

The Institute of Cancer Research HR Excellence in Research Award – Four Year Review and Future Strategy (2015-2018)

Four Year Review

(Full glossary and references provided on p5)

1. Internal evaluation process

The ICR's 4 year review was led by Professors Keith Jones (Deputy Dean) and Janet Shipley (Head of Division of Molecular Pathology) and representatives of key research groups (postdocs, students, scientific officers and faculty), similarly to the original gap analysis and 2012 report. The 2014 ICR-wide Staff Survey now incorporates questions to allow benchmarking to the CROS and PIRLS, and will now run annually (rather than triennially) to allow better analysis of trends and maintain momentum (Action 1a). PRES is already running annually for students. We will fully break down responses to separate researchers from non-research staff to give a clearer picture for researchers (Action 1b). Priorities have been identified via this working group and other researcher-led strategic groups such as the ICR's Athena SWAN Silver working groups and the 2014 Strategic Student Training Review (SSTR). The SSTR involved a gap analysis against the QAA indicators, RDF subdomains, Concordat Principles and the RCUK statement of expectations. The ongoing fulfilment of the action plan and strategy will be overseen by the Staff Engagement Committee, reporting in to the Management Executive.

2. Key achievements and progress

Original action plans updated in November 2014 can be accessed via the [ICR website](#)¹.

2A. Recruitment and Selection

The ICR's equality training was redesigned at the request of Equality Steering Group and includes a focus on unconscious bias. We have reviewed attendance and with tailored communications, increased attendance at the workshop by 36% in 2014 compared with 2013. 67.5% of current employees have completed this training and we will increase this to 80%, implementing added checks at probation sign-off between managers and individuals (Action 2a). Refresher recruitment and equality training has been introduced for team leaders in preparation for the annual student recruitment event. Furthermore, a project exploring use of psychometric questionnaires (OPQ) during student recruitment process was completed and recommendations made to the Research Degrees Committee. Recruitment training has been agreed as mandatory for all chairs of panels across ICR and embedded into manager induction (Action 2a). We are improving recruitment data recording via the eRecruitment system and clarifying aspects of senior researcher recruitment (Action 1c).

Guidance on the procedure for securing tenure has been developed and published internally, and the Director of Research has provided a briefing for CDF. The Chief Executive has confirmed that all CDF will be matched with a faculty mentor outside of their own division (Action 2c). A scheme has been developed by the SO Association to offer mentors to all promotion candidates. Mentors are volunteers who have successfully navigated the promotions process in the past. A new question in the Staff Survey ("Promotions criteria are fair and transparent") was introduced in 2014 but only 34% of researchers responded positively. We will increase understanding of the process to researchers to reach 50% positive responses by June 2015 (Action 2d).

2B. Recognition and Value

The HR strategy (published via the intranet and shared with researchers) has a focus on early career researcher support e.g. pay, promotion and career progression. The *Pathway to Independence* project to support progression of postdocs to team leader role was launched (see case study 1). A Postdoc Code of Practice has been developed and copies will be provided to all new postdocs and team leaders to articulate expectations (including regular feedback meetings, appraisals etc) and support available

for postdocs. Short, informal [postdoc induction](#)² meetings have been launched to provide information on skills training and careers support, led by the Postdoc Association.

In addition to SO promotions mentoring, a maternity mentoring and coaching scheme has been launched, led by the newly established Parents' Network. Bespoke workshops on mentoring within teams are offered, and mentoring guidance is available to all staff via the intranet. [External mentoring](#)³ training/resources are also promoted. Mentoring schemes for clinical researchers are being led by the Head of Clinical Studies (Action 3e) and the Chief Executive is championing a review of mentoring for CDF (see above).

