



Careers in Research Online Survey 2017

REPORT OF KEY FINDINGS FROM UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
RESPONSES

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Careers in Research Online Survey 2017 (CROS) – Report of key findings from University of Sussex responses

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Careers in Research Online Survey was designed to help Higher Education Institutions across the UK to enhance the quality of provision for research staff. CROS was delivered as an online questionnaire to Sussex research staff using Bristol Online Survey (BOS) between the 1st – 29th March 2017.

The total target population was 377 researchers spread across 11 schools (at the time of the survey there were no research staff in the School of English). In total 239 completed responses were received amounting to an overall response rate of 63%. The response rate was the best to date being 54% higher than the 2015 response rate of 41%. The Sussex 2017 response rate more than double that of the national average response rate of 24% and was one of the highest engagement rates amongst all participating UK institutions.

The nationwide exercise closed on 31st May 2017 and national level aggregate responses are compared with Sussex outcomes throughout this report. The national level report, compiled by Vitae is available at: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/vitae-5-steps-forward-web.pdf>.

KEY MESSAGES

Overall the 2017 survey results demonstrate considerable improvements over 2013 and 2015 outcomes across the majority of areas explored. In most instances Sussex responses compare well with the national aggregate response and indeed exceed the national picture in a number of areas. Particular aspects of notable improvement include; awareness and clarity of promotions processes, equality and diversity, appraisal and professional development. Areas where the survey indicated challenges or room for improvement were; use of short-term contracts, involvement/engagement of PIs, involvement of research staff in decision making and support for career planning.

A. Research Careers

1. Since CROS 2013, there has been a gradual decline at Sussex in the proportion of CROS respondents employed on fixed term contracts from 84.5% in 2013 compared to 80% in 2017. Since 2015 there has been a significant increase in the proportion of respondents on open-ended contracts, 18% in 2017 compared to 10.1% in 2015.
2. The proportion of respondents employed on fixed term contracts at Sussex is 12% higher than the national average (71.3%); a gap that has widened by 3 percentage points since CROS 2015. Sussex is below the national average in terms of researchers employed on open-ended contracts, (Sussex 18%; national 27.2%), but this gap has narrowed slightly since 2015.
3. Compared to 2015 there was a sharp rise in the proportion of Sussex respondents employed on contracts of less than 1 year duration from 7.8% in 2015 to 19.2% in 2017. The 2017 figure, although significantly higher than the 2015 Sussex result, is still lower than the national average of 21.1% of researchers employed on contracts of less than 1 year.

4. Compared to the national aggregate responses, 2017 Sussex respondents are less likely to be employed on multiple (3 or more) successive contracts compared to other UK counterparts.

B. Recognition and Value

5. The CROS 2017 responses to questions regarding equal treatment in comparison to other staff groups show a marked improvement over 2015 responses.
6. The most significant improvement was respondents' perception of equal treatment with regard to opportunities for promotion and progression. In 2015 only 25.9% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they felt equally treated with other staff groups with regard to opportunities for promotion and progression, whereas in 2017 this increased to 40.17% agreement; a result higher than the national aggregate response of 34.25% agreement. Of the remaining 59.83% respondents that did not select agree/agree strongly to the statement relating to promotions, 35.6% selected disagree/disagree strongly (*Nat. 46.83%*), 19.25% selected 'don't know' (*Nat. 14.04%*) and 5.02% selected 'not applicable' (*Nat. 4.88%*).
7. Sussex was also ahead of the national picture with respect to perceived equal treatment compared to other staff groups for 'access to training and development opportunities' and 'opportunities to attend conferences and meetings'. There was also improvement over 2015 results for perceived equal treatment with respect to 'flexible working' and 'terms and conditions of employment'.
8. An area for concern is the lack of discernible progress since 2015 in perceptions of opportunities for research staff to participate in decision-making processes; this is despite increased involvement of research staff in University and School Level Committees.
9. A total of 66.1% of Sussex 2017 respondents reported that they had participated in an appraisal over the past two years, which is a 10.7% increase on the 2015 CROS survey results. For Sussex responses, 'recent appointment' was the most highly cited reason for non-appraisal. In 2017 less than 25% of non-appraised Sussex respondents reported that they were not invited to appraisal. This result is 10 percentage points lower than the national aggregate response, where 'not invited' was the most commonly reported reason nationally for non-participation in appraisal.

