The HR Excellence in Research Award in the UK and Europe: main challenges

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World-class professional development for researchers

Informing policy development

Working directly with institutions to enhance practice

Providing information, resources and activities for researchers

Building an evidence base to inform practice and policy
1996: UK Concordat for research staff
2001: Review of research careers initiative
2002: CROS
2002: Roberts professional development and UK GRAD Programme
2005: European Charter and Code
2006: UK gap analysis
2008: Concordat and Vitae
2008: HR Strategy for Researchers
2009: CROS re-launched
2010: first HEIs receive HR Excellence in Research Award
2011: PIRLS
2012: Concordat review and measures of progress
2013: Horizon 2020 Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions
2013: Feasibility study into formal HR certification
2013: Vitae review of HR action plans across Europe
2014: Horizon 2020, article 32 (C&C implementation)
2016? Accreditation? Condition of H2020 funding?
Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers (2008)

- Recruitment and selection
- Recognition and value
- Career development
- Researcher responsibilities
- Equality and diversity
- Monitoring and review
HR Excellence in the UK (2010)

- Concordat is equivalent to the Charter and Code
- UK HR Excellence in Research panel
  - mandate from the Concordat Strategy Group
  - includes representation from the European Commission
  - reviews initial submissions and two-year internal review submissions
- Vitae manages process
  - coordinates and negotiates the UK process with the European Commission, streamlined for institutions
  - reviews and provides feedback to institutions on submissions
  - reviews progress and drives enhancement
  - developed external review process
  - developed UK response to the proposal for a formal HR certification
- 80 UK organisations with the Award
UK institutional benefits and drivers

- Produce excellent research
- Recognised as research intensive
- Attract the best researchers
- Increase researchers’ abilities
- Increase research funding

- Research Excellence Framework
- Research Council UK statement of expectations
- Athena Swan, encouraging women in science
- Legacy of Roberts funding, professional development
- Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF)
- Concordat and HR Excellence in Research Award
- Enhancement and benchmarking
Careers in research online survey (CROS) (2009, 2011, 2013)

- Parallel online surveys run by HEIs targeting research staff
- Question set covers the Concordat principles
- Anonymous views of their experiences, career aspirations and development opportunities
- Longitudinal comparisons and confidential benchmarking groups
- 2013 UK aggregate data: 8216 responses from 68 institutions representing a 26% response rate
- Valuable tool in gathering views of research staff and observing progress with Concordat implementation
Principal Investigator and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) (2011, 2013)

- Parallel online surveys run by HEIs targeting principal investigators and research leaders
- Anonymous views of research leadership and management of researchers
- Longitudinal comparisons and confidential benchmarking groups
- 2013 UK aggregate data: 4837 responses from 49 institutions representing a 28% response rate

www.vitae.ac.uk/PIRLS
Concordat: Recognition and value

“Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation’s human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world class research”

CROS 2013
60% have an appraisal; 44% useful
40%-87% perceive fair treatment with other staff
35%-77% perceive recognition and value for different activities
70% satisfied with work-life balance

PIRLS 2013
83% have an appraisal; 53% useful
65% confident in performance management
65% confident in conducting appraisals
48% satisfied with work-life balance
• ‘People management’ roles perceived less important than ‘leadership’ activities (or core research), and less valued

• Lowest confidence in giving career advice, performance management, conducting appraisals, managing finance

- Timely to review activities: growing numbers with the Award, formal accreditation on the horizon
- Major review of all published documentation associated with the Award across Europe
- 61 UK and 48 non-UK institutions reviewed (seven research funders)
- Aimed to compare UK and non-UK implementation strategies and highlight themes, strengths and gaps, mapped to the Concordat principles
- Identified a framework based on what institutions reported they were monitoring to measure their success against objectives
- Snapshot: used a repeatable methodology
Review of HR Award action plans: key findings

- Significant evidence of implementation across all the Concordat principles, both UK and non-UK
- Engagement with the C&C or Concordat had ‘driven practice and transformed the nature of researcher HRM’
- High degree of consistency across Europe, with some notable differences
- UK institutions able to draw on UK-level infrastructure, eg surveys, benchmarking, Vitae Researcher Development Framework, etc
Recruitment and selection; Recognition and value (principles 1 and 2)

- Most commonly cited evidence:
  - reviewed pay and progression of researchers (100%)
  - reviewed recruitment processes (93%)
  - developed, reviewed or implemented appraisal procedures (89%)
  - increased number of positions openly advertised (70%)

- Other themes:
  - training staff on recruitment panels
  - monitor and report on recruitment
  - addressing fixed term contracts
  - monitoring staff satisfaction and engagement
  - Stronger focus on researcher mobility in non-UK plans
  - Policies cf on the ground action

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Support and career development (principles 3 and 4)

- Most commonly cited evidence:
  - offering career/professional dev programme (100%)
  - providing access to careers advice and guidance (98%)
  - induction (82%)

- Other themes:
  - mentoring programmes
  - supporting principal investigators/managers to increase their understanding of career development
  - monitoring take-up of career and professional development
  - specialist inductions
  - researcher development programmes (drawing on Vitae Researcher Development Framework)
  - careers advice and mentoring
Researchers’ responsibilities (principle 5)

- Most commonly cited evidence:
  - facilitating research staff to take on wider role (71%)
  - research staff included in institutional committees and structures (62%)

- Other themes:
  - research staff associations
  - policy on researcher responsibilities
  - enabling researchers to gain experience/profile beyond the institution

- Individual responsibility cf enabling role of the organisation
Equality and diversity principle 6

- Most commonly cited evidence:
  - Monitoring equality and diversity (84%)
  - Equality and diversity policies (80%)

- Other themes:
  - External recognition

- Focus on wide range of protected characteristics cf focus on gender/disability
Implementation and review principle 7

- Most commonly cited evidence:
  - Monitoring implementation (97%)
  - Publishing plans and progress reports (94%)
  - Collecting/using data on researchers’ experiences (84%)

- Other themes:
  - Informal benchmarking, seeking recognition and input
  - Legal compliance
  - High level of surveying and consultation within national framework
    - CROS
    - PIRLS
Recommendations

- Widen take up of the Award
- Explore use of the evidence-based framework to underpin evaluation
- Organisations should fully publish plans
- Review areas where less consistent evidence of action
  - employer and researcher responsibilities
  - specialist development and careers support for researchers
  - equality and diversity agenda
  - training for research staff to take on supervisory/management roles
- Explore extending UK surveys to enable international benchmarking