2C. Career Development

A comprehensive careers programme is embedded in to the researcher development programme, coordinated and delivered by trained Learning & Development team members (with previous postdoctoral research experience and careers counselling/psychometrics training) and careers advisors from the University of London (C2 Careers). A number of faculty also support careers events around academic careers. Careers support is outlined in the redesigned [Training Catalogue](#)⁴. ICR staff and students reported higher positive responses to 'I take ownership of my own career development' (4.15) than the CROS average (4.06). 43% staff responded positively in the Staff Survey to "I can access impartial careers advice when I need it", we will break this down for research versus non-research staff and aim to reach 70% for research staff (action 3b). A [LinkedIn online](#)⁵ group for current and former postdocs has been launched to enable networking and contacts. We have tracked the career destinations of 57% of postdocs who left ICR in the last 5 years (Action 1d). We have also increased the provision of online/webinar training to allow improved access across sites and off-site (six careers webinars held since Jan 2013 and recordings available online).

The Pathway to Independence pilot⁶ programme was delivered in 2013 (both core programme and follow-up day), evaluated and presented to Research Directorate. Research Directorate have recommended the programme is repeated as a biennial event and 2015 funding has been ring-fenced. "Pathway to Independence" awards from the Academic Dean have launched to provide small bursaries to allow postdocs to gather preliminary data for their independent research proposal. We are tracking the careers of the initial cohort via a LinkedIn group and ResearchGate online platforms. The two year review questionnaire to the first cohort will launch in January 2015 to further inform 2015 programme and measure impact of the initiative. We will publish results from the evaluation of cohort 1 on the website⁶ (Action 2g). Furthermore, broadly-available support for junior researchers aiming for academic independence has increased in-house, with collaborative events such as "Postdoc to PI" with Imperial College and a new workshop on writing grant applications.

Training support for technical grade staff has expanded and is tailored to fit in to the working day, based on feedback from the group (Case study 2). The 2013 SO Lunch and Learn programme was evaluated in January 2014 with strong feedback. 90% of respondents have either used or plan to make use of training sessions in future. Of those who had attended the Lunch and Learn sessions over 85% were positive about content, time slot, duration and relevance to their role. A 'Train the technical trainer' programme developed to build capacity for internal training within teams and divisions. Workshop presented at 2014 [Vitae conference](#)⁷ to share best practice.

In terms of leadership development for managers of research staff, team leaders can request an external coach. The established "Women in Science" group (female team leaders) has met biannually, with sessions on leadership and management issues. People management training is promoted via L&D communications, at supervisor refresher workshops and mandatory equality workshops. All junior team leaders are offered funded places on EMBO Lab management course and 65% of current CDF have attended this. 80% of CDF attended a development day which included presentation from Head of Research Operations and the Head of OD and workshops on budget management and grants have been designed and delivered for this group for the first time.

Student training and careers support has continued to receive positive feedback and the SSTR group concluded 'that overall, the ICR's training provision successfully covers the great majority of areas specified by these [QAA, RCUK, RDF and Concordat] bodies'. 85% students surveyed in the SSTR indicated they had attended training to support transferable skills development. The RDF, introduced at

induction, is routinely used by students to identify training needs with their supervisor, and all other researchers have access to it via the ICR intranet.

2D. Researchers' responsibilities

The staff associations are strongly engaged in providing professional development opportunities, with the postdoc association (PDA) championing "Work in progress seminar series" for students and postdocs. The PDA has also made efforts to engage more with industry, developing a session on commercialising research with Cancer Research Technology (CRT) and holding a discussion evening at the Academy of Medical Sciences (AMS) between postdocs and industry leaders about how to support the next generation of leaders in life sciences⁸. The SO Association has expanded its technical conference so it is open to all researchers (case study 2). In 2013-14, 48 members of staff (non-L&D) contributed to the delivery of centrally provided training (5% total workforce).

