

HR Excellence in Research Award 2021- 8-year Review

Context and Organisational Environment

Glyndwr University is at an exciting phase of its evolution as we prepare our application for Research Degree Awarding Power and continue to develop the research capacity and capability of the. The University has set out its [Vision and Strategy](#) up to 2025, with its core values as Accessible, Supportive, Innovative and Ambitious. With four strategy domains which operationalise the mission and values: Teaching that Inspires, Research that Transforms, Engagement that Enables, Structure that Sustains.

The University's commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers underpins the engagement with, and the support offered and provided to all researchers: staff and students. We have retained the HR Excellence in Research award since 2013 and have continued to document and monitor progress against the Concordat principles. Our previous Action Plan focussed on the development and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants, specifically naming them as our key audience and beneficiaries. After review and consideration, the new action plan for the next two-year period will now be aimed towards and be for all academic staff on a research and teaching contracts (196) and postgraduate research students (65). As one of the University's main priorities within the Research Strategy 2018-2025, is to develop the research capacity and capability of the university by developing its staff, we believe that by making all academic staff beneficiaries of the Concordat and representing development throughout the career lifecycle we will further strengthen our commitment to research development.

Overall oversight of the HR Excellence in Research Award and The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers falls under the aegis of the Research Committee. The Research Committee's membership includes senior managers, research leaders, contract research staff and postgraduate research student representatives. The Research Committee considers and recommends to the Academic Board any revised strategies and implementations of the Concordat, monitoring progress and reporting deliverable actions, updated annually. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research Chairs the Research Committee and has overall oversight and strategic leadership of the award and concordat, demonstrating the intuitional commitment to research support and development at a strategic level. As of 2018, each faculty now has an Associate Dean responsible for promoting and supporting research in their faculty. The content of the progress report and action plan has been influenced by teams across the University and as seen in the next two-year plan, individuals, teams and committees have been included under our responsibilities which stretch across all corners of the University, to emphasise that this a full institutional commitment. Operational oversight of the HREiR and Concordat lies within the responsibilities of the Head of Research Service, Research Development Tutor, and the Organisational Development & Diversity Manager.

Circumstances 2019-2021

A 6-year HR Excellence in Research review was completed in November 2019. Our original action plan for 2019-2021 mapped against the 2008 concordat principles was postponed due to requiring further amendments. As the new 2019 Concordat had been published the University invested time in completing a gap analysis of the University's current position concerning each of the obligations. From this analysis, the University produced a new action plan mapped against the new 2019 Concordat to cover the 2020-2021 period submitted and published in September 2020. Whilst an

action plan was not in place for this time (November 2019-September 2020) the University continued to be committed to the development and support of all researchers.

Like all University's, organisations and communities Glyndwr was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic continues to affect how we as an institution work and operate and it did have an impact on the progress of some of the activities outlined in our 2020-2021 action plan. However, Glyndwr quickly responded to the ever-changing environment and embraced the positive benefits the lockdown brought. We communicated and delivered our provisions using online platforms in both synchronous and asynchronous formats. In some circumstances, this meant that we saw a greater number of attendees especially in staff development activities delivered through HR which saw an increase of 24% of attendance than the previous year. During this time Glyndwr also opted to subscribe to the University of East Anglia postgraduate research online training programme which offered 62 different sessions relating to research and professional skills. The UEA online training programme was successful and well-received leading to the University subscribing again for the 21/22 year. Whilst the impact of Covid remains, the University continues to adapt to a form of working that sustains our commitment to the training and development of both our research staff and students.

Internal Evaluation Process and Success Measures

Alongside the 2020 gap analysis conversations were conducted with teams across the University to ensure an institutional approach was taken towards any new actions and commitments. As we developed the new concordat action plan we have referred to and aligned with existing key initiatives been undertaken at Glyndwr University, including Equality, diversity and inclusion action plans, Mental Health and Well-Being strategy and the Enterprise Strategy. Throughout the review process, we have also considered not just what actions to put in place, or are already in place, but how to communicate and promote this information more effectively. We have also considered the new ways of working and connecting across the university introducing new online initiatives to support our researchers working remotely.

To gather evidence and identify ongoing future need the review process primarily looked at the following data sets. Survey results from; the annual postgraduate research students survey, staff engagement survey, research assistant survey and staff conference feedback surveys. Attendance records were also evaluated for the delivery of staff development events hosted by the University's HR team and the attendance records from the research development team. Furthermore, as our research training and development sessions have been conducted online during the pandemic any reordered sessions were made available through our virtual learning environment, we were able to assess how many people had accessed the training asynchronously. Personal Research Plans which include sections on barriers, requirements and training needs were also examined during this process. Moving forward the University has signed up to the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey. Acknowledging that survey turnout can sometimes be low, and hope to put plans in place to ensure a good turnout, other measures such as social media analytics, attendance schedules, website hits and focus groups will be used to measure our success over the next two years period.

