

HR Excellence in Research Award: Durham University's 10 Year Review June 2022

This report forms part of the University's ten-year submission to HR Excellence in Research recognition process and outlines our process and progress to date in supporting and implementing the principles in the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Durham has been an HREiR award holder since 2011 [a full record of submissions is available on the institutional website](#). This report is presented in conjunction our Action Plan 2020-2022 and our forward-facing Action Plan 2022-2025.

How was the 10-year internal review undertaken?

Overall responsibility for reviewing and evaluating progress against our action plan sits with the Research Culture Committee (RCC) which replaced the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) in 2021 and has a wider remit to oversee research culture development across the University. The RCC takes a holistic view of 'research' and 'research culture' and is dedicated making positive changes impacting Researchers (n=400), Research and Teaching staff (n=1467), Technicians (n=90) and PGR Students (c1700). It is Chaired by the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research (Professor Jane Macnaughton). The group includes representatives from HR Business Partnering, the Researcher Development Programme based in the Durham Centre for Academic Development (DCAD), the Equality and Diversity Team, Research and Innovation Services (RIS), the Library, Careers Advisor, the Chair of the University's Technical Manager's Network and academic staff from the University's four faculties. Research staff membership is provided via the chair of the Research Staff Association (RSA), who is elected by the research staff community and represents the voice of contracted researchers within the University. The RCC reports to University Research Committee which is a formal committee of Senate. The RSA meets regularly with its members to feedback issues to the RCC to contribute to institutional decision making. The HR Excellence in Research Award forms part of a larger package of university strategies and implementation mechanisms that positively impact our researchers' career and professional development support and opportunities. As such, the award is considered alongside the [University Strategic Plan 2017-2027](#) and within this, the [University People Strategy](#). This 10-year Review is part of a continuous process of review rather than a 'one-off' event that includes the following activities:

- An internal evaluation of progress against the 2020-22 Action Plan is undertaken by RCC three times each year. This involves consultation with colleagues from our Colleges, DCAD, CEEC, RIS, HR and RSA.
- The views of research staff are gathered every two years via the Culture Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS). Durham have taken part in CEDARS 2020 and 2021 adding to the data gathered via the earlier CROS 2019. In addition, research staff contribute to formal annual focus groups and regular face to face networking events with the RSA, and the RCC itself. The results of these feedback mechanisms are used as success measures against our Action Plan obligations and guide future work.
- A draft of this external evaluation and action plan based on the 2019 Researcher Development Concordat was reviewed by RCC in June 2022 before submission to Vitae. The final documentation was reviewed by Provost Board prior to submission.

Key Developments and progress against the 2020-2022 Action Plan Leadership and organisation

In October 2021 there was significant reorganisation of Durham's approach to research culture, including how attention is paid to the wellbeing, support and career development of researchers. A

new Deputy PVC for Research (DPVCR) was appointed with a specific remit to improve research culture. The new DPVCR took over chair of the newly constituted Research Culture Committee (RCC) and extended its membership and initiated a project called 'Flourish@Durham' which will determine what staff value about positive research culture. This informs the development of a roadmap and series of workstreams to address challenges. The first consultation workshops took place in May and June 2022 and the road map will follow in the autumn of 2022. In Addition, Durham has recently appointed a new VC and a new PVC-EDI.

Progress against: Recruitment, Selection, Recognition and Value

- Progress has been made in awareness of progression and promotion policies (80%) but this still needs to be translated into belief that researchers are likely to succeed. Concerns and confusion remain with respect to fairness and eligibility.

