

In September 2010 Heriot-Watt University (HWU) received the “HR Excellence in Research” award from the European Commission. In 2012, an internal assessment of progress against the original 2010 Concordat Implementation Plan was carried out and an action plan for 2012-14 put in place. In 2014, HWU successfully retained the Award after an external assessment. In 2016, an internal assessment was carried out against the progress of the 2014-2018 Action Plan. A new [2016-2018 Action Plan](#) was put in place and is subject to external review with a new 2018-20 Action Plan in place.

1. About Heriot-Watt University

Heriot-Watt University's current strategy “**Global thinking, worldwide influence**” aims to place Heriot-Watt University at the forefront of research and research-led education in the UK and internationally. The University's priorities are to:

- Promote new interdisciplinary fields of research, emphasising economic and societal benefit in order to generate high impact outputs and attract significant research funding to increase critical mass;
- Develop further strategic collaborations through national and international academic and industrial research alliances;
- Take advantage of our international campuses and worldwide learning partnerships to extend research opportunities;
- Facilitate research management through research-led institutes and interdisciplinary research centres, providing focus and identify to enhance research opportunities, performance and funding;
- Support innovation and entrepreneurship in the creation of new enterprise; and
- Increase the number of research students commensurate with an expanded research landscape

Heriot-Watt University has five core values that express the “Spirit of Heriot-Watt University”. These values are:

Pursuing Excellence

Pride and Belonging

Shaping the Future

Outward Looking

Valuing and Respecting Everyone

The People Strategy includes outlines of the ways in which it intends to meet the seven principles of the Concordat. This strategy includes the following University priorities:

- Building coherent capacity and capability to deliver a workforce with calibre and skills that are fit for the future
- Facilitating and supporting change through provision of advice and expertise to deliver a robust and agile organisation for the future.
- Creating pride and belonging for a motivated, aligned and high performing workforce

The Heriot-Watt academic community, our alumni and our partners are coming together to help develop our vision and ambition for a new strategy for our university for the period 2020-2025. Strategy 2025 will be developed in three phases:

- Our Global Conversation – looking at trends and issues and generating ideas for our future
- Our Chosen Direction – focussing on synthesising our ideas and selecting the future direction
- Our Global Ambition – formalising and launching our new strategy

A dedicated website and blog is in place with all stakeholders invited to share their views. <https://strategy2025.hw.ac.uk/>

Our new strategy will continue to be underpinned by our Values, although these too will be refreshed to ensure they reflect and support our rich and diverse student, staff and community base.

1.1 University Structures and Committees

There are 282 Research Associates at Heriot-Watt University (as at May 2018), all based at the Scottish campuses.

Growth in researcher numbers at our international campuses is expected over the next four years. [The University](#) consists of five specialist technological and business academic Schools: Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society; Engineering and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and Computer Sciences; Management and Languages; and Textiles and Design based at our Scottish Borders campus.

The implementation of the Concordat is overseen by the Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation), with regular updates to the University's Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI). Concordat implementation is also one of the considerations of the Research Staff Forum (RSF). RSF membership includes research staff representatives from the academic Schools, the Head of the [Centre for Academic Leadership and Development](#) (ALD), the Researcher Development Coordinator, the ALD Engagement Coordinator, HWU's Athena SWAN Officer, and the Clerk of UCRI. It is chaired by the Director of Human Resources Development. This group provides a forum for discussion of issues relating to research staff and contributes to improving the support and provision for research staff across HWU. The group reports into the University's Professional Services Leadership Board and provides an update to UCRI via the Clerk to UCRI. The researcher development agenda for research staff at HWU is well developed and HWU is represented on numerous Scottish and UK committees related to researcher development. Therefore, the University is in a strong position to learn from good practice in other institutions and to avail itself of and contribute to collaborative opportunities for research staff.

