HR Excellence in Research Award
External review report

This report is provided as a result of the external review of the institutions which hold the HR Excellence in Research Award, 4 years after gaining the Award. An international peer reviewer team, containing two UK and one international peer reviewers, undertook the review, and this report is the output of that assessment.

This report was then reviewed by at least two members of the UK HR Excellence in Research Award Panel, who reviewed the recommendations of the peer review team in relation to your institution and reviewed consistency of judgements across the peer reviewer teams.

Principles of review
The Peer reviewers were seeking to be convinced that there is sufficient evidence that:
- there are robust mechanisms in place within the institution to regularly and thoughtfully review and reflect on progress and define appropriate strategy and actions
- the institution is making genuine progress against its strategy and where possible that the impact is evident within the researcher community

Institution	Oxford University
Date of review	15 April 2016
Peer reviewer team:	
Peer reviewer name	**Peer reviewer job title and institution**
Louise Bright	Deputy Director Research and Business Engagement, University of South Wales
Victoria Sedman	Researcher Training and Development Manager, Nottingham University
Brigita Krsnik Horvat	Head of Office for Researchers' and Projects' Support Office, University of Maribor
Institutional representatives:	
Name of representative	**Job title**
Stephen Goss	PVC Personnel and Equality
Claire Pearson	Post doc and Project Manager
Laura Hodsdon	Learning Development Manager

Is the evidence provided?			
	Y/N	**Evidence found in documentation, including highlights**	**Evidence provided during the call with institutions being reviewed**
Shows how internal evaluation was undertaken	Y	The Research Staff Working Group (RSWG) has led the evaluation. RSWG has good representation across academic and research support sectors and has senior leadership engagement at PVC level.	Researcher representation was discussed and this is an area where a culture change has been achieved. Researchers feel their voices are heard by representation on departmental and divisional committees as well as central committees. Researchers are able to feed views up to committees of influence in Oxford.
Shows how researchers' views were taken into account during the	Y	Excellent. Detailed consultation undertaken with a range of stakeholders including the research	

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review		staff society and the Code of Practice Implementation Group. Evidence of working across agendas - Athena SWAN cited as an example. Surveys were also used to gather evidence including culture change surveys, and HR Audit.	
Indicates how review links with existing QA and other implementation mechanisms (this is not a requirement to retain the award)	Y	The Research Staff Society has representation on Research Committee and Research Staff Working Group.	
Provides details of key achievements	Y	All actions are completed or in the process of being implemented. There is evidence that researcher development is firmly embedded at Oxford. Key achievements include the establishment of a thriving research staff society. A range of development opportunities are available including peer mentoring, PI Programmes and more local interventions at divisional and departmental level. A single staff survey is also being introduced to replace CROS and PIRLS.	HR Excellence in Research Award has increased focus and energy on needs of researchers. It has acted as the "glue" to enable joining up of many important initiatives such as Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter Mark. Oxford Research Staff Society started 3 years ago. The growth of the society has been steady since then. The society organises social and professional events that are well attended. Researcher representation is now embedded at departmental, divisional level and more senior levels. There has been a huge cultural shift both in the sense of equality and diversity and expectations and interest in staff development. The buy in to PDR and engagement in staff development increasing amongst the academic community. Academics are appointed to lead HR Excellence in their divisions. This has led to forums being set up for ECRs to discuss issues affecting them.
Shows progress against the original strategy outlined in the original action plan and 2 year review, including indicators and metrics where appropriate (i.e. to what extent is the strategy set out implemented?)			
Identifies progress against all Concordat principles	Y	**Recruitment and Selection** Researcher Connections programme builds on induction for new researchers.	Some departments make PDR mandatory. For those that don't hold PDRs currently Athena SWAN is helping to provide external pressure to

| | | **Recognition and Value**
Researchers are clearly valued at Oxford given the breadth of development opportunities available and the significant efforts made to hear the researcher voice.

Career Development
Researcher Connections workshops established and centrally run to provide opportunities for researchers to network. An extensive menu of development opportunities is available to researchers as standard.

Researchers Responsibilities
70% of departments employing researchers have implemented a PDR. In some areas it is now mandatory.

Diversity and Equality
Good links with Athena SWAN. Returning Careers Fund also a good initiative. Evidence of opportunities to reflect on issues including Managing people and projects in a research context and Balancing family and a research career.