2E. Diversity and Equality

Following review, ICR was re-classified as part of Athena SWAN research institutes scheme with a deadline to submit application for silver in 2016. Divisional working groups are participating in analysis of data and the Silver steering group meets termly. Staff Survey incorporates questions to measure Athena SWAN initiatives and data can now be analysed by division, which is informing priorities of Athena SWAN divisional working groups. The Athena SWAN initiative was presented and endorsed by the Academic Dean at the annual ICR-wide conference. 79% of staff are aware of initiative (above 55% CROS national average 2013). A specific session was held at the annual faculty retreat exploring barriers to career progression for women at CDF/Faculty level and subsequent action to improve mentoring for CDF resulted (Action 2c). Equality training and monitoring was embedded into the REF process in 2013/14 and further opportunities to support early career researchers via Dean's Awards (see Section 3 of the strategy) resulted from recommendations by the REF selection panel.

2F. Implementation and review - see description of internal review process.

ICR 4 year HR Excellence in Research Strategy (2015-2018)

The ICR's 4 year strategy can be summarised as three broad areas; 1) Using data to inform priorities and measure impact, 2) Leadership and management development and 3) Defining career paths and supporting career development.

1. Using data to inform priorities and measure impact

ICR-wide Staff Survey was completely re-designed to allow better analysis of data based on role type, gender, clinical versus non-clinical researchers and comparison across divisions. We can benchmark some questions to CROS and PIRLS national data and will now run the survey annually to give greater ability to monitor trends and impact of initiatives (Action 1a and b). Key areas going forward (and priority for Athena SWAN working groups) are around improving recruitment data recording and ensuring managers are adequately trained (Action 1c). We will also be making efforts to improve the transparency of appointment of team leaders and division heads, which are key bottle necks in the academic career path. The ICR's Athena SWAN Silver application deadline is November 2015.

The ICR uses a high turnover model for researchers, to ensure a continuous flow of new research students and postdocs below team leader level. This means most postdocs and PhD students leave ICR after 3-5 years on average. In order to measure whether we are achieving our strategic objective 'to educate and train the next generation of cancer researchers', we will continue to identify where researchers go in their careers after leaving ICR (Action 1d). We will publish these data and compare with published data from peer research institutes. We will present the data at careers events such as the careers conference, and furthermore we will examine ways to evaluate the impact of training e.g. through an alumni survey (Action 1e). This will help inform future training strategies.

2. Leadership and management development

In order to continue to lead in the field of cancer research globally, the ICR must ensure that team leaders are effectively recruiting, managing, motivating and leading their teams. The experience of a researcher is often very dependent on their manager and the Staff Survey highlighted that researchers

score significantly lower than non-research staff for “my immediate manager lets me know how I am doing” and “I have a good working relationship with my manager”. The proportion of faculty made up of junior team leaders has increased to 30% over the last two years (now 20 out of 69). We will seek to expand the portfolio of support provided to new team leaders via the established CDF network, providing bite-sized master classes on key skills (e.g. supervision skills) to build engagement of the group and involving senior faculty in delivering these (Action 2b). As many of our senior faculty travel frequently, we are reviewing how we provide development to this group, expanding resources online (e.g. webinars) and one-to-one briefings at convenient times. CDF will also be matched with a faculty mentor (outside of their Division) (Action 2c). A new managers’ network will be developed for research and non-research staff (Action 2f).

The ICR is committed to achieving Athena SWAN Silver recognition and the project group involves a large number of researchers including several influential senior researchers. Supporting women to manage and lead is a core objective. We have provided funded places on the national Aurora women’s leadership programme and will evaluate the first cohort of ICR attendees, with alternatives offered to unsuccessful applicants. A bespoke workshop on “Personal Effectiveness and Power” for female team leaders is under development with Roffey Park and will be open to both ICR and RMH senior women. To ensure recruitment on to influential committees is fair and transparent, guidance is being developed as to how researchers are selected for involvement (Action 2e).

The ICR will be offering places for Leadership in Action programme in collaboration with UCL for the first time in 2015 for researchers. We will explore mentoring and expanding support for postdoctoral fellowship holders who are on the first step to academic independence. Furthermore the Pathway to Independence programme for postdocs aiming for team leader positions will be run again in 2015 and the two year review of cohort 1 will take place in January 2015 (Action 2g).