C. Recruitment and selection

10. During the application process over 93% of respondents recruited in the last two years had received a job description, details of required qualifications and details of the specialist research skills required. In all instances these levels were above the nationwide results. 67.67% of Sussex respondents received details regarding transferable/personal/management skills required of the post holder during the application process. This result was lower than the national aggregate response, where 76.8% of respondents had received this information.
11. Since 2013 there was consistent improvement in respondent perceptions of institutional induction with 43% of 2017 Sussex respondents citing institutional induction as useful/very useful. This represents a 40% increase over 2015 results and is 13.5% higher than the national aggregate response.

12. The proportion of respondents stating that institutional induction was not offered has dropped by 47% since 2013 and in 2017 Sussex respondents were more likely than their national counterparts to be offered institutional induction. However, Sussex 2017 respondents were less likely than their counterparts in other UK HEIs to take up offers of institutional induction (15.6% Sussex respondents did not take up institutional induction compared to 9.37% nationally).

D. Support and career development

13. 69% of 2017 Sussex respondents had undertaken one or more days training/development over the previous year. Compared to 2015 results the proportion of Sussex respondents that undertook 10 or more days training almost tripled from 3.7% in 2015 to 10.2% in 2017. This indicates that more Sussex researchers are investing a greater number of hours towards their professional development.
14. In comparison to the national aggregate responses, Sussex has higher proportions of respondents reporting that they have undertaken no training (Sussex 18.3%; Nat. 13.9%) or less than 1 day training (Sussex 13.2%; Nat. 8.47%). The free text survey responses indicate that to encourage further uptake of training and professional development, continued effort is required to ensure training/professional development opportunities at Sussex are readily accessible to all researchers, with particular attention given to those working part-time or remotely. In addition, it continues to be critical to communicate the importance and value of professional development activity to research staff managers.
15. Over 76% of 2017 Sussex respondents feel encouraged to engage in and 85% take ownership of their personal and career development. A total of 50% of Sussex respondents reported having a clear career development plan and 54% keep a formal record of professional development activities. These results indicate that although researchers generally feel encouraged to engage in professional development, there is still scope for improvement in the support for career development planning and recording activity.

E. Equality and diversity

16. The 2017 results demonstrate that Sussex has made distinct progress across all aspects of equality and diversity examined by the CROS survey.
17. Since the 2015 CROS survey there is a recognisable improvement in the overall perceptions of Sussex respondents in relation to institutional commitment to equality and diversity, with 88.2% agreeing/strongly agreeing that Sussex is committed to equality and diversity. This represents a 5.6% increase over 2015 results and is 2 percentage points higher than the 2017 national aggregate response for this question.
18. There were improvements with respect to respondent perceptions of work-life balance, where 68.9% reported satisfaction, a 14.1% increase on 2015 and 2 percentage points higher than the 2017 national response.
19. Although a higher proportion of 2017 Sussex respondents agreed that the institution promoted better mental health and well-being at work (46.4%) compared to 2015 (38.9%); there was still a significant proportion who disagreed with this statement (27%) or answered 'don't know' (26.6%).

The proportion of positive responses from Sussex was 3.7 percentage points lower than the national aggregate result, although the gap has closed significantly since 2015 when Sussex was 12.3 percentage points lower than the national aggregate for this question.