Progress against: Support and Career Development

- Despite being suspended during Covid measures, we are currently recruiting more than 15 participants per annum to the Research Project Leadership Programme (RPL). Recruitment is being extended to all PIs in next cohort in 2023.
- 79 researchers registered on the Careers and Enterprise portal and 13 researchers attending 1-1 careers appointments with specialists – this shows slow but steady growth year on year.
- CEDARS shows 62% of researchers are aware of what is available to support professional and career development

Progress against: Environment and Culture

- Clear progress has been made in researcher awareness of the Concordat. DCAD and departments (Engineering and Sociology) have held events to raise awareness which is now at 53% of researchers overall.
- More work needs to be done particularly to raise awareness of the commitment to 10 days CPD. The DPVC is currently discussing with HR whether this commitment can be written into new researcher contracts.
- Greater than 250 research staff per annum engaging in professional development workshops recorded via the Training booking system. Events booking has now moved over to the new Oracle Learning system
- CEDARS indicates an overall improvement in delivery and attendance at institutional and departmental induction. However, focus group, RSA and Research Culture meetings suggest that departmental induction works well but that institutional induction is still not helping new staff navigate the research environment beyond departments. The new VC has taken personal charge of this process and a report will come to RCC on the institutional induction review.

Progress against: Equality Diversity and Inclusion

- The 2021 CEDARS survey indicated that the majority of researchers felt that Durham was committed to EDI.
- Since our last report, Durham has appointed a new Senior Organisation Development Manager with special responsibility for inclusion as well as two Senior EDI Learning Development Managers.
- The new PVC for EDI took up post in February 2022 and has taken over leadership of EDI and Respect work across the University.
- To date around a third of research managers have undertaken EDI training

- EDI Skills boosters eLearning material made available to all staff

Progress against: Health and wellbeing

- Health and wellbeing of staff and students is a key priority of Durham's new Vice Chancellor.
- Report and Support tool for concerns about bullying and harassment launched
- New Health and Wellbeing strategy launched in 2021 and in March 2022 initiated a new Staff Concerns Policy which is intended to simplify and reduce the time taken to respond to concerns.
- New Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) launched. This is a confidential employee benefit designed to help staff deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting home life or work life, health and general wellbeing.
- The 2021 CEDARS survey indicates that 77% of research staff feel able to take positive action to support their mental health and wellbeing and more than 50% feel the University supports them in this.

Strategic focus for 2022-2025

Durham is a research-intensive university committed to attracting world class staff and enabling them to “pursue their research interests in a cooperative and well supported working environment” (Durham Research Strategy, 2022). Durham has now invested substantially in personnel and structures to carry this forward. As well as this being a key focus of the DPVC for Research, we have appointed a new Research Culture Manager and the new Research Culture Committee is focussed on delivery. A programme of consultation has begun which will result in a road map and a series of workstreams aimed at ensuring Durham's research culture enhances the experiences and lives of everyone involved in research here. Three important objectives will be:

1. **Supporting researcher careers.** The DPVCR along with colleagues in DCAD and Careers and Enterprise are currently discussing the Prosper programme (University of Liverpool) which provides targeted support for ECRs in career development beyond academia. Prosper is due to roll out to other universities in June 2023.
2. **Supporting and developing research managers and PIs.** The University is committed to ensuring that all leaders are aware of the principles of inclusivity and all senior management staff have been offered Inclusive Culture Leadership Training developed by Advance HE in January – March 2022. The Flourish@Durham project will seek to understand the challenges for research managers and develop actions to address these as the project develops.
3. **Supporting researcher CPD provision.** DCAD are mapping existing CPD provision to identify gaps (using the Vitae RDF as guidance) but also to inform the design of the new four-stage career framework, the Durham Researcher Development Award (DRDA). This a major development project over the next three years aims to formalise CPD at four career stages (1. Postgraduate Researcher, 2. Early Career Researcher, 3. New or Aspiring Principal investigator and 4. Senior Research Leader). Relaunch and Development Needs Analysis (DNA) tool for staff as a way of identifying CPD requirements and capturing achievement.
4. **Supporting researcher representation.** To assist the RSA in increasing its overall membership and representation across all Faculties. Members of the RSA are at the forefront of the consultation process for the Flourish@Durham initiative. Increase attendance and opportunity to attend further Research Culture Cafes which offer valuable informal feedback on Durham research culture.