1.2 Management and Implementation

Resource for managing the HR Excellence in Research process has traditionally come from the Centre for Academic Leadership and Development (ALD) which forms part of the Human Resources Directorate. In early 2017 ALD underwent a Resources Review aimed at enhancing the way in which academic development is delivered across HWU. This resulted in a realignment of Learning and Teaching and Public Engagement activities to enhance the ability of ALD in delivering researcher and academic development. Resultant personnel changes allowed the Head of ALD to restructure the team and develop new roles that better reflect the current and future requirements for the department, which will also change its name to the 'Research Futures Academy'. Recruitment to be completed by the end of 2018.

1.3 Key challenges

In addition to the uncertainty surrounding Brexit and its effects on attracting and retaining international researchers, and potential impact on funding, there were a number of other key challenges in implementing the current action plan. Research priorities often meant that Principal Investigators and Early Career Researchers were limited in their ability to prioritise time for personal development. There were also limits to the level of details available from some of the HWU systems particularly in tracking the transition from fixed-term and open-ended contracts. Actions have been put in place to help address these issues in the 2018-20 action plan.

2. The review process

2.1 How the internal evaluation was undertaken

The evaluation was managed by an HR Excellence in Research Working Group comprising the Deputy Principal (R&I), Director of HRD, Head of ALD and the ALD Engagement Coordinator with contributions from the RSF and the ALD Advisory Group. The evaluation was driven by a dedicated member of ALD staff (ALD Engagement Coordinator) included review of progress against previous action plans, input from key stakeholders (e.g. HR, Research and Enterprise Services), consultation with research staff representatives via the RSF and a Postdoc consultation event, and consideration of University policies and practices that impact on research staff.

2.2 How Researcher's views were taken into account

Data from the 2017 CROS and PIRLS were used, plus feedback from the researcher development programmes. Discussions at meetings of the RSF shaped the priority areas focussed on in this review and action plan. Feedback from a newly developed HWU Postdoc Forum has also informed the 2018-20 action plan. Additionally a Postdoc consultation event was undertaken in June 2018 to consider the impact of the plan on current HWU Postdoc Researchers, what has worked well and what could be improved for the 2018-20 plan.

2.3 How the review links with existing QA and other monitoring mechanisms?

The information gathered in this review has been presented to University committees and groups including UCRI, PSLB and RSF. The review assists in providing monitoring and QA information to other reviews across the University such as [ELIR](#); the development of researchers is a priority in the University's [Outcome Agreement](#) with the Scottish Funding Council; and the University's [Athena SWAN Action Plan](#) contains a number of connections with the Action Plan for implementing the Concordat. The University's iHR system which came online in 2014, is being increasingly used for monitoring purposes.

3. Implementing the Concordat at Heriot-Watt University

At the outset of the Concordat implementation process, the University undertook a gap analysis which informed the action plans for the periods 2010-12 and 2012-14. The initial report from 2010 is available [here](#). Also available are the [2012 internal review](#), the [2012-14 Action Plan](#), [2014-2018 Action Plan](#) and [2016-18 Action Plan](#). The key actions and outcomes since the last review are highlighted below.

3.1 The key actions and outcomes since the last review

Principle 1 – Recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers

- The HWU recruitment website has been updated with RA roles more clearly advertised and including reference to flexible working options. Increase in proportion of researchers finding role via open advertising. (46% from 42% CROS 2017). Current internal processes ensures open advertising on all roles except for named researchers.
- All recruiters undertake mandatory training. The training programme includes enhanced diversity elements.
- Transfer to open-ended contracts after 3 years on contract renewal (legal requirement is 4 years)
- Established systems and processes for identifying staff approaching end of contract and support for identifying appropriate opportunities within HWU. Positive feedback from Postdoc consultation session on this process.
- Research staff advancement and promotions' process mirrors that for academic roles.