20. There were improvements over 2015 results with respect to respondent perceptions of equality and diversity in relation to employment processes and activities. The most significant change was a 22.6% increase in the proportion of respondents who provided positive responses in relation to fair treatment regardless of personal characteristics with respect to career progression/promotion (57.4% agree/strongly agreed in 2017 compared to 46.8% in 2015).
21. Compared to the 2017 national aggregate response, Sussex respondents were closely aligned with other UK HEIs (within 3 percentage points of the national result) in terms of the perceptions of fair treatment of staff irrespective of age, caring responsibilities, ethnicity, *gender*, *gender identity*, nationality, religion/belief, *sexual orientation* (characteristics in italics denote those where Sussex responses were slightly more positive than the national response). These results are a distinct improvement over 2015, when Sussex was >3 percentage points less positive than the national results with respect to all but one characteristic (sexual orientation). This demonstrates a significant narrowing of the gap between Sussex and the national results for equality and diversity.
22. Sussex responses were less positive (>3 percentage points lower than national aggregate) with respect to fair treatment irrespective of: adoption and parental leave (3.3 percentage points lower), disability (4.9 percentage points lower), pregnancy and maternity (7.8 percentage points lower). Despite being less positive than the national picture for these three areas, the gap between Sussex and national results has narrowed significantly. In 2015 the Sussex results were 7.9 percentage points lower than national in terms of disability and 16.1 percentage points lower than national for pregnancy and maternity (adoption and parental leave was not listed in the 2015 survey).

F. Demographics

23. Approximately three quarters of respondents were aged 40 or below. There was a greater proportion of female responders (48.95%) than male (44.73%) with 6.33% responders preferring not to state gender. A total of 92.7% responders did not consider themselves disabled, with 4.3% stating a disability and 3% preferring not to answer.
24. 50.6% Sussex respondents were UK nationals with 33.5% from other EU member states and 15.9% from outside the EU. This represents a 12.2% decrease in UK nationals, a 3.4% increase in respondents from EU member states and a 57.4% increase in non-EU respondents compared to 2015. In comparison with the national aggregate response, Sussex has a distinctly higher proportion of respondents from other EU member states (33.5%) compared to the national picture (26%).

G. Sussex Specific Questions

25. Respondents noticed a range of positive improvements to the institutional support for research staff including: increased opportunity for training and development, transitions to indefinite contracts, clarity of promotion procedures, one to one coaching, usefulness of appraisals, support at end of contract, more information about employment rights, ease of access to information.

26. Some negative changes were also noted, in particular: increasing student numbers without additional support for staff, less technical and administrative support, increasing bureaucracy.
27. The most preferred mechanism for training and development were 'interactive training workshops' with the least preferred 'work shadowing and placements'. In general, the mechanisms which involve interaction with others tended to be more popular than the more solitary mechanisms of learning such as online courses and self-directed learning.
28. 70% of respondents have a workspace within a shared office, 16.6% had their own office, while 6% worked in a hot-desk environment. 3.8% (9 individuals) did not have an allocated workspace. Free text comments indicated that the most common frustrations in relation to the working environment were: overcrowding, lack of communal/meeting spaces, noise/distractions from office colleagues.
29. The most popular changes that respondents felt would make the biggest positive difference to support for career development were: more stable employment contracts, access to a supportive mentor, more encouragement and support from line managers for career and professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are a series of recommendations to be overseen by the [University's Research Staff Working Group](#) with input from other relevant University groups/Committees (to include Research Staff Reps, University Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team, Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, Equality and Diversity Committee).

A. Research Careers

1. Research alternative approaches to fixed-term contract management adopted by other HEIs **(RSO)**
2. Conduct further analysis of the underlying reasons for the increase in respondents employed on contracts of less than 1 year duration. Consider further guidance and/or policy statement relating to use of fixed-term contracts of less than 1 year duration **(HR and RSO)**
3. Share survey outcomes relating to funding sources of Sussex Researchers with Research Development Team and Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee **(RSO)**

B. Recognition and Value

3. Continue to raise awareness of Research Fellow promotions via case studies of successful promotees to be published in the Sussex Researcher Newsletter and included in promotions related communications. **(RSO)**
4. Highlight, via the usual communication channels, areas where Research Staff are engaged within decision making processes, including case studies of where researcher contributions have resulted in School/Institutional changes. Provide guidance for researchers about options available for contributing to School/Institutional decision making. **(RSO)**
5. Review information for research staff appraisers/appraisees to ensure clarity of guidance relating to follow up and ongoing dialogue following the appraisal meeting. **(HR and RSO)**
6. Introduce a regular 'briefing' section within the Sussex researcher newsletter to provide key facts about policy/legislation/initiatives relevant to research staff. **(RSO)**

