

# HR Excellence in Research Report

**2023**

## OUR POSITION AS A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Swansea University has a long-standing commitment to supporting the career development of researchers, having been the proud holders of the HR Excellence in Research Award since 2010. We are a research-intensive Institution with 5,027 staff, of whom 439 are Research Staff and have primary responsibility to conduct research: Research Staff are employed specifically for this purpose (including Research Assistants, Research and Senior Research officers, Research Fellows and postdoctoral researchers). In the latest Research Excellence Framework 2021 assessment, 86% of the University's overall research was rated as world-leading or internationally excellent - up from 80% in the previous REF exercise in 2014.

We continue to be recognised for the impact of our research which makes real, positive difference to the lives of people across the world. 86% of our research, judged by a panel of REF experts, is making outstanding and very considerable impact in terms of reach and significance, at a local, regional and global level. 91% of our research environment is classed as world-leading and internationally excellent. This reinforces that Swansea University is an outstanding environment to conduct research as a student or an academic, and that our research makes a real difference in the world.

During this review period, the University has experienced a great deal of change – not least our collective response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of research and the way we support all staff, including staff whose primary responsibility is research. In addition, we have signed up to The Technician's Commitment to help address key challenges facing technical staff working in research. We have also moved to a new Faculty structure with the creation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, and Science and Engineering and have been working to transition and embed new roles, Faculty Committees, processes, systems and procedures. We have created opportunities to widen the reach of the University's leadership team through the creation of a new strategic academic leadership role, Deputy PVC Research Culture.

## OUR EVALUATION AND PROCESS

This evaluation was led through the Research & Innovation Staff Working Group (RISWG) chaired by Professor Biagio Lucini, Deputy PVC for Research Culture. The RISWG has been active since September 2016 with defined [Terms of Reference](#). Research Staff representatives from each of our three Faculties are integral members of this group. The group meets with the purpose of supporting personal, professional and career development aligned to the Researcher Development Framework and oversees the delivery of the Concordat Action Plan for Research Staff. This evaluation was coordinated by the Learning and Development Manager, Jo Home, supported by the RISWG, and reporting into the Committee for Research, Innovation and Impact ([RIIC Terms of reference](#)). Oversight and strategic leadership has been provided by the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research Culture (Chair of the RISWG) and the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation), who chairs RIIC, demonstrating Institutional commitment to researcher support at a strategic level.

## OUR EVIDENCE AND SUCCESS MEASURES

Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), direct consultation with researchers and central support via the RISWG; Institutional work on Athena SWAN, the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and the Race Equality Charter; the University vision and Strategic plan. The review has also been informed by minutes from the RISWG, RIIC and feedback captured from Research Staff in relation to their lived-in experiences of our research environment, employment and their professional and career development at Swansea.

## OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS SINCE 2021

### THEME 1 Environment & Culture

- ◆ In June 2021, Swansea participated for the first time in the national **Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers Survey** (CEDARS), with 189 respondents. Results have been shared at the Research Staff Working Group (RISWG), Research, Innovation and Impact Committee (RIIC) and used to update the actions under the [University Concordat Action plan](#)
- ◆ CEDARS is included as a specific outcome in the University R&I strategy, with a commitment to continue and increase engagement and reach with the research community and to use the results to inform actions going forward.
- ◆ The [Research and Innovation Staff Working Group](#) continues to ensure the voice of researchers is heard and monitors, maintains, and coordinates the renewal of Swansea's HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) accreditation. During this period, the RISWG has met five times, and has ongoing representation from researchers in different disciplines, across all 3 Faculties.
- ◆ Communications from PVC Professor Helen Griffiths to all staff ([10 March 2021](#)), revised webpages and our revised R&I strategy highlight our commitment to review and monitor the implementation and delivery of the UK Concordat [Our Commitment to Researchers - Swansea University](#).
- ◆ Our **welcome email** to new Research Staff continues to include clear signposting to the Concordat.
- ◆ CEDARS indicated that 60.8% Swansea researchers completing the survey have heard of the Concordat to support the career development of researchers compared to 54.6% of the national benchmark group
- ◆ **Research Staff wellbeing**, included as a specific outcome in the University R&I strategy: "To take frequent, active, and meaningful steps to determine and address levels of Research Staff wellbeing, with emphasis on mental health support and wellbeing programmes"
- ◆ Information about health and wellbeing is included at all **new staff Inductions** (12 induction events per calendar year; 75 research staff attended between January 2021 - 2022). Newly developed resources: [Health & Wellbeing - Swansea University](#) are signposted at the induction seminar and University Occupational Health and Health & Wellbeing specialists deliver a specific session on the services available.
- ◆ The University has signed up to the **victim support hate crime charter** and training sessions have been arranged for all staff to understand more about hate crimes and how to report a hate crime. Webpages [Bullying and Harassment - Swansea University](#) give further support internally and externally.
- ◆ 90 staff (including 10 Research Staff) have participated in at least one session of the four-part Emotional Resilience and Thrive series designed to support psychological health and wellbeing. A total of 10 workshops have been delivered between January 2021 - 2022.
- ◆ 71.8% Research Staff feel that Swansea actively promotes the importance of good mental health and wellbeing of staff compared to 69.3% nationally (CEDARS, June 2021)
- ◆ The strategic **Health and Wellbeing Board** includes the membership of the Deputy PVC for Research, and the operational **Health and Wellbeing Network** invites a member of the RSWG to represent the views of Research Staff and be the 'Wellbeing Champion' for researchers.
- ◆ The University continues to invest and provide access for staff and students to **'Togetherall'**. Information webinars were run in September 2021 to inform about the service and benefits of this online mental health support platform. Between

