

University of Bristol eight-year self-assessment for the HR Excellence in Research award. December 2018

INTRODUCTION: In 2015/16 the University of Bristol (UoB) developed a [seven year strategy](#) describing the focus for the institution for this period. The strategy is broad-ranging, representing our varied remit both in research and teaching excellence. The strategy document includes a clear commitment to the development of early career researchers. We have therefore tied our Concordat action plan into the plans in the strategy. In addition, in 2017/18 a decision was made to create 'Bristol Clear' a new virtual hub that brings together support for research staff. This was also supported by increased resource enabling us to develop and enhance the support available. This report will feed back on the specific actions in the Concordat action plan, including those linked to the University strategy. It will also focus specifically on the developments under the Bristol Clear initiative. Finally, it then refers to our new 2018 action plan, outlining next steps and future focus for the next four years.

PROCESS: Our Concordat Implementation Group oversees the implementation of the action plan and our internal assessment processes. Our internal assessment processes include consultation with key stakeholders such as our Research Staff Reps Committee and Working Party, and it draws on data from surveys such as CROS and our whole staff survey, as well as data from regular internal monitoring processes. More details about the group and the process can be found on our [website](#).

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE ACTION PLAN SINCE THE SIX-YEAR REPORT:

Bristol Clear:

The most significant progress we have made during this period is the decision to create and launch [Bristol Clear](#). The vision for Bristol Clear is "to provide an environment for clarity, honesty and a renewed perspective for our research staff. Time to learn and to reflect. Space to explore choices. Encouragement to speak their minds and find the quiet confidence for them to define their own path. This is what we mean by *Bristol Clear*".

This vision was created in collaboration with research staff through focus groups and 1:1 conversations over a number of months. The decision to launch this new initiative was accompanied by increased resource for 3 years which has enabled us to recruit three new members of staff until July 2020: a full-time Staff Development Officer and 1.5 FTE administrative staff.

This additional resource has enabled us to scope and establish Bristol Clear as a brand as well as to do an initial redesign of our research staff training provision. We have also responded to researcher requests for more substantive writing support by launching regular monthly writing days and we will be supporting researchers to write by taking part in the national academic writing month *WriteFest*, this year. In addition, we have also been able to broaden our careers support; this year we have run ninety-four 1:1 career appointments and of the 77% who gave us feedback 98% found these sessions valuable. We will continue to offer 1:1s at this increased level (**action against 3.3**) but will also be offering a monthly careers drop-in afternoon providing access to online materials, and short bookable query sessions. Lastly, the resource has enabled us to launch a new mentoring scheme and to support the VC Fellows scheme, a key part of our seven-year University strategy.

In addition to these key areas, the following progress has been made in the specific Concordat areas:

A: Recruitment and Selection

Support for international staff:

- In our last action plan we committed to running refresher training for all interview panellists as a way of ensuring good recruitment practices and since then we have run 22 of these, covering 75% of academic schools and 350 staff (**action against 1.2**).
- The International Adviser role was established within the recruitment team in order to support international staff joining the University. Initially a survey was sent out and focus groups held to ascertain what kind of support would be most useful (**action against 1.2**). This has led to a focus on the following activities:
 - The creation of a relocation support web page (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/jobs/relocation-support/>)
 - Working closely with the HR Operational Hubs to develop a process whereby we reach out to new members of International staff at the point of offer of employment by way of a welcome email with useful information and links and an invitation for them to contact us to discuss their needs as they

begin to consider the relocation process. The most frequent questions are about how to find accommodation, visa applications and how to secure bank accounts.

- Implementing a buddy scheme with volunteers from existing staff that new starters can opt into, we currently have 105 buddies and 35 new starters match to a buddy currently.
- Attending the Welcome Fair with a stall aimed at international staff.

