

Scottish Funding Council

HR Excellence in Research Action Plan 2016-2018

The following action plan covers the period 2016-2018. The actions within this plan have been developed in line with updates to SFC's strategic plan 2015-18 and our recent outcome-focused approach.

Delegated authority for the actions detailed in this plan lies with the Director of Research and Innovation at the Scottish Funding Council. The team within the Research and Innovation Directorate will be responsible for implementing the majority of these actions. However, many of these actions will include working closely with the team that manage the SFC's Outcome Agreement process.

Principle¹	Activity/Policy/ Funding	2016 – 18 Future Actions²	Success Measures	Deadline
1-7	Activities specifically to support implementation of the Concordat	Submit 4-year review of HR Excellence in Research award demonstrating progress and highlighting future actions	Successful review to maintain HR Excellence badge for further two years.	Summer 2016
		Future collaborative activity to share good practice among Scottish and UK institutions	Maintain and increase year on year the number of Scottish institutions holding HR Excellence in Research award and Athena Swan and Race Equality Charters.	Ongoing. Draft Outcome Agreements received in February of every year.
			Good practice is implemented and embedded within Scottish institutions' policies	Annual outcome agreement submission date (February of each year)
1-5	Co-funding and support for Research Pooling & other Collaborative Initiatives	Aligned with both the Scottish Government's policy and the UK Research Councils' focus on quality and scale, SFC will continue to work towards collaborative, quality driven and multi-institutional HE provision where appropriate	Funding for research pools, Innovation Centres, pan-Scotland Graduate Schools and other collaborative strategic investments continues to be monitored and evaluated to ensure best possible outcomes achieved.	Annual monitoring and evaluation reports are received every Autumn.

¹ Full detail of all seven Concordat principles is given at the end of the action plan table on page 7.

² New actions are shaded in purple.

1-5	Signatory to Other Concordats	Continue to encourage good practice and support the Research Integrity Concordat and the Concordat for Public Engagement with Research.	Institutions include reference to their signatures on concordats in their Outcome Agreements and/or relevant websites	Ongoing. Annual outcome agreement submission date (February of each year).
1	Research Excellence Grant (REG)	Provide QR funding to Scottish institutions.	Scotland's universities maintain their record of success in research, as evidenced in the 2014 REF (77% of research in Scotland's universities was assessed as world-leading or internationally excellent).	Ongoing. Indicative funding allocations announced December of each year.
		Ensure that supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers remains a key principle behind REG	More implicit links to career development of researchers in discussions on maintaining research excellence and in Outcome Agreements.	Ongoing. Annual outcome agreement submission date (February of each year).
			Scottish institutions demonstrate hard goals with regard to improving equality of opportunity for their researchers including stretching targets for Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter accreditation	Annual outcome agreement submission date (February of each year).
2	Institutional HR Practice	Continue to use Outcome Agreements as the primary vehicle in which we discuss matters of HR practice where	Good practice is implemented and embedded within Scottish institutions' policies	Ongoing. Annual outcome agreement submission date (February of each year).

		appropriate with institutions.		
3 and 4	Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG)	Continue to provide universities with funding to invest in the environment for high quality research training and development.	Monitor numbers through annual reporting procedures	Ongoing. Scottish institutions submit data to Higher Education Statistical Data (HESA) each Autumn.
	Postdoctoral and early career researcher exchanges (PEER and PECRE)	Continue to support research pools for these exchanges and ensure learning is embedded within networks	Monitor numbers through annual reporting procedures	Annual monitoring and evaluation reports are received at end of October.
3, 4 and 5	Scottish Crucible Programme	Continue to support collaborative leadership and development programmes	Monitor numbers through annual reporting procedures	Annual monitoring and evaluation report due every October.
	Enterprise and entrepreneurship education	Continue to explore with the Enterprise Agencies and the HE/FE sector innovative approaches to developing entrepreneurial skills. This is partly delivered through SFC's strategic investment in Enterprise Campus	Annual increase of the number of researchers with enterprise/entrepreneurship skills	Annual monitoring and evaluation report due every October.
5	Strategic Dialogue Meetings (SDMs) with individual institutions	Continue to hold SDMs with individual institutions to build mutual understanding and relationships between	Enhanced understanding through discussions with both staff and students on how the university is supporting their development.	In line with 3-year cycle of Outcome Agreements.

		institutions (staff and students) and SFC.		
6	Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity	Identified equality and diversity as one of seven priority areas for development over the lifetime of SFC's next strategic plan	SFC's published Equality Outcomes 2015 are implemented and monitored	Ongoing. Next mainstreaming report is due in 2017.
		Targets for retention, articulation and widening access to be included within institutional Outcome Agreements	Targets are exceeded.	Ongoing. Annual outcome agreement submission date (February of each year).
		Continue funding of ECU to roll out 3-year programme of work to support universities and colleges in Scotland in this area	Good practice is implemented and embedded within Scottish institutions' policies	ECU annual monitoring and evaluating reports received in November of each year.
		Engagement with next REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel to ensure appropriate steps are taken to ensure equality and diversity agenda upheld in future discussions of next REF and recommendations from REF 2014 EDAP report are implemented	Enhanced measures to support equality and diversity in next REF exercise, building on the success seen in REF2014	Ongoing. SFC will continue to work with other UK funding bodies to develop and implement future REF2021 exercise.
7	Improved Data	Work in partnership with HESA,	Improved understanding of how to	Ongoing. In line with 3-

	Collection	RCUK, ECU and other funding bodies to improve data collection on researcher careers	use the data collected by SFC and partners more effectively.	year cycle of Outcome Agreements.
		Working in partnership with Vitae, Universities Scotland et al, encourage increased participation in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) in 2017 from Scottish institutions	Larger number of Scottish institutions take part, and use the results of, CROS and PIRLS 2017	Ongoing. Next survey expected in 2017.

The Concordat's key principles:

1. Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.
2. 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.
3. Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.
4. The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.
5. Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.
6. Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.
7. The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.