include, for the first time, a researcher on a fixed term research-only contract. At the same time it was agreed to extend the membership of the Research Degrees Group (a subordinate committee of the Research Committee) to include a PhD student representative.

The voice of researchers who are academic staff was sought through the PIRLS survey which the University ran for the first time in 2017. Other views were engendered through the working group and the Committee membership (which includes 11 academics, 1 PhD student and 1 contract researcher).

Response to PIRLS was disappointing with a response rate of 9% (against a sector average of 25%). Various reasons for the poor response were considered, including insufficient internal promotion (email campaign only), duration of survey (5 weeks only), timing (many academics involved in marking and away from routine academic duties), and colleagues not identifying themselves as Principal Investigators or Leaders and therefore not seeing PIRLS as relevant to them.

Key themes emerging from the PIRLS was an appetite for Research Mentoring, and for further research training, particularly in the area of supervising PhD students and in managing projects and groups. In general, the University scores were higher than the sector wide benchmark scores, although not to the question ‘I understand how my research activities are aligned with my institution's strategic priorities’ which likely reflects the University’s devolved approach to individual’s choice of research topics. A total of 92% of respondents stated that they have a a good level of job satisfaction (compared to 76% in the sector).

The general staff survey undertaken in 2016 provided opportunity for all employees to share their perspective on all aspects of their experience at the University. Whilst there were no specific questions for research, recourse to the data reveals a small number of comments that relate to research. A total of 21 respondents (N= 360) identified research as one of the aspects that they most enjoyed about working at the University (3 cited researcher development as a positive), and 12 respondents identified research as one of the aspects that they least enjoyed about working at the University (none mentioned researcher development).

In September 2017 the Director of Research and Research Development Officer met all 10 contract researchers as a single group to discuss career aspirations and support as part of the consultation exercise.

Key achievements in the 4 year period
The 2 year review document describes the key achievements for 2013/14 and 2014/15, including:

- Achievement of University’s best REF/RAE result in its history (Principle 2)
- Achievement of Research Degree Awarding Powers which provided external recognition of the quality and maturity of the University's Research Environment (Principle 2)
• Alignment with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Principle 5)
• The launch of the Researcher Development Awards supporting 13 ECRs to accelerate their careers and networks (Principles 1-5)
• Launch of new Research Strategy which includes explicit commitment to researcher development and mentoring for research (Principle 2)
• The instigation of Researcher Development Days (Principles 3 and 4)
• Retention of Two-Ticks status “Positive about disabled people” (Principle 6).

The twin imperatives of REF and RDAP raised the pace of change during the preceding period. Since 2014/15 the pace of change has been slower as the focus has moved to ensuring that new systems, procedures and initiatives are embedded; furthermore staff changes in the Research Office meant some centrally driven initiatives were delayed slightly. Nevertheless, key achievements in the last 2 years are as follows:

• Operating PIRLS for the first time. Despite the low response rate the PIRLS gave some interesting information, particularly on the institution specific questions on mentoring (Cross Concordat);
• Changing the Terms of Reference and Membership of the University’s Research Committee to include a Contract Researcher (Principle 4);
• Capture of external research project funding to recruit a (relatively) large team of contract researchers as research assistants and research fellows (most significant in University’s history). The whole researcher team received their first PRDP (following consultation as part of the HR Excellence Award) (Principle 1);
• Launch of the Social Sciences Research Network addressing a need identified as part of an annual review of researcher activity to support early career researchers in the social sciences. The network has expanded the range of networking and peer support and opportunities for ECRs in the social sciences to network with the smaller number of experienced researchers. Five meetings have been held with an average attendance of 10-15 researchers, around 70% ECRs (Principle 3).

Although not driven by the Concordat there have been further developments at the institutional level with respect to equality and diversity. For example a focus on BAME and UG student recruitment, progression and employability has also led to the inception of the Advancing Diversity and BAME Group to advise the Vice Chancellor’s Group about recruitment of academic BAME staff and students: a number of initiatives are underway but impact will not be discernible immediately due to the cycles of recruitment. The University has also retained the Disability Confident employer symbol (Principle 6).