7. Develop and record a webinar to introduce core concepts of Research Governance and integrity. Embed webinar and associated content in research staff website and newsletter communications

C. Recruitment and selection

8. Review of Research Fellow standard job descriptions to ensure reference is included to transferable/personal/management skills where appropriate **(HR)**

D. Support and career development

9. Convene a focus group with Part-Time and Distance researchers to explore professional development access needs and preferences. **(RSO)**
10. As new professional development resources are developed, ensure formats offer opportunities for peer interaction wherever possible.
11. Develop a career development toolkit to assist researchers in career planning activity and to highlight existing career development resources **(RSO)**
12. Develop a business case for investment in specialist careers advisory support for research staff **(RSO)**

E. Equality and Diversity

13. Communicate CROS results relating to mental health and wellbeing into the broader University review of institutional mental health and wellbeing support. **(RSO)**
14. Communicate CROS Equality and Diversity results to Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Equality and Diversity to inform University initiatives. **(RSO)**
15. Communicate gender related CROS results to the University's Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team. **(RSO)**

F. General

16. Continue to publicise the University's Brexit related information and briefings via the standard research staff communication channels. **(RSO)**
17. Organise a Brexit briefing for the Research Staff Working Group, Research Staff Reps, Directors of Research and Knowledge Exchange and others supporting EU Research Staff **(RSO and HR)**
18. Highlight the Research Hive in the Library as an alternative workspace and meeting space for research staff **(RSO)**
19. Explore research funders and other HEIs expectations/guidance with respect to researcher workspaces and develop best practice information to share with Schools **(RSO)**
20. Develop business case to expand professional development support to include tailored provision for new, existing and aspiring PIs/research staff managers **(RSO and HR)**
21. Communicate CROS outcomes to research staff community, Schools, relevant University committees and senior management. **(RSO)**
22. Run CROS 2019 to monitor progress in the support for the career development of researchers at Sussex. **(RSO)**

Careers in Research Online Survey 2017 (CROS) – Report of key findings from University of Sussex responses

FULL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Background

The Careers in Research Online Survey was run at Sussex between the 1st – 29th March 2017. During this period there were 377 members (headcount) of research staff at Sussex in post, an 11% increase over 2015 when the survey was last run and the research population was 339 members.

For the purposes of CROS, the term ‘Research Staff’ is used to describe staff employed by the University whose principle role is to conduct research. The Research Staff population does not include teaching and research posts, such as Lecturers, Readers, and Professors.

239 surveys were completed, making the Sussex CROS response rate 63%. This is the highest ever response rate at Sussex for the survey, being 54% higher than the 2015 response rate of 41%. It was significantly above the 2017 national average response rate of 24% and amongst the highest level of engagement across all participating HEIs.

Responses were received from researchers from all academic schools with the exception of the School of English where no research staff were employed at the time of the survey.

The CROS questionnaire was structured into six sections:

1. About your research career
2. Recognition and value
3. Recruitment and selection
4. Support and career development
5. Equality and Diversity
6. About you (demographics)

In addition, a number of institution specific questions were asked.