Implementation and Review
The establishment of the single staff survey is hoped to provide rich data for review in replacement of CROS and PIRLS. | provide PDR. There is also an increasing pressure from researchers to engage in PDR. The PDR process is improving and feedback is good. The Learning Institute is running training on PDR and producing resources for those engaging in the process to ensure that it is more than a tick box exercise.

Research Staff Code of Practice has been developed and well established. It relates directly to the Concordat and has been developed for ease of use. It is highlighted to researchers when they arrive and there is good knowledge of it by staff. Good cross links via the website. Termly welcome events for researchers where the Concordat and code of practice are discussed.

Internal staff survey will be used to explore researcher views rather than CROS and PIRLS. This approach has been adopted because some questions were not relevant to Oxford (for example CROS and PIRLS refers to central systems that are not relevant to Oxford.)
A detailed mapping exercise has been undertaken to look at surveys required for Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter Mark and CROS and PIRLS. It is intended that one survey is used to provide feedback and information to help with all of the above initiatives. To date 43% response rate (much higher than response rate for CROS and PIRLS.) Very rich information from free text coming in from the single survey so far. Research staff responses can be disaggregated from other staff in the single survey as well as the ability to identify PIs. Feedback from staff is that the single survey is easy to use and highly relevant. The survey can also be broken down to divisional and departmental level.

Central services and Oxford Learning Institute run courses to compliment the divisional offering, for example how to apply for research funding and how to manage people. Good links with central HR to ensure that HR |

			Excellence in Research and Athena SWAN developments are highlighted and understood. The process around developing policies was discussed. The process is long and very consultative. Divisions feed into policy development and significant effort is made to discuss the policies to ensure buy in. Training is not mandatory - researchers are the biggest single group who engage in training. Work has been undertaken to appropriately signpost where researchers should go to find the most appropriate skills development. In terms of research misconduct, well established procedures in place.
New action plan provides clear actions, specific accountability, specific deadlines covering the next, at least, 2 year period.	Y		
Report outlines focus of strategy for next four years, inc. success measures	Y	There is a focus on online resources for researcher to compliment existing provision.	

The following were supplied			
Context (institutional profile - confidential)	Y		Context was discussed during the call. Oxford has 4,500 research staff divided into 4 divisions - range in size and character. Very complex institution with devolved process at divisional level. Central policies and support are in place.
Original action plan online	Y		
Two year action plan online	Y		
Two year report online	Y		
Four year report online	Y	There is a clear focus on continuing to embed researcher development into policies and procedures and that the offering is sustainable and equitable. There is also an on-going focus on ensuring researcher representation and the development of management and leadership skills across the research workforce.	

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New Four year action plan (covering at least 2 years) online	Y		
Case study supplied (optional, not required for review – requested to share practice)	N		The Peer Review Team would like to encourage Oxford to develop a case study around the use of the single staff survey once a first full round has been completed. The second case of good practice could be developed about the establishment and impact of Oxford Research Staff Society. https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/connecting-other-researchers/oxford-research-staff-society?wssl=1

The peer reviewer team concludes that:	Y/N	Comments (to be completed)
The evidence provided meets the requirements of the four year process	Y	
The evidence provided meets the requirements, but you would like to see the following changes made over time		
The evidence provided will meet the requirements ONLY if the following changes are made		
The evidence provided does not meet the requirements and extensive changes are required. You recommend putting on hold until these are addressed		
Peer reviewer summary, comments and recommendations	The Peer Review Team would like to commend Oxford on the information made available via the Oxford website particularly in terms of relevant HR policies. The evidence provided in the submission indicates that Oxford is making significant achievements. This is further supported and evidenced via the institutional call. The use of a single staff survey could provide Oxford with rich information from academics, by the nature and scale of Oxford could be far removed from the centre. There is an excellent array of staff development on offer and the uptake and feedback from PDR is encouraging.	
The UK panel concludes that:	The UK HR Excellence in Research Panel have subsequently reviewed this external review report along with your institutional four year report and can confirm that there is both evidence that the review process has been followed correctly, and that your institution has met the criteria for retaining the Award. Congratulations. The members of the UK Panel that reviewed your submission and this report were:	

- Dr Irmela Brach, Policy Officer, European Commission
- Dr Fay Couciero, member of the UK Research Staff Association
- Dr Andy Dixon, Director of Research, University of Chichester and member of the Concordat Strategy Group
- Mr Guy Gregory, HR Director, University of Bristol and member of the Concordat Strategy Group
- Professor Trevor McMillan, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Provost, Keele University and member of the Concordat Strategy Group