Key achievements

Environment and Culture

Personal research plans were designed in 2017 to support staff in their research journey enabling them to reflect on their achievements and planned direction of their research. Over the last two years, the PRP initiative has continued to develop with further sections being added on barriers and

training needs and questions relating to the Research Excellence Framework. Guidance and examples have been developed for staff at different stages of their research career. The PRP is also now part of the Personal Development Review cycle and academic staff are expected to upload their PRP to the online system used by the university as part of the annual PDR.

Open House for Research as an initiative began to encourage and facilitate internal networking and provide an open informal environment to discuss research plans, activities, and outcomes. The series originally started as three a year but due to its success, we now hold four sessions a year with an average attendance of 20 individuals which includes both staff and students. In our 2020-2021 postgraduate research survey the research development events that were mentioned most by our students were the success of the open house for research events. The University is proud of this initiative which we believe develops and sustains a supportive, fair, and inclusive research culture across all research career stages. We are hoping over the next two years to further develop these events and increase attendance by 20%.

Employment

Induction at the University had continued to be reviewed and developed, especially as we have moved to working remotely during the Covid- 19 pandemic. Research has become a more prominent part of the induction process, creating specific guides to introduce the research office and research community at the University. Videos were created introducing what research support is available at Glyndwr and the development and training accessible to them.

Professional Development Reviews are conducted on an annual basis but informally monitored throughout the academic year. The PDR offers an opportunity for staff to discuss career aspirations, individual personal circumstances, and where reasonable adjustments may be required to support the staff member. PDR guidance has been reviewed and updated to reflect sections for managers to discuss and agree on development and training needs. The document includes a variety of learning and development types and sources, including the completion and engagement with the Personal Research Plans.

Professional and career development

Workload Allocation and Professional Development. The University has developed a workload allocation model (WAM) to support the allocation of duties to academic staff. The framework notes that all staff should be given the opportunity to attend staff development events, both internal and external, in addition to research and scholarly activity and dedicates a section to record annual training and development time. Guidance on completing this section has been produced to ensure WAM reviewers discuss this. New members of staff are provided with a higher workload allocation for training and development. The latest results from the staff engagement survey indicate that 91% of staff agree that their individual training needs are discussed. The University recognises that more needs to be achieved in this area and the new action plan has included several new actions to increase communication and engagement regarding training and development opportunities as part of the WAM process.

Research development awards align with our main objectives to develop our staff. Two awards were first introduced to enable researchers to collaborate with colleagues in other universities and help support external funding for research bids and publications. Acknowledging that it is often difficult to obtain financial support, Glyndwr has established a fund to help facilitate these activities. The success of these awards led to a third development award being introduced for financial support for conference contributions, this award also became available to postgraduate research students.

Seven awards were approved in 2019/20; two of these were cancelled or postponed to 2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, and in one case, the overall cost of the activity proved to be prohibitive.

Next steps and future focus

The action plan for the next two years includes achievable and measurable commitments to further strengthen our dedication to the concordat across all three priorities and individual obligations. The below provides an overview our key priorities but all actions can be found in the attached action plan.

Environment and culture

The focus of the next two years is to further create an inclusive and transparent workplace environment and effectively promote a positive research culture, which in turn we believe will sustain our ambitions to increase research capacity and capability. The University will dedicate time to reviewing and actively promoting research integrity and research best practice. Alongside the successful Open House for Research series the research office will pilot a Research Culture Café over the next two years so all staff and students can contribute to the discussion on the challenges they face, review what we are already doing well and share more widely what a better culture would look like. Furthermore, many of our actions for the next two years include how to effectively communicate to our research community, with a plan to further increase a social media presence, complete a number of social media campaigns and relaunch both our external and internal webpages.

Employment

We recognise that within our Action Plan we have not made as many actions within the Employment obligations as the other sections, we aim to monitor responses closely in both CEDARs responses and staff engagement surveys and review if further actions are required for the future. Whilst much work has been done as part of our induction process the University identifies that further communication and engagement is needed specifically surrounding research when induction takes place to embed a feeling of a research culture and community at the early stages of recruitment. Furthermore, over the next two years, we plan to further promote our future leaders' programmes and review any possible research management schemes. The university will continue to be committed to engaging all researchers, at any stage of their career, in relevant policymaking and decisions making conversations.

Professional and careers development

Whilst work has been done over the last 4 years to implement specific time and dedication to staff and student development and training needs, the University now acknowledges the need to further promote and encourage staff and students to engage with the training and development we as a University have to offer. Communication strategies have been put in place in our most recent action plan to implement a campaign promoting research development. One of our main priorities over the next two years is to work with researchers and research centres to build our research visibility, research identity and presence as a University. Furthermore, we hope to increase and promote contract research and consultancy within our local and regional areas.