

In September 2010 Heriot-Watt University 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, the University underwent an external assessment of progress, successfully retaining the Award. In 2016, an internal assessment was carried out against the progress of the [2014-2018 Action Plan](#). A new [2016-2018 Action Plan](#) is in place.

1. About Heriot-Watt University

Heriot-Watt University’s 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. To achieve these aims, 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

There are 258 research staff at Heriot-Watt University, 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.

1.1 University Structures and Committees

The implementation of the Concordat is overseen by the Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation), who provides regular updates to the University’s Research and Knowledge Exchange Board (RKEB). Concordat implementation is also one of the considerations of the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG). The RSWG membership includes research staff representatives from the academic Schools, the Director of Human Resources Development, the Head of the [Centre for Academic Leadership and Development](#) (ALD), the Researcher Development Coordinator, and is chaired by the Deputy Principal (Research and Knowledge Transfer). This group provides a forum for discussion of all issues relating to research staff and takes responsibility for coordinating efforts across the University to improve the support and provision for research staff. The researcher development agenda for research staff at Heriot-Watt is well developed and Heriot-Watt 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.

2. The review process

2.1 How the internal evaluation was undertaken

The evaluation was managed by the Researcher Development Coordinator with contributions from the RSWG. The evaluation included review of progress against previous action plans, input from key stakeholders (e.g. HR, Research and Enterprise Services), 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 2015 CROS and PIRLS were used, plus feedback from the researcher development programmes. Discussions at meetings of the RSWG shaped the priority areas focussed on in this review and action plan. Additionally, PRES and a 2016 review into PGR processes and support are being used to inform further supervisor development.

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

The information gathered in this review has been presented to the RSWG and RKEB. 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 came online in 2014, and 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](#) and [2014-2018 Action Plan](#). The key actions undertaken since the last review, plus the areas to be actioned over the next two years are highlighted below.

Principle 1 – Recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers

Staff employed beyond 3 years are offered an open-ended employment contract. Since 2014, 34 staff have moved from fixed term to open-ended contracts. Of these, 19 (up to Aug 2016) have been research-only staff.

2016-18: Staff moving to open-ended contracts are continually monitored by iHR, reporting monthly to the Vacancy Management Group (VMG). It is now planned that HR will report annually to the RSWG.

Principle 2 – Researchers are recognised and valued

The Performance Development Review (PDR) process was updated in March 2014. The [new processes](#) include discussion of a researcher's career, aspirations and required development for progression. A new [promotions procedure](#) for academic (teaching and research) staff was also introduced, clarifying the promotion opportunities and career pathways for researchers. There have since been 57 academic promotions, of which 21 were research staff.

2016-18: Continue monitoring the use of PDR, evidenced using iHR, and report to University Executive.

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

[ALD](#) have a wide variety of activities providing Knowledge Exchange support for academics and research staff, including a leadership and development programme (**Heriot-Watt Crucible**), a public engagement initiative (**HW Engage**), and additional development opportunities such as the **Research Futures** programme of workshops.

The **online provision** of information has vastly improved since 2010, with a new intranet structure. ALD are shown on the intranet homepage, allowing immediate access to ALD upon opening a web browser. Many departments and service areas utilise social media for greater engagement, such as YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook.

Scottish Crucible and Heriot-Watt Crucible are coordinated through ALD. **Scottish Crucible** is a national leadership and development programme for researchers focussing on fostering the key academic attributes of interdisciplinary collaboration, innovation and leadership, funded by Scottish Funding Council. **Heriot-Watt Crucible** is funded by the University, and develops knowledge exchange between local partner institutions and researchers from across the University nominated by Heads of School. A review exercise in 2015 showed that over £1million research funding has been awarded to Heriot-Watt Crucible participants as a direct result of collaboration within the programme.