Principle 2 – Researchers are recognised and valued

- Research staff advancement and promotions' process mirrors that for academic roles (6 advancements in 2018). Staff have access to the same benefits package as all other staff.
- Evidence of recognition of research staff in University recognition events ('*Spirit of Heriot-Watt*' and '*Pride and Ambition*' events eg - Robotics team). Also see section 3.2.
- Provision of training and development opportunities for ECR's to reflect the distinct nature of their career development eg Careers within academia and Career outside academia. (8 RA's attended)
- Revised reporting and terms of reference for Research Staff Forum to enhance the ability to respond to issues specific to ECRs particularly relating to HR and development needs.
- Funding established for HWU-wide Postdoc Forum to support peer-led development and networking opportunities. (Committee comprises 10 members, 2 of whom are also member of Research Staff Forum).
- PDR participation rates for researchers (92% in CROS 2017 and 93% in PIRLS 2017).

Principle 3 – Researchers are equipped and supported for the increasingly diverse, mobile and global research environment

- Diverse range of internal and external development opportunities open to all staff including management and leadership, learning, teaching and research skills, transferable skills, entrepreneurship and public engagement. Uptake by RA
- Well established and successful Public Engagement programme through HW Engage including sessions covering engagement with policy, Parliament and the media and participation in Edinburgh Fringe Festival. (121 RA's participated during 2017-18 out of a total uptake of 787)
- Pilot of new careers-focussed workshops to the ALD programme for Research Staff. 8 RA's attended session with positive feedback (4+ out of 5). A Research Staff Careers Symposium for Engineers held in Nov 2017 jointly with University of Edinburgh with over 50 attendees from HWU.
- Access to bespoke '*Research Connect*' events focusing on interdisciplinarity and collaboration with HWU and external researchers eg Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (7 RA's out of 27 participants) and British Geological Survey (10 RA's out of 70 participants).
- Over 50% of eligible PhD Supervisors have participated in the revised Supervisor Development workshops to date.

Principle 4 – A researcher's personal and career development is recognised and promoted

- Diverse range of internal and external development opportunities open to all staff including management and leadership, research skills, transferable skills, entrepreneurship and public engagement.
- Annual Personal Development Review process in place for all staff with a section dedicated to personal and career development. (See Principle 2)
- Research staff representation on range of Committees in all Schools at School or Research Institute level.
- Postdoc Forum support (see Principle 2)

Principle 5 – Researchers share the responsibility for their own personal and career development

- Development and success of HWU-wide Postdoc Forum (See Principle 2). This peer-run group has developed from a School –based initiative to deliver successful and well-supported events over the past year.
- Participation in Postdoc focus group on HR Excellence in Research. 10 volunteers participated in a 3 hour consultation event to explore impact of HR Excellence at HWU.
- Participation in national and institutional surveys (HWU CROS 2017 response rate 34%) and Athena SWAN initiative (RA representation on every Athena SWAN action team).

Principle 6 – Diversity and equality

- Successful retention of Athena SWAN awards. See [HWU Athena SWAN website](#)
- Equality Outcomes Action Plan 2017-2020
- Introduction of 'Equality and Privacy Impact Assessments' as part of all policy reviews to help ensure we equally support all our staff, students and wider community.
- Continued commitment to E&D initiatives to embed good practice and raise awareness. [Equality Initiatives](#) and [Doing Things Differently](#)

Principle 7 – Undertaking regular review of progress in strengthening research careers in the UK

- Participation in national CROS survey above national average in 2017 (CROS 34% against national average of 24%)
- Support for Research Pools and Centres for Doctoral Training
- Representation at local and national fora eg ScotHERD etc

3.2 Recognition

The following awards recognise the recent achievements at Heriot-Watt University:

- HEIST Awards: Marketing Initiative to Promote Research Excellence – Year of Robotics (2018, won)
- Herald Higher Education Awards: Campaign of the Year – Year of Robotics (2018, won)
- Herald Higher Education Awards: Partnership Award – ORCA Hub (2018, shortlisted)
- Sunday Times: International University of the Year (2017, won)

