

# University of Bristol

## Update report spring 2022:

### Implementation of the principles of the 2019 Concordat to support the career development of researchers

The University of Bristol (UoB) retained the HR Excellence in Research award at the 10-year renewal point in 2020. Building on our work to date, we have continued to implement our action plan for the 2019 Researcher Concordat.

#### 10 days development time for all Research staff

As signatory to the Concordat, UoB is committed to support all research staff with their career development. To ensure that all research staff, including those who are funded by organisations who are not signatories to the Concordat and who do not fund development time, have fair access to development opportunities, the UoB underwrites this commitment financially by granting all research staff access to up to 10 days development time pro-rata/per annum.

#### Establishment of Research Concordat Champions

We introduced the role of Concordat Champion. Champions are members of the School's Research Committee (or equivalent) and are a key contact for Research Staff Reps; they play a key role in making sure all academic staff are aware of the Concordat and understand their role in supporting careers of research staff. The Champion role includes working with fellow PIs and HR to support and facilitate changes to how we conduct research and support careers of researchers. Champions and Reps may also work together with Heads of Schools and others, such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion managers, to establish further ways to address the local research culture. We met our success measure for 20/21 and successfully appointed a champion in each school. Actions by Champions to date have involved focus on local induction, recruitment practices, support for PIs, and enhancing of research staff networks.

#### Extension of workload model to Research Associate level and managing teaching opportunities for research staff

The University agreed a Workload Agreement with the Joint Trade Unions for all Academic Staff including Senior Research Associates (Grade J) and Fellows (Grade K) in 2019, which is linked to the Academic Workload Allocation Principles. We convened a Task and Finish group (TFG) to focus on the extension of the workload model, and to look at how we support research staff in developing through having opportunities to teach. The TFG presented its findings to University Executive Board who endorsed the extension of the workload model to include Research Associates (Grade I), and who endorsed an updated policy on teaching activities for research staff by the end of this academic year, which sets out a school-centralised management process to ensure fair and transparent access of these teaching opportunities.

#### Pilot of a support programme for managers of researchers

To support PIs and managers of researchers, we developed further development opportunities: We made available a self-directed learning resource called the "Induction Handbook for Principal Investigators". Furthermore, we are piloting a modular development programme "Research in practice", which is aimed at both PIs and Research staff and is mapped against the research project

life cycle. In the context of PI's responsibilities as managers, this programme includes sessions such as "Managing a research team", and "Recruiting research staff". We have also run a local pilot in one faculty titled "The PI as an impactful researcher". The evaluation of the scheme showed that participants the programme was highly effective in supporting PIs confidence in managing and leading research teams well. We will explore how to build on the success of the pilot to offer this more widely across the University.

#### [Career development and choices initiative](#)

As part of our "Career choices" initiative we ran a "Career fortnight" in summer 2021, offering a wide range of opportunities to develop and plan careers. As part of this fortnight we developed a career development planner, alongside our detailed [Career planning toolkit](#). We are also going to run career seminars in late spring 2022, focusing on careers beyond academia. These seminars will include guest speakers from other sectors and industries who moved from Academia into a different career.

#### [Supporting PIs with Development Review conversations](#)

The University has implemented a new Staff Review and Development system, with a focus on supporting academics to undertake meaningful development review conversations which support researchers with developing their careers. The CEDARS survey in 2020 showed that less staff found the staff review conversations useful than in previous years (77% vs 84% in 2019 found it useful). Through our new system, which was launched in spring 2021, we introduced the new Development Review system, which allowed us to record how many of our staff completed the review. Develop data showed that by the end of 2021 44% of our research staff had completed a staff review on the system. However, local evidence shows that individual research and development reviews have taken place which are not recorded through Develop. We will continue our work in supporting PIs in having effective Development review conversations in order to facilitate strategic career development planning.

#### [Implementation of a new learning management system \(LMS\)](#)

In spring 2021 UoB implemented a new LMS across the University, named "Develop". The new LMS coordinates staff learning and development content, activities and opportunities in one user-friendly location, and it allows staff to record their development activities (i.e. the system can be used to evidence compliance with essential training requirements). This allows more effective monitoring of engagement with development activities by researchers and their managers, and it will support researchers with their strategic career planning.

#### [Developing the offer of Bristol Clear](#)

We continuously strive to develop our offer to ensure quality and breadth of opportunities. Informed by our investigation into how to best support PIs and Managers of Researchers, and informed by requests from our Research Staff reps to have access to bite-sized information on how the University works, we launched the [Research in practice](#) programme: Research in practice is an integrated development programme which practically supports teams in the way that they do research. It offers a combination of focused information sessions and more in-depth development workshops and is aimed at all staff working on a research project, including academic staff currently holding, or planning to apply for research funding. The programme includes over twenty individual workshops. Additionally, it will include research professionals who want to develop their knowledge about specific aspects of the research project life cycle. The pilot will be evaluated in late spring 2022 and will inform the offer for the next academic year.

In addition, based on requests by research staff, we have added specific sessions focusing on recruitment and progression opportunities and processes for research staff, and career-focused workshops for researchers. The CEDARS 2021 survey also highlighted additional needs for development offers, for example Citizen science and Interdisciplinary working.

#### [Developing academic writing practice](#)

During spring 2022 we are piloting an eight-week “Academic Writing Programme”. This structured programme combines regular training with a practical commitment to practise structured writing time and develop writing habits. As part of the programme, participants need to find an academic writing mentor. Over 50 academics across career stages and career paths are enrolled in the pilot.

#### [Research culture and environment](#)

UoB appointed an Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research Culture. This appointment, and funding directed at Research Culture as for example by Research England, allows us to address enhancing research culture more effectively. As part of this work, during spring 2022 we are piloting a Reciprocal Mentoring scheme between research and more senior staff, and the development of a researcher behavioural framework, co-produced by researchers seconded to focus on this work. We anticipate that the outputs of these, and other local initiatives across the University during spring 2022, will offer us a real insight into effective approaches to enhancing research culture in all its facets.