HW Engage collaborate with other HEIs via [Edinburgh Beltane](#); coordinate the Principal's Public Engagement Prize; identify external funding sources for outreach activities; and provide a focal point for staff wishing to engage with audiences beyond academia. Since its inception, [HW Engage](#) has supported and enabled researchers to exhibit at the [Royal Society Summer Exhibition](#), present at the [Edinburgh Fringe](#), and take part in the multiple science festivals. In 2015, HW Engage organised the Scottish Closing Ceremony of the International Year of Light "IllumiNations", coordinating research projects that took light-based technology into schools during the year, and the ceremony which included lectures for 400 school children and 400 members of the public, a science festival and light show.

A University-wide review of Induction in 2016 has resulted in two work streams of improvements for all staff.

2016-18: Update and refresh the Induction networking event; provide a staff handbook on arrival.

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

In addition to the annual PDR process, there are a number of development opportunities from across the University, including from ALD, Organisational Development, and Research and Enterprise Services.

Organisational Development offer a number of personal and career development opportunities open to all staff. The number of research staff attending OD opportunities has increased by 14% in the last two years, although none attended the careers workshops in 2016. The **Research Staff Working Group** meets three times per year, acting as a discussion forum and voice for research staff to University management. The University continues to participate in the **Aurora** leadership development initiative, participants include academic and research staff.

2016-18: Maintain the provision of opportunities; support research staff reps to build networks of researchers.

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

Heriot-Watt launched **Converge Challenge** in 2010, the largest business planning competition in Scotland. It is open to researchers from across Scotland’s Higher Education Institutions, and includes business planning training for all participants. Since 2014 [Converge Challenge](#) has created 51 spin-out companies, 6 of which are from Heriot-Watt.

ALD’s **Personal Development Management System** (PDMS) is a booking system for ALD activity but also acts as a training record for researchers to take ownership of and track their progress. The courses are grouped on the PDMS under the domains of the **Researcher Development Framework**.

The RSWG supports research reps to provide events within their own Schools: an example is the EGIS Postdoc Forum created in 2016 to run networking events, seminars and social events.

2016-18: Review Research Integrity training provision; monitor take up of new data management provision.

Principle 6 – Diversity and equality

The University’s Bronze Award from the **Athena SWAN** Charter runs till Nov 2016 and resubmission is underway. A [number of Schools](#) have also successfully gained School-level bronze awards.

The University Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy is mapped to the [Equality Outcomes 2013-2017](#) and the SFC [Outcome Agreement](#) further embeds equality and diversity into all our activities.

2016-18: Execute the action plans for both Athena SWAN and the Equality Outcomes Action Plan; provide new plans going forward; investigate level of support for those for whom English is not their first or bilingual language.

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

Continual monitoring of feedback such as CROS and PIRLS is undertaken, primarily through the RSWG to RKEB. The University is involved in a number of collaborations with other Scottish and UK Universities through Research Pools, Centres of Doctoral Training, and Scotland-wide networks such as ScotHERD and Universities Scotland.

2016-18: Continue to monitor and respond to researcher opinion; maintain links with other HEIs.

3.1 Challenges

- Research Staff Working Group –While it has been difficult to recruit research staff representatives, four of the five Schools now have representatives.
- Research Staff Symposia – It has not been possible to repeat the very successful Research Staff Symposia as regularly as had been hoped (primarily due to competing demands on staff time). However, a Symposium was run in November 2014, and a further is planned for Nov 2016.

3.2 Recognition

The following awards recognise the experience, policies and career development of researchers at Heriot-Watt University:

- Herald Higher Education Awards: Academic Support Team of the Year (2016, shortlisted)
- ARMA Award: Public Engagement and Advocacy (2015, won)
- THE Leadership & Management Awards: Outstanding HR Team (2014, shortlisted)
- THE Leadership & Management Awards: Outstanding HR Team (2013, winner)
- THE Awards: Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers (2012, shortlisted, Edinburgh Beltane)
- THE Awards: Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Development (2012, shortlisted)
- Leadership Foundation for Higher Education’s “Good Practice Impact Award 2011” (shortlisted)
- THE Awards: Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers (2010, winner, with Universities Scotland partners)

Created 30 June 2016

This edition 16/09/2016 16:54 June 2016, Dr Vicky Ingram, Centre for Academic Leadership & Development