

## **The Royal Veterinary College “HR Excellence in Research Award” Two-Year Internal Review**

Award Date: 27 January 2012

Review Date: 24 January 2014

### **Introduction**

In January 2012 The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) was one of only 50 UK HEIs, at that time, to receive the "HR Excellence in Research" Award from the European Commission highlighting the College's commitment to supporting the career development of researchers.

A condition of this award is that a two-year internal assessment of progress against its original Concordat implementation strategy is undertaken. This report contains the findings of the RVC internal review and revised action plan for 2013-14.

### **Outline of Internal Review Process**

At its last meeting the internal review was agreed and undertaken by the Research Concordat Working Group (RCWG). The group has reviewed progress to date, successes achieved and identified where further work is required. Membership of this group includes the Vice-Principal - Research & Innovation, Director of Human Resources, Head of the Graduate School, Assistant Director of HR, Staff Development Adviser, President of the Researcher Association, Early Career Researchers and Principal Investigators.

Researchers' views have been taken into consideration through CROS and PIRLS survey data, representation of researchers on the RCWG and feedback from the Researcher Association.

Additionally, the RVC reviewed its Implementation Strategy bi-annually to measure progress against the action plan, the outcome of which resulted in a revised action plan to cover the period 2013-14.

### **Key Achievements and Progress**

Following the gap analysis in 2011, many areas of good integration and successful implementation of the Concordat were identified alongside others where scope for improvement was identified. The latter formed the key elements of the RVC Implementation Strategy and Action Plan for 2012-13. The following highlights key areas of achievement against our action plan:

#### **Action 1: Improve Communication with Stakeholder Communities.**

The RVC identified increased awareness of the Concordat amongst its research community as an important requirement. To achieve this, we have redesigned our intranet pages to clearly signpost major resources, providing links to the Concordat, the Code of Practice for the Development of Researchers, the Vitae website and the Advice Centre. We have also made the Concordat and our Implementation Strategy and Action Plan more accessible on the RVC external web pages, as well as including information in our New Starter Induction Programme. In addition, we have highlighted the importance of raising awareness about the Concordat, particularly relating to the career development of our researchers, in the appraisal documentation sent to Principal Investigators prior to the start of the annual appraisal cycle. The Code of Practice itself has also been reviewed and updated by the RCWG.

**Action 2: Create Additional Resources.**

The RVC recognised that an important element of successfully implementing the Concordat was the need to create appropriate and easy to use resources to assist our researchers in their careers. To help achieve this, we have made available case studies highlighting a range of successful researcher careers, offered career development days throughout the year and collected and published 'next destination' information.

**Action 3: Continue to Develop Existing Relationships and Provision.**

The RVC recognised that it was important to ensure that support was available to our researchers through the Researcher Association. This included providing financial and administrative support to the Association, as well as implementing a full constitution which involved the election of a President and Vice President. In addition, following feedback received through a survey of our researchers, the weekly researcher seminar series are in progress of being re-designed to make them more accessible and relevant.

**Action 4: Improve Researcher Representation**

To ensure researcher views were taken into account, a key target was to improve researcher representation on RVC Committees, particularly the Academic Board and Research Strategy Committee. There is now a PostDoc Researcher who attends these committee meetings. In addition, researchers are invited to departmental meetings, ensuring they are included in departmental decisions.

**Action 5: On-going Review of Compliance with Concordat Principles.**

The RCWG meets every 6 months (in January and July) to review the progress against the RVC Implementation Strategy and Action Plan. A key aspect of these meetings is to identify where the RVC is doing well in respect of our action plan, as well as suggest areas for improvement.

**Next steps and focus of our strategy for the next two years**

Our next steps will focus on the following areas:

- **Equip and Support**

To support our researchers in developing their careers, we have mapped the Research Staff section of our Staff Training and Development Programme for 2013/14 to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF). This is a work in progress. We will also enhance our appraisal documentation to include a greater emphasis on the production of a personalised career development plan, based around the RDF. A key aspect of this will be the creation of a list of 'advisers' who can act as a source of support for researchers in addition to their Principal Investigator (PI). An awareness session for PIs has been introduced in 2013/14 with the aim of encouraging them to reflect on their role in providing career guidance and support for their researchers. Awareness sessions will continue to be run and these sessions will be refined based on feedback to enhance their value to PIs.

- **Personal and Career Development**

To ensure the importance of personal and career development is recognised, the Research Staff Development section of the Staff Training and Development Programme will be reviewed and approved by the RCWG. Further support in this area will include building on the series of career planning and development workshops for our researchers. We will also refresh our case studies and ensure they are accessible on the Researcher Association web pages and continue to collect and publish data on next destinations of our contract researchers encouraging our current contract researchers to consult and utilise this expanding network of RVC researcher alumni.

- **Researchers sharing responsibility for their own personal and career development**

We will continue to develop and promote the work of our Researcher Association, including advertising regular events and seminars being run. Through the Researcher Association, we will encourage our researchers to utilise their wider network of contacts for career advice in addition to consulting their Principal Investigator.

- **Equality and Diversity**

To ensure equality of opportunity is promoted in all aspects of researcher recruitment and career management, we will benchmark against national awards, in particular submitting an application for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award. This will focus on what the RVC needs to do to develop women within research roles. In addition, we will raise awareness of flexible working options for researchers, through the Researcher Association.

### **Success Measures**

Our success measures will include:

- Reviewing the data from the CROS and PIRLS surveys in 2015 to see whether improvement has continued;
- Reviewing feedback received from the Researcher Association and implement any necessary actions;
- Reviewing and reporting on the effectiveness of the personal development plan (PDP) as part of the appraisal documentation in order to better support our researchers in their career development and planning;
- More than 85% completion of research staff appraisal PDP's achieved by the end of the 2015 appraisal cycle;
- Ensuring more than 85% of our existing Principal Investigators (PIs) attend an awareness session by end of 2015;
- Ensuring all new PIs attend an awareness session within 12 months of joining the RVC;
- Providing three updated case studies which are advertised on the Research and Researcher Association web pages;
- Researcher Association to run another event by July 2014, rising to three events per year from 2014-15;
- Achieving the Athena SWAN Bronze Award.