October 2020 and Jan 2022, **5,843** logins were registered, with new registrations from 677 students and 60 staff.

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## THEME 2 Employment

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- ◆ We have embedded changes to our recruitment processes to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and fairness. The number of Research Staff that agree or strongly agree that their recruitment, selection, and appointment at Swansea is merit based and fair has risen from 60% (CROS, 2019) to 81% (CEDARS, 2021)
- ◆ Feedback from CEDARS (June 2021) has informed and enhanced **Research Staff promotion**. For the first time, researcher promotion has been aligned to the PDR cycle, mirroring timeframes with our academic community. University promotion workshops have been delivered and led by our PVC R&I to clarify the promotion process for Research Staff and Research Staff managers.
- ◆ In 2021/22, there were 26 applications for promotion from Research Staff, 11 of which were successful (42%). This compares to 8 successful promotions in 20/21 from a total of 28 applications (29%).
- ◆ The **Research Staff Promotion Panel** has been revised to include the PVC for Research and Innovation and the 3 Faculty Associate Deans for Research. All unsuccessful candidates receive feedback on their applications from the Chair of the Panel.
- ◆ Researchers continue to have the opportunity to discuss career development and objectives in their **annual PDR**. University participation in the PDR 2021 was 99% (2,710 staff).
- ◆ The **Research and Innovations Awards 2022** celebrates and recognises individual and team contributions to our research, including the contribution of postgraduate and early career researchers, and the outstanding response to the covid pandemic.

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## THEME 3 Professional & Career Development

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- ◆ 304 courses have been offered over this period with **3938 completions** (479 from Research Staff), ranging from '*Maximising the IMPACT of your research*' to '*Time Management*.'
- ◆ We have reviewed our [researcher development programme](#) to rationalise and consolidate into one place all university wide training & development opportunities supporting Research Staff. Webpages are focussed on the [career development](#) of Research Staff highlight our commitment to researchers, including [10 days of professional development](#) pro rata, per year
- ◆ The University has continued to commit funding and resource to [Welsh Crucible](#), an award-winning programme of personal, professional and leadership development for the future research leaders of Wales.
- ◆ Our collaborative network 'LINC' enables our researchers to build networks with private, public and third sector organisations
- ◆ Swansea has joined for the first time '**23 Things International**' tailored for researchers interested in learning new tools for research, building their professional profile and networking
- ◆ We have invested in leadership and management development, launching a new online product, the [Managers Hub - Swansea University](#) to support managers of people on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. In its first 12 months of going live the Managers Hub had 4,364 page views. **Management and leadership development** training been revised and launched, including modules to support University managers on 'Meaningful conversations during PDR reviews' and 'How to have challenging conversations'.

## OUR FUTURE FOCUS, STRATEGY AND SUCCESS MEASURES

Our strategy and focus for the next three years are summarised below. An updated action plan has been developed that sets out areas of focus. This plan will continue to evolve, and progress will be monitored via our RISWG, RIIC and reported to the University Senior Leadership Team.

Over the next 3 years the University strategy will focus on:

- ◆ The development of a single set of university values, which express how it feels to be a part of the University as a staff member or as a student
- ◆ The development of our leaders and managers, to ensure that our culture is aligned to our values and our people are engaged in the outcomes and how we deliver them
- ◆ The development of a reward and recognition strategy that will ensure our people feel valued for the great work that they do

Our strategic approach will ensure that the researcher voice is heard and used to improve the employee experience of researchers, through how they are led, how they are recognised and rewarded, and ultimately how they feel as part of the University.

### Success measures include:

- ◆ Strength of researcher voice and visibility in university strategy and policy making.
- ◆ Recognition that CEDARS is to be continued, to increase engagement and reach with the research community and to use the results to inform actions going forward.
- ◆ Responding creatively to a changing research landscape and funding opportunities post COVID-19.
- ◆ Further development of a suite of wellbeing resources and training for line managers
- ◆ Engagement of Research Staff in the development of a People and University culture strategy
- ◆ Targeted career and professional development support for Research Staff, including the Made in Wales: Researcher Career Stories series.
- ◆ Revised job application processes, informed by feedback from Research Staff
- ◆ Development of a bespoke researcher induction
- ◆ Progress against actions reported, including seeking and responding to Research Staff feedback.