

HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR)
8 Year Self-Assessment Review Report – Resubmission April 2022

Introduction and Background

Warwick is one of the UK's leading research Universities and our success and growth is underpinned by our talented research community. We are committed to supporting the career development of all members of our research community at all career stages, and to providing an environment where colleagues can thrive. Warwick first received the HREiR in 2012 and undertook successful reviews in 2014, 2016 and 2018. At each review, we have assessed progress and implemented a modified Action Plan (AP). Vitae encouraged us to revise and re-submit our submission in 2021 and this revised version is based on Vitae's feedback. The key points of our revision are as follows: 1) we have completely renewed the action plan from ground up so that actions are up-to-date, relevant and have clear measures of success, 2) we have implemented a new governance structure, most notably with the establishment of the Research Culture Forum, which will take responsibility for the HREiR action plan.

Concordat progress evaluation and governance

Internal evaluation and monitoring of the action plan is undertaken by the Research Culture Forum, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research). This group includes representatives from our Social Inclusion team, Organisational Development, Human Resources, Research & Impact Services, Doctoral College, the Research Staff Forum, PhD students, technicians and fixed-term research fellows. The Research Culture Forum reports to the University Research Committee, which provides research governance and reports to the Senate, which is the supreme academic authority at Warwick, and reports directly to Council.

Stakeholder / community engagement and communications

Warwick is committed to engaging stakeholders within the planning, implementation and review stages of the Concordat and HREiR submission. Submission information is shared with research focussed and appropriate support staff for input and comment. Open discussion has also taken place in the newly formed Research Culture Forum. The HREiR Working Group consists primarily of members from the Research Culture Forum. The Working Group has prepared this submission and will monitor progress in relation to the action plan.

Culture of development support and inclusion

Inclusion is one of Warwick's four strategic priorities, and a Social Inclusion Strategy has been published with an implementation plan which also informs our equality objectives. Warwick is committed to improving working conditions for all colleagues in line with the expectations of external charter marks, such as Athena Swan, Race Equality, Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, Business Disability Standards, Positive Allies, Menopause and the Thrive Wellbeing Charter.

Executive sponsorship and senior commitment

Warwick's Executive Board members demonstrate personal commitment to creating a sector-leading working environment for all colleagues, in particular research-focused staff. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (PVC) chairs the two key committees in relation to the Concordat and the HREiR: Research Culture Forum, the key committee that drives the mission of HREiR, and the University Research Committee, the highest-level research committee to which the Research Culture Forum reports. A new research executive position, Academic Director for Research Culture, was created in 2021, who is presently the deputy Chair of the Research Culture Forum and the Chair of the HREiR Working Group. One of the University Executive Board members serves as a social inclusion champion to take a leadership role in the social inclusion agenda.

Review of progress since 2018 – summary

Significant and positive progress has been made on the actions detailed in the 2018 plan. There is institutional recognition that learning and development of research active staff is essential and should be embedded within working life; not only to equip individuals to progress in their careers, but to ensure that researchers are equipped with critical transferable skills, whether they remain at Warwick or move elsewhere (HE, industrial, national and international organisations).

However, there have understandably been some delays, due to Covid-19, in the progression of some actions and projects, most significantly further development of the Recruitment module of the Human Resources' Success Factors Management Information system has been delayed. There are also systemic issues within the sector, e.g. reality of fixed-term employment contracts, which cannot be addressed in isolation, and Warwick has been engaged with the Russell Group work and recommendations as summarised in the 'Realising our Potential' report.

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on staff, with Researchers being additionally impacted by the limitations placed on their research from homeworking. The following interventions have been provided to try and support this cohort.

- A central Wellbeing Hub was created, promoting available support and policies in place to support carers.
- Many local surveys, and two central Covid-19 staff support surveys were run to understand key issues, identify support required and feed into Warwick's responses to the pandemic.
- Heads of Department and Managers are encouraged to have regular virtual meetings to support both academic research and the wellbeing of researchers.
- Academic probation and promotions were extended, on request, by 6 months due to Covid-19 impact.
- Introduced promotions advisers to support those (predominantly women) most impacted by lockdown.
- Career Support Funding Scheme has been introduced to help where caring responsibilities/ equality issues have impacted careers.
- Research Staff Forum Meetings continued on-line and increased in frequency as important part of 'staying in touch' provision.
- Training and career development initiatives moved on-line.

Key Achievements and Progress against the Concordat

Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining research staff

The importance of inclusive and engaging recruitment and on-boarding processes:

- A Human Resources Strategy Director (and Recruitment team) appointed to develop and implement socially inclusive approaches to talent attraction, succession planning, promotion, progression, retention and leavers, to enhance the employee experience and the Warwick employer brand. The team will be reviewing end-to-end recruitment and selection processes.
- On-boarding, Welcome and Induction play a critical role in retention, by setting the cultural tone and supporting engagement and community building. In addition to local departmental induction, there is now a central University Welcome Hub and twice termly virtual Welcome events hosted by senior colleagues, as well as a research specific Induction session for colleagues engaged in research activities.

Principle 2: Research staff are recognised and valued as an essential part of our human resource.

Researchers' views and voice

- Researchers are encouraged to share their views and experience through the newly established Research Culture Forum. In addition, Covid specific surveys took place and departments have carried out their own culture survey as part of Athena work.
- Revisions to the Promotions framework have provided greater parity and recognition for those on Research track, with colleagues now being able to use the same titles as colleagues on combined Research and Teaching pathways.
- Since 2018, there have been 4 Research focussed colleagues promoted to Prof and 10 to Associate Prof.