B: Recognition and Value

- The number of research staff using the Staff Review process (69.5%) increased again, according to CROS 2017 and the proportion who found it useful also increased (74.2%) (**action against 2.3**).
- In summer 2017, the University carried out a comprehensive review of academic Progression and Promotion, within which research staff views were captured and represented by ASD. Proposals have now been put forward for new policy in this area to be progressively implemented through 2018, 2019 and 2020 (**action against 2.5**). A representative of Academic Staff Development sits on the implementation group to continue to represent the interests of Research Staff and to ensure communication and understanding between the implementation group, and Research staff (through both the reps network, and Unions) to achieve the best possible implementation of the developing Progression and Promotion policy, and promote adjunct development (by direct engagement with, and by making materials available) for
 - Research Staff – to both inform RS regarding new processes, and support and equip them to manage their well-being in an ongoing climate of precarious employment.
 - PIs – to foreground development needs of research staff, and support them to think about how to build in development capacity, funding and resources as they plan and develop grants and research projects
 - Wider University units (in particular HR and Finance) – to support a more holistic approach to recruitment and financial costings, that will make it possible for Research Leaders to both cost and recruit to projects in a way that prioritises Research Staff development.
 - University management – in understanding the impact that forms of P&P have on wider issues of Equality and Diversity, and Research Staff well-being.

C: Support and Career Development

This is the biggest area of development over the last year with the launch of Bristol Clear and the associated mentoring scheme and increased staffing resource as mentioned above. We have also made the following progress in specific areas:

- As part of the University's strategy the Vice-Chancellor's Fellowships scheme was in 2017 and we recruited 12 Fellows into our first cohort and 16 Fellows into our second cohort, who are due to start in Nov 2018. ASD provide them with 1:1 coaching and bespoke development opportunities, including a residential to build them as a cohort (**action against 3.1**). Through these interventions we plan to develop a good understanding of the support required by researchers in these roles so that we can work towards rolling out some of this support to a broader group of research fellows across the University.
- We have reviewed induction for research staff and our new approach will focus on improving the expectations of research staff and will connect up SR&D, induction and mentoring. As part of this we are working with School Managers to assess local induction and will be adding two elements:
 - A small pack of standard, initial information that introduces RS development, the RS reps, and points researchers to the website, social media etc. to be distributed along with other information to each researcher – to be ready for roll-out in initial form by summer 2019.
 - Annual presentations of the work of Bristol Clear, run by Bristol Clear staff, to coincide with School meetings (timing TBC with School Managers).

We also continue to underline the role of RS Reps in welcoming RS into the organisation, and this is being picked up by Reps in discussions of their role description.

- A main component of Bristol Clear is the establishment of a mentoring programme for research staff (**related to 3.8**). This launched in September with two briefing sessions and interest from 20 potential mentors and 34 mentees. So far we have matched 9 pairs and set up 1 mentoring circle. Alongside this we have also run our

first community event 'Academic Journeys' which was an opportunity to hear how people's careers have been shaped by the support of others. Around 70 research staff attended and 90% of those who responded to feedback thought it was worth attending. This event, alongside our 'Peer-to-Peer' events (where we build mentoring skills into researchers to enable them to support each other), will be a regular event to build staff engagement and a community spirit to the scheme.

D: Researchers' Responsibilities

- We have launched new development sessions on research integrity for research staff ('Research Integrity: what it means for me and my research.') which 25 academics have attended so far. For those leading research teams we also have a session ('Encouraging a Positive Culture of Research Integrity') which 28 academics have attended. Across both sessions 100% of attendees found the sessions very or quite effective and 100% would recommend it to other academics (**action against 5.3**).
- 100% of attendees at our "Getting the Most out of your Staff Review" development session found the session very or quite effective (**action against 5.6**).

E: Diversity and Equality

Equality, diversity and inclusion was a key strand to our University strategy and as such, there has been quite a bit of activity in this area. Over the last year, we have grown our central EDI Team in HR and appointed a new full-time member of staff to identify ways in which we can improve representation of BAME staff. We also appointed an EDI Champion in the Elizabeth Blackwell Institute who is funded by the Wellcome Trust and engaging in activity to better support a diverse range of staff across the faculties of Health and Life Sciences. Other specific activities have included:

- The inaugural meeting of the BAME Staff Network took place in September 2017 with an initial focus on the way we design and promote job opportunities.
- Professor Nishan Canagarajah, PVC (Research), became one of 12 commissioners on the newly formed Bristol Commission for Race Equality.
- There is a focus on disability inclusion within our new building projects through consultation with our Disabled Staff Network and involvement from the earliest stages of design.
- We have engaged in a number of initiatives around mental health and wellbeing including a series of Masterclasses for managers on managing staff absence which 120 managers attended; drop-in sessions to approximately 150 members of staff to promote Wellness Action Plans to help facilitate conversations about managing mental health at work; the delivery of MIND facilitated sessions on managing mental health in the workplace and Sleep Clinics run by the Staff Counselling Service.
- Our involvement with Athena SWAN Charter continues, with three of our Schools achieving Silver Awards for their commitment to good practice in gender equality. The School of Mathematics and School of Biochemistry rose from Bronze to Silver; and the Bristol Medical School (formed from amalgamating two former schools) was also awarded Silver (**action against 6.2**). We now have thirteen schools holding SWAN awards. The Gender Equality Group continues to maintain oversight of SWAN progress and will soon begin working as a self-assessment team on University-level SWAN accreditation.
- The EDI team hosted our first Men's Allyship Workshop in July which was fully booked and received very positive feedback. This was a male only workshop facilitated by the Feminist Men's Project, where issues such as male entitlement were explored.
- The number of female professors currently stands at 24.1% of the professoriate (as at July 2018), which is an 8% increase since July 2013 (1.8% since November 16) and such population data is shared with Deans and members of the university's senior management team as part of the Integrated Planning Process and through our Strategic Performance Indicator and EDI Dashboard Reports. We are making good progress towards reaching an agreed target 28% female professors by 19-20 and 33% female professors by 22-23 as one of the University's Strategic Performance Indicators (**action against 6.7**).
- We joined with other local organisations, community groups and individuals to sign the Bristol Trans Support Pledge, to signify our commitment to trans equality. In collaboration with members of our LGBT+ Staff and Students Networks the EDI team also reviewed and improved our guidance on supporting trans people and

have worked with colleagues in Estates to improve the provision of gender-neutral facilities across our buildings.

- We launched our on-line LGBT+ Role Models programme where a range of staff share their experiences to show that being LGBT+ is not a barrier to success: individuals can be open about themselves at work if they want to be. We worked with the LGBT+ Staff Network to finalise a glossary of terms to raise awareness of LGBT+ terminology. We promoted and supported a range of events developed by our LGBT+ Staff and Students to celebrate LGBT+ History Month and we continued the tradition of lighting up an iconic building in rainbow colours (the Victoria Rooms).

F: Implementation and Review

- In May 2017 we ran CROS (Careers in Research Online Survey) with a 40% response rate. (**action against 7.2**). We reviewed the responses to CROS and fed these into our ongoing concordat action plan and the University strategy action plan, which has led to a number of initiatives including Bristol Clear, and the Progression and Proportion review.
- We continue to ensure that research staff are consulted through the research staff reps and other processes. Significantly over the last year research staff have been heavily involved in the development of Bristol Clear and the Progression and Promotion review.
- We continue to collaborate with researcher development colleagues across the sector including through the GW4 alliance with Cardiff, Exeter and Bath Universities (**action against 7.4**), and through a group formed in 2014 named Researchers14, of which Bristol is a founder member. This brings together 13 large research-intensive institutions to share practice around strategy, policy and development activity for research staff.

FUTURE STRATEGY AND NEXT STEPS: We have developed a new action plan for the next two years. We will continue to review and update this plan in line with current University priorities and our seven year strategy, using the RSWP and Reps committee for consultation in addition to CROS. Key development areas as mentioned with specific success measures in the action plan are:

- Continue to develop the Bristol Clear provision and brand, to include refreshing the website, expansion of the mentoring scheme, looking at local induction events and developing the drop-in careers afternoons. Monitor engagement and feedback on all of these.
- Continue to run both recruitment refresher training staff review training to PIs to ensure these processes are run effectively. Assess the effectiveness of and implement necessary updates to the staff review training and monitor the numbers of reviewers undertaking the training.
- Review the Academic Career Pathways and Progression and Promotion procedures, ensuring that research staff interests are appropriately represented within the review through consultation with the Research Staff Working Party.
- Launch a new development programme of events targeted at those with a personal fellowship to include a welcome event, topic-based sessions and a “fellows day” to build this cohort.
- Monitor the implementation of the policy on the expectations of research staff who teach
- Carry out the gender pay gap project and continue to monitor gender balance in our academic staff, particularly at professorial level
- Continue to support schools to apply for Athena Swan and submit for an institutional silver award.

SUCCESS MEASURES: As well as measuring achievement of Action Plan items, we will also use the following success measures:

- Evidence of improvement in CROS data as compared to previous years.
- Evidence from the all staff survey.
- Numbers of reviewers trained in SR&D process, numbers engaging in the process and feedback received.
- Take-up of and feedback on training and development opportunities.
- Achievement of Athena SWAN awards.
- University strategy action plan implementation.