

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	Institute of Cancer Research
Date of review	2nd March 2015
Peer reviewer team:	
Peer reviewer name	Peer reviewer job title and institution
Louise Ackers	Chair in Social Policy, University of Salford
Isabelle Halleux	R&D Executive Director, University of Liege
Louise Bright	Associate Director, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
Institutional representatives:	
Name of representative	Job title
Professor Keith Jones	Team Leader and Deputy Dean
Dr Amy Moore	Researcher Development Manager
Dr Holly Barker	Postdoctoral Training Fellow and Chair of the Postdoc Association

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	Review was lead by Deputy Dean and a Head of Division. This involved post docs, students and scientific officers. PRES, CROS and PIRLS also used to evaluate.	
Shows how researchers' views were taken into account during the review	Y	Engagement with all types of staff. Where non-research staff have inputted (for example in staff survey) their views are separated to enable the views of staff involved in research to be considered.	Excellent efforts made to listen to the views of the research community not only relying on responses to surveys but by engaging with the postdoc association and its member.
Indicates how review links with existing QA	Y	Action Plan and Strategy are reviewed by Staff Engagement Committee that	A lot of reference has been made throughout the report on initiatives to



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and other implementation mechanisms (this is not a requirement to retain the award)		reports to Management Executive.	benchmark activities with existing QA processes including Athena Swan, Aurora and key partner institutions (Wellcome Trust; Royal Marsden: BBSRC etc)
Provides details of key achievements	Y		Detail is given on a wide range of innovative interventions. The reviewers were immediately impressed that the report was prepared by 2 leading researchers (and not only by HR). The report does not provide background data on its staffing and the numbers of postdocs – or staff on fixed term contracts but it emerges that the ICR is really quite unique in that its role is to build capacity and train the next generation of cancer researchers – so it clearly has a very high throughput. This necessarily generates challenges in terms of managing expectations and building relationships – when most researchers only stay for 3-4 years. Again the reviewers were very impressed with the range of measures and the innovative nature of them. Especially on gender – mentoring and also the emphasis on SOs (many of which may aspire to be researchers). The need to constantly recruit new researchers was highlighted but this is the nature of the research environment.
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?)			This was discussed. The report and discussion provide evidence of progress in terms of accessing training and engaging with the initiatives referred to above – which must be a challenge with such a transient population – and the awareness amongst them that their stay there is necessarily temporary.
Identifies progress against all Concordat principles		Recruitment and Selection Equality training that focuses on unconscious bias. Good review of attendance with checks about who has attended and refresher courses available. Recruitment training now mandatory for chairs of recruitment panels. Capturing data on recruitment is improved via the eRecruitment system. Recognition and Value HR Strategy focuses on ECR support.	Excellent engagement across the research community in its broadest sense. Good use of many techniques to garner opinions including surveys, workshops, engaging with associations to career cafes and conferences. Principal Investigators feel well supported to effectively deal with their teams and able to carry out their research. Outreach is a strong theme with



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		<p>Postdoc code of practice developed as well as postdoc inductions.</p> <p>Career Development Comprehensive researcher development programme established. Leaders can request an external coach. Women in Science group established. Good evidence of the attendance and satisfaction of events attended included external events run by Vitae.</p> <p>Researchers Responsibilities Postdoc Association active. Sessions held on industry engagement.</p> <p>Diversity and Equality Working towards silver Athena SWAN submission in 2016. Faculty retreat held to explore issues for women in science. Equality training and monitoring throughout REF process.</p> <p>Implementation and Review Review was lead by Deputy Dean and a Head of Division. This involved post docs, students and scientific officers. PRES, CROS and PIRLS also used to evaluate. Review Staff Engagement Committee that reports to Management Executive.</p>	<p>excellent engagement with the public. Researchers are offered media training via the annual science communication course and numerous opportunities have been exploited for example talking to financial donors, explaining their science in the pub over a pint, STEM Ambassadors and high profile TV programmes such as Panorama. Increased capacity in the central communications team has also helped this agenda.</p> <p>Competitions to encourage engagement are also a regular feature at ICR including science writing and science image competitions.</p> <p>Excellent work and monitoring around gender issues and particular concern paid to issues that might arise around maternity.</p>
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		

The following were supplied			
Context (institutional profile - confidential)	Y		
Original action plan online	Y		
Two year action plan online	Y		
Two year report online	Y		
Four year report online	Y		
New Four year action plan (covering at least 2	Y		



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years) online			
Case study supplied (optional, not required for review – requested to share practice)	Y	Two case studies are provided. Pathway to Independence and Scientific Officer Training.	The case study highlighting the Scientific Officer training was particularly worth highlighting as this is a group of often forgotten research active staff who ICR have given careful consideration to.

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		<p>The review team, through a mix of reading the documentation and discussing the action plans and the HR Excellence process more broadly, are assured 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.</p> <p>The review team was also convinced that the institution is making genuine progress against its strategy and there is much evidence that engagement with the research community is having a positive impact.</p> <p>The Institute of Cancer Research have demonstrated a thoughtful and robust approach to improving the skills and experience of their research staff. Of particular note was the consideration given to all groups of staff undertaking research, especially their Science Officers who could so easily have been overlooked.</p> <p>Clear progress has been made over the review period and challenging but SMART objectives have been set for the coming years.</p> <p>Senior management are clearly engaged in this agenda and the review team have no hesitation in recommending to the panel that the Institute of Cancer Research retain their HR Excellence in Research award.</p>	
The UK panel		The UK HR Excellence in Research Panel have subsequently reviewed this external	



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<p>concludes that:</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>The members of the UK Panel that reviewed your submission and this report were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Irmela Brach, Policy Officer, European Commission • Dr Anastasia Callaghan, 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 • Dr Janet Metcalfe, Chair and Head, Vitae and on behalf of the Concordat Strategy Group
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