

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD 2 YEAR SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

September 2013

1.0 Background

1.1

The following report details the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan's) process for conducting the two year internal audit process against the principles of the Concordat as outlined in the original submission. Attached is the update Action Plan that has emerged from that audit process which will guide and govern research development initiatives in the period 2013 – 2015.

1.2

UCLan is passionately committed to the continuing professional development of researchers at all stages from doctoral training to post-doctoral to Professoriate. It has a specialist team within the Research and Innovation Office under the Director of Research and Innovation – the Research Development and Support team – who hold within their brief responsibility for the coordination of all research staff and student training across campuses – both UK based and internationally (e.g. UCLan Cyprus). The Research Development Manager within this team is responsible for coordinating all training provision, and convening the CIG (Concordat Implementation Group) at regular intervals. The function of the CIG since the original receipt of the HR Excellence Award (2011) has been to undertake the monitoring, maintenance and enhancement of provision. Reports based on CIG activities are distributed to appropriate research groupings; considered by the Director for Research and Innovation and ultimately report to the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee within Academic Board.

1.3

During the period since receipt of the award, the Research Development and Support Team (RDST) have been responsible for increasing the provision of courses and workshops within the research training calendar. Features of this expanded training portfolio over the period 2012/13 are as follows:

- 67 stand-alone repeated training sessions for students in 2012/13 to 658 student participants;
- the 9 day Graduate Research Skills Programme was offered 9 times to 272 students
- 7 research student Induction Days were run for more than 150 new starters
- 3 deliveries of the New Supervisor 4 day programme to 97 new supervisors
- 1 delivery of the New Supervisor programme to staff at UCLan Cyprus (May 2013)

- Focus groups on the creation of the Supervisor Refresher Programme – launching Nov 2013
- Focus groups on “Future Prof” – development for the Professoriate – launching by June 2014
- Provision of 23 Epigeum modules on line (Research Masters programmes and Integrity Modules) now accessed by over 2000 students – PGR, PGT and UG

2.0 Internal Audit Process

2.1

Internally, the Audit Panel comprised the following members of staff*:

- ❖ Director of Research and Innovation
- ❖ Head of Graduate School
- ❖ Research Development Manager
- ❖ Human Resources Staff Development Manager
- ❖ Human Resources Manager
- ❖ Principal Lecturer in Academic Development
- ❖ Careers Adviser
- ❖ RDST Training administrator

**Please note that this was the formal audit convened for the purposes of the HR Excellence in Research Award 2 year self-assessment. Evaluation is undertaken with all groups of staff after every event. These evaluations are paper based evaluation forms; BOS generated surveys and one-to-one or one-to-group discussions. Focus groups are used in the Needs Assessment of every training event, so the process of development and evaluation is a continuing dialogue that informs professional development activities.*

2.2

Documentation reviewed included:

- ❖ Original Concordat Bid and Action Plan
- ❖ The Concordat Document
- ❖ The guidelines from Vitae on Audit conduct and expected outcome
- ❖ Exemplars from other Universities’ audit process (Nottingham, Exeter, Aston, York, Lancaster)
- ❖ Feedback from training participants via the Bristol Online Survey system – both staff and students – on all training events – and reports of verbal feedback received in addition to paper evaluation forms from each and every training event
- ❖ Spread-sheets indicating training events held and take up by both staff and students
- ❖ The newly developed Research Training Brochure 2013/14 detailing all training events mapped to the RDF domains
- ❖ Preliminary action planning for the period 2013-2015

3.0 Key Findings and Conclusions (denoted in red)

3.1

UCLan has made significant steps in enhancing its researcher training and development programme. The number, frequency and diversity of training on offer for students were evaluated by the majority of staff as commendable. It was agreed that the imperatives for the future were maintaining and sustaining current provision, and ensuring flexible as well as traditional formats were provided. Such flexible formats would include the development of comprehensive off-campus access to training events via appropriate streaming. A video library of interviews with key staff would also be developed – e.g. with professors on launching an academic career; with researchers on grant acquisition and funding opportunities; with researchers on getting published; with careers on how to develop entrepreneurialism; and so forth. Furthermore, that a comprehensive professional guide to the research training available for students would be produced and in print for distribution by October, and that during 13/14 a similar guide would be developed for staff.

3.2

Feedback scores on all Staff programmes had been high. In terms of on-going development for the Staffing provision, two areas were noted as requiring further development. Whilst the provision for early and mid-term career researchers (via Supervisor Training; The Researcher Toolkit; Research Leadership) was considered appropriate, it was agreed that there was insufficient development on offer for the more experienced career researchers e.g. Professoriate members. The Newcastle Times Higher Award winning programme was reviewed by the Panel, and it was agreed that similar provision should be developed and made a priority for the period 13/14. Preliminary discussions have been had with the Newcastle Staff Development Manager and work is already ongoing on the development of "FutureProf".

3.3

It was noted that whilst there was excellent provision in terms of careers guidance for students by virtue of the Certificate in Graduate Career Skills for Researchers, this was not offered to staff. It was agreed that this be run frequently enough to satisfy both markets, and information made available on the staff training programme with immediate effect. Furthermore, that recorded interviews with the coordinators and facilitators would be placed on line to give students and staff tasters of the training content to encourage and support take up, and that this video library be continually expanded with other training videos over the year 13/14.

3.4

When reviewing detail on Recruitment and Selection, the audit Panel felt that whilst all staff received a very thorough induction on the full range of services, more could be provided for academic staff (and appropriate support staff) in regard of specific requirements for research. It was agreed that a bespoke Research Induction for Staff programme should be developed for launch as soon as was possible. It was agreed that the Research Development Manager would liaise with HR and other appropriate stakeholders in developing this addition.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1

The audit panel concluded with positive statements on the range of student and staff provision, which would be enhanced by the developments highlighted above and in the attached action plan. It was agreed that the key focus must be the sustainability and quality of on-going, as well as developing provision – in order to continue to provide appropriate, timely and valuable development activities to the full scope of the researcher market.

4.2

That the CIG (Concordat Implementation Group) would continue to monitor on a regular basis and at least once per semester, the current and planned provision, ensuring that provision met the requirements of the Concordat domains.

4.3

That all developments would continue to be carried out using appropriate focus groups to ensure that training met the needs both of external quality stakeholders, and internal users.

4.4

That the audit report, updated 2011 Action Plan and 2013-2015 Action Plan would be forwarded to all Audit members for confirmation, before sign off by the University Director for Research and Innovation and distributed to the Research and Knowledge Transfer committee.

4.5

That continued investment with Vitae in terms of attendance at Hub group meetings, Conferences and engagement with training resources e.g. the RDF Planer should be continued in order to benchmark practice and ensure currency against national and European development agendas.

End of audit report.