3. Defining career paths and supporting career development

A Postdoc Code of Practice has been developed and agreed by the ICR Research Directorate to clarify expectations of postdocs, their team leaders and the support provided by ICR. This will be widely disseminated and embedded into the recruitment and appraisal processes (Action 3a).

The ICR works closely with its partner the Royal Marsden Hospital (RMH) to ensure scientific discoveries are translated for patient benefit. Clinical academics face numerous challenges to achieve academic independence, such as managing dual careers, fewer senior clinical academics to draw on as role models/mentors, and competition for funding. We will clarify the career pathways for clinical academics at ICR/RMH and identify gaps in the support provided to these groups. With our clinical partner the Royal Marsden Hospital, we will establish a mentoring scheme so that all clinical academics can access advice in addition to their line manager. Furthermore we will seek to develop a bespoke leadership programme for the group using the Pathway to Independence model. This will be led by the newly established Clinical Researcher Career Development Working Group (CRCDWG), Chaired by the Head of Division of Clinical Studies (Action 3c-e).

In order to support the growing need for scientists to gather, store and manipulate big data, ICR has established a core bioinformatics facility. This field is of strategic importance to the ICR’s research, and in the 2014 training review, over 90% of student and supervisors responded that there should be an introductory bioinformatics course provided. Therefore we will widen the portfolio of training provided to our scientists in this area, using internal expertise of the scientific computing team and external experts. We will provide an introduction to bioinformatics programme as a grounding and signpost to further support. We will work with the Scientific Computing team and the Users forum (SCUF) to provide additional workshops for programming/computing skills (Action 3f).

Although available to all researchers, only 43% of staff/students reported awareness of impartial careers support in the 2014 staff survey. We will seek to improve the awareness of researchers to at least 70% (Action 3b). We will also take forward actions related to student training that resulted in the gap analysis described in the internal evaluation process description above (Action 3g-h).

Glossary

ACS = Assistant Company Secretary
 AMS = Academy of Medical Sciences
 ASC = Athena SWAN Coordinator
 ASSSG = Athena SWAN Silver Steering Group
 Asst Dir (AR) = Assistant Director (Academic Resources)
 CDF= career development faculty (junior, non-tenured team leaders)
 CRCDWG = Clinical Researcher Career Development Working Group
 CRT = Cancer Research Technology
 CROS = Careers in Research Online Survey
 HoDCS= Head of Division of Clinical Studies
 HR IO = HR Information Officer
 ICR = Institute of Cancer Research
 L&D = Learning & Development
 OPQ = Occupational Personality Questionnaire
 PDA = Postdoc Association
 PRES = Postgraduate Research Experience Survey
 PIRLS = Principle Investigator Research Leaders Survey
 RCUK = Research Councils United Kingdom
 RDA = Researcher Development Advisor
 RDC = Researcher Development Coordinator
 RDF = Research Development Framework
 RDPEM= Research Degrees Project and Events Manager
 REF = Research Excellence Framework
 RMH = The Royal Marsden Hospital
 SCUF = Scientific Computing User Forum
 SSTR = 2014 Strategic Student Training Review

References

1. <http://www.icr.ac.uk/about-us/responsibility/hr-excellence-in-research>
2. <http://training.icr.ac.uk/coursed.php?course=512>
3. <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/careers/mentoring-and-careers/mentoring/>
4. <http://training.icr.ac.uk/icr-landd-p4p-rgb.pdf>
5. https://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostRecent=&qid=7424326&trk=my_groups-tile-flipgrp
6. <http://training.icr.ac.uk/pathway/>
7. https://www.vitae.ac.uk/events/vitae-researcher-development-international-conference-2014/workshops/copy31_of_so-youre-new-to-uk-higher-education-institutions
8. <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/more/news/nextgen-life-sciences-supper-club/>