**Areas where progress has been slower**

Whilst some progress has been made to develop capacity and activity around coaching and mentoring for research (Principle 4) this has not been as much as initially anticipated. Nonetheless, the situation is better understood and a baseline position established; a review of departmental research statements (April 2017) revealed that the most frequently cited thematic area departments was around staff development with a specific link to mentoring (featuring in 12 of 16 departments list of the top 3 priorities for research). This analysis was supported by the data arising from bespoke institutional questions in PIRLS about mentoring at the University. The data revealed that 48% of respondents have either acted as a research mentor or received mentoring in the past 5 years, and 40% of respondents reported that they had had a positive experience of being mentored (4% had had a negative experience). Work to further embed and expand mentoring capacity is occurring in pockets; the Research Office deal with a small number of requests and make recommendations to match mentors with mentees, the department of Childhood, Social Work and Social Care are in the process of launching an ‘Academic journal writing mentorship’ scheme for 6 early
career research staff in the department. Sport and Exercise Sciences have utilised visiting academics as mentors for a small number of colleagues. A total of 28% of PIRLS respondents stated that they would like training on how to be an effective mentor. A coaching and mentoring programme was embedded in the Researcher Development Awards scheme and all 13 members of the cohort attended the introductory session with 12 taking at least one further session. 6 individuals took up an additional session, and a further 3 attended all 4 sessions made available to them. Feedback has been broadly positive, with individuals noting that the sessions have enabled them to think differently about their career trajectories, their confidence as researchers and their own ability to coach others.

Next steps and focus for next two years
The four-year review process requires the University to identify its action plan for the next two years. The proposed key actions are:

- Increase PIRLS uptake to at least 20% of staff base (PIRLS 2019)
- Following a review of current practice, implement a careers/professional development induction pack for hourly paid and contract researchers as part of their appointment (Q4 2018) (Concordat 3.6)
- Hold an annual funding workshop bespoke to contract researchers with 50% attendance of contract researchers (Q1 2018) (Concordat 3.3 and 3.9)
- Achieve 100% participation in PRDP for contract researchers on contracts of one year or more (Q3 2018) (Concordat 2.3)
- 50% contract researchers to have had an interview with a careers consultant and/or undertaken a skills audit to ensure that researchers’ CVs best reflect their skills and experience (Q4 2018) (Concordat 3.2)
- Achieve at least 33% of contract researchers participating in offered exit interviews at end of contract (Q4 2018) (Concordat 3.2)
- Provide opportunities for contract researchers to develop additional competencies outside of their core research duties (all CRs to have taken up at least one opportunity) (Q1 2019) (Concordat 3.2 and 3.7)
- Launch Professional Doctorate which will provide a new opportunity for formal research training for academic staff researchers, with at least 3 academic staff registering (2018/19) (Concordat 4.2, 5.5 and 5.6)
- Achieve 55% of all respondent in PIRLS 2019 stating they have either been a mentor or mentee in the past 5 years (2019) (Concordat 3.8, 4.5, and 5.6)
- Achieve 80% of respondents in PIRLS 2019 who have who had a mentoring experience stating that it was positive (Concordat 3.8, 4.5, and 5.6)
- Provide training to at least 20 staff in research mentoring (Q1 2019) (Concordat 3.8, 4.5, and 5.6)
- Submit an institutional application for Athena Swan (2019) (Concordat 6.10)
- Roll out new Research Integrity training in 2018/19 aiming for participation from 50 researchers in the year (Concordat 5.1)
- Ensure widest possible spectrum of equality-related data is collected as part of the next institutional review of individuals’ research activity (Q4 2018) (Concordat 6.1).

In addition the University is reviewing the academic career pathway and the use of Lecturer and Senior Lecturer roles within the academic progression route. This is being driven by senior colleagues outside of the HR Excellence award process, but nonetheless will lead to benefits relating to researcher development such as a wider range of entry points for researchers seeking academic positions and a more structured approach to career progression.