- Silver Award, Teaching Excellence Framework (2017)
- Bronze Award, Athena SWAN (2017)
- Guardian University Award: Social & Community Impact (2017, won)
- Shortlisted for 2017 Times Higher Education Awards for The Homelessness Monitor Project and the Edinburgh Super Resolution Imaging Consortium (ESRIC)

3.2 The key actions and outcomes for the next review

Principle 1 – Recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers

- Ensure percentage of research staff advancements are in line with wider academic promotions and report annually to RSF. (CROS 2019 Promotion and progression HWU responses to exceed national average).
- Monitor diversity of ECR community to ensure it is in line with wider staff profile and report annually to RSF.
- Improve support for physical, mental and financial wellbeing for all HWU staff through better access to information and ensure RA satisfaction level is in line with wider staff profile. (CROS 2019 Commitment to mental health response target of 60% agreement). Monitor sickness absence statistics for RA's and benchmark against HWU and sector.

Principle 2 – Researchers are recognised and valued

- Ensure process of transfer to open-ended contract renewals after 3 years continues. Report to RSF annually.
- Ensure proportion of research staff promotions is in line with academic staff figures
- PDR participation rates for RA's to be maintained at equivalent level to wider academic community (90% target).

Principle 3 – Researchers are equipped and supported for the increasingly diverse, mobile and global research environment

- Increase participation and feedback on Research Futures Academy development opportunities for ECR's that reflect the distinct nature of their career development eg Careers within academia and Career outside academia, Engaging with Business' pilot programme. (Target of 50% engagement with RA community).
- Increase participation and feedback on internal and external development opportunities open to all staff including management and leadership, learning, teaching and research skills, transferable skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship and public engagement. (Target of 50% engagement with RA community)
- Increase participation in Public Engagement programme through HW Engage. (Target 50% RA engagement)
- Increase participation in enterprise and entrepreneurship activities including business plan competitions such as 'Converge Challenge' and 'Enterprise YES!' (25% of RA community)

Principle 4 – A researcher's personal and career development is recognised and promoted

- Diverse range of internal and external development opportunities open to all staff including management and leadership, research skills, transferable skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship and public engagement. (Target of 50% engagement with RA community).
- Maintain participation in annual PDR process for RAs to over 90%
- Promote additional opportunities for development directly to RAs (via RFA online newsletter eg Aurora leadership programme, RSE opportunities, other HEI initiatives) (Monitor awareness of External opportunities via CROS 2019)

Principle 5 – Researchers share the responsibility for their own personal and career development

- Continue support for HWU-wide Postdoc Forum to support peer-led development and networking opportunities. (Target of 50% engagement with RA community).
- Maintain research staff representation on School and Institute-wide committees and monitor annually.
- Encourage senior managers and PI's to prioritise RA development. (CROS 2019 target of 7.5 days pa for participation in training and professional development.)
- Develop further feedback channels eg focus groups, bulletin boards etc with researcher community. Monitor participation levels annually and report to RSF.
- Increase participation in national/institutional surveys and Athena SWAN initiative. (40% participation rate for RA's)

Principle 6 – Diversity and equality

- Successful retention of Athena SWAN awards. See [HWU Athena SWAN website](#)
- Equality Outcomes Action Plan beyond 2020 to be in place.
- Continued commitment to E&D initiatives to embed good practice and raise awareness. [Equality Initiatives](#) and [Doing Things Differently](#)
- Embed results of Inclusivity Matters project aimed at supporting staff with disabilities. (All members of UE and 70% of PIs to undertake training).

Principle 7 – Undertaking regular review of progress in strengthening research careers in the UK

- Increased participation in national surveys CROS and PIRLS – 40 % participation rate target
- Develop dashboard for Management Information and report UCRI and UE every 6 months.
- Representation at local and national for a eg ScotHERD etc