Recognising and supporting Researcher's wellbeing and work-life balance

- Warwick supports flexible working and recognises how challenging personal circumstances can impact progression. Academic probation extensions include: Due to Mat leave/Parental Leave 22; Due to Sickness Absence 4; Due to Covid-19: 132.
- Warwick Academic Returners Fellowship buys out up to 60% of teaching and administrative duties for staff on full academic contracts returning from maternity/adoption/long term parental leave. Since 2015, 52 staff have benefitted from taking up these Fellowships.

Principle 3: Research staff are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in the global research environment.

- A new modular 'Career 5 Series' to support career development of research staff was established in 2019/20.
- Warwick is a founding member of the Eutopia Project, which is an alliance of 6 European Universities committed to delivering open, innovative and inclusive higher education in Europe.

Principle 4: Recognition of the importance of research staff personal and career development at all stages of their career.

- Research staff can access Coaching and Mentoring support and develop their skills by volunteering as a coach or mentor.
- 10 female research active colleagues have been funded to participate in the Aurora Female Leadership Development programme.
- R&IS Impact team provide faculty, departmental and bespoke 1-2-1 advice and support on showcasing, measuring and evaluating impact, as one of the four dimensions within the academic promotions framework.
- Research staff can access a diverse range of courses to support research skills / wider career development.

Principle 5: Individual research staff share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development.

- Research active staff networks operated during 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, providing an opportunity to set up and lead a small network thereby developing leadership skills.
- Academics are supported to work with industry (e.g. through our Polymer Club) and to participate in large and strategic research initiatives; (e.g. Warwick is a collaborator in £32m ESRC Productivity Institute; co-directorship of the new National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise; Theme Lead for the EPSRC UK Energy Research Centre).
- Warwick Innovations signposts and supports research staff in commercial and social enterprise ventures.

Principle 6: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of research staff.

- University Strategy 2030 sets aspirations for Research and Education and is underpinned by strategic priorities of Innovation, Inclusion, Regional Leadership and International. A new Social Inclusion (SI) Strategy has been launched with a comprehensive implementation plan which forms Warwick's SI/Equality Objectives 2020-24.
- Warwick actively engages with Charter Marks – Silver Athena Charter Mark, Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, Race Equality Charter Mark, Disability Standards, Menopause and Thrive at Work Wellbeing Charter.
- REF 2021 has been underpinned by ED&I (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion); as demonstrated in our REF Code Of Practice, which was accepted by Research England at the first opportunity. 182 colleagues, including all Heads of Department were trained in ED&I, and panels and outputs were monitored for gender balance.
- We have made progress in recruiting members of various under-represented groups as research-focused academic staff, since 2018. We have made progress in disability, ethnic minority, LGBTQ+ and religion.

Principle 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.

- Financial support has been accessed from UKRI Covid-19 Grant Extension Allocation to support those impacted by Covid, which positively supported research staff on UKRI grants.
- Warwick has engaged with the Wellcome Trust Translational Partnership; promoting wider collaborations, sharing opportunities with relevant scientists, running processes to support compliance with funder caps on submissions; arranging mock interviews; supporting industry days. This supported research staff's career progression.
- Research & Impact Services and the Information and Digital Group's Academic Technology team help colleagues identify where technology and digital approaches can enhance humanities research. Warwick is committed to the City of Culture; which showcases external impact, reach and societal relevance within the narrative of academic success. These initiatives provided valuable opportunities for research staff.

Strategy for the Next Two Years

Research will play a key role in Warwick's Covid-19 recovery. Warwick is supportive of the increased expectations outlined within the Revised Concordat. Warwick recognises the distinctive contribution of all members of the research community and has chosen to extend the principles of the Concordat to the whole community (including Technicians and PGRs). Therefore, we will follow a phased and progressive implementation of the Concordat across 2-5 years.

Warwick has appointed a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Professor Caroline Meyer (from 1st August 2021), who will provide academic leadership for the University's Research Strategy (<https://warwick.ac.uk/research>), which provides direction for our research contribution locally, nationally and globally, ensuring that our research 'makes a distinctive, competitive impact on the world' and creating an environment where each individual researcher can thrive and produce excellent research. In addition, Warwick appointed a new Academic Director of Research Culture (Professor Sotaro Kita, from 1st November 2021), who is a member of the Research Executive, and leads the HREiR Working Group.

Under the leadership of the new PVC for Research, Warwick launched the Research Culture Forum, which oversees the action plan for HREiR. This group involves all relevant stakeholders of the Concordat and is chaired by the PVC for Research, with the Academic Director for Research Culture as the deputy chair.

Based on Vitae's feedback on our action plan submitted in 2021, we completely revised this plan, and all initiatives are new and have concrete success measures. In the next 2-year Review period, Warwick's key activities will be:

- Embed the Research Culture Forum to have open and collaborative discussions about the University's research culture, with all stakeholders. This Forum will play a key role in gathering the views and articulating the voice of research staff and technicians.
- Continue to deliver Research Integrity training, as a compulsory element for all employees involved in research.
- Deliver against the Social Inclusion strategy, which is designed to remove economic, social and cultural barriers.
- Establish a new post-award induction mechanism for academics who are awarded external funding and develop this into a vehicle for delivering the actions for managers.
- Establish better mechanisms for capturing relevant data (e.g., training completion, induction participation) for HREiR action plans.
- Enhance the existing local arrangements for induction with a new enhanced central induction for all new researchers. This will provide key information, orientation and welcome to the community. This will be an important vehicle for delivering actions for researchers.
- Work with the Warwick Institute of Engagement and Warwick Innovations to create and showcase opportunities for researchers beyond academia.

Warwick values the direction and focus provided by the Concordat and we aspire to maintain and improve upon the progress made since our initial HREiR award in 2012. This will be done through on-going consultation, co-creation of initiatives, evaluation, monitoring and reporting impact of progress across the research community.