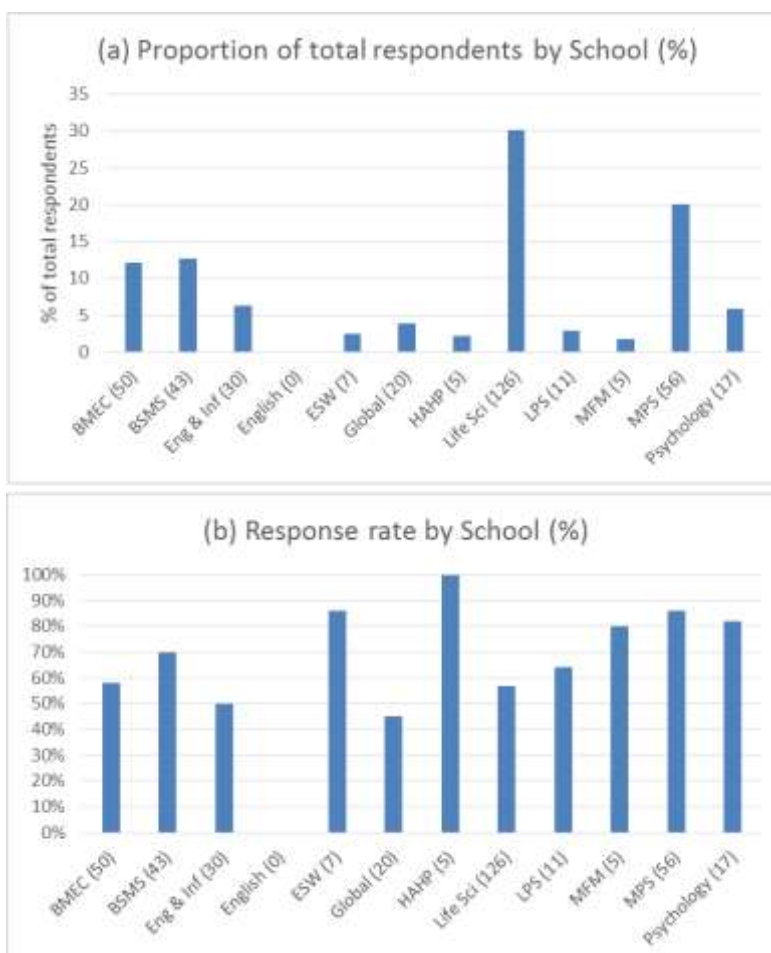


Figure 1 (a) Proportion of total Sussex respondents by school; (b) response rate by school. Numbers in parentheses denote the total number of research staff in the school at the time of the 2017 survey.

This report sets out the key findings from the Sussex responses to the CROS 2017 survey. Comparisons are made against the CROS 2017 national aggregated benchmarking responses, which total 7411 responses across 69 higher education institutions. Comparisons are also made with the 2015 and 2013 Sussex CROS results.

2. Key Findings

2.1 Research Careers

There was a relatively even spread in the number of years' experience amongst Sussex 2017 responders; 33.5% had been a researcher for 3 years or less, 35.8% between 4-9 years and 30.7% 10 or more years. The majority of respondents (53%) have only been researchers at Sussex for 2 years or less, with 57.6% respondents on their first research contract at Sussex. Part-time researchers make up a 14.2% of Sussex respondents, which is in line with the national aggregate (14.5%). No 2017 Sussex respondents reported being employed on casual/hourly paid contracts; this is an improvement over 2015 when 4.3% of respondents reported being employed on this basis.

The majority of 2017 respondents (80%) are employed on fixed term contracts. Since CROS 2013, there has been a gradual decline in the proportion of CROS respondents employed on fixed term contracts from 84.5% in 2013 compared to 80% in 2017. Since 2015 there has been a significant increase in the proportion of respondents on open-ended contracts, 18% in 2017 compared to 10.1% in 2015. This can be explained by the annual fixed-term contract review that the University introduced in 2015, which has so far transferred over 100 research staff to indefinite contracts.

A comparison with the national results indicates that the proportion of respondents employed on fixed term contracts at Sussex is 12% higher than the national average (71.3%); a gap that has widened by 3 percentage points since CROS 2015. Sussex is also below the national average in terms of researchers employed on open-ended contracts, (Sussex 18%; national 27.2%), but this gap has narrowed slightly since 2015.

Fixed term contracts were mostly between 1-3 years (66.1%). Compared to 2015 there was a sharp rise in the proportion of Sussex respondents employed on contracts of less than 1 year duration from 7.8% in 2015 to 19.2% in 2017. The 2017 figure, although significantly higher than the 2015 Sussex result, is still lower than the national average of 21.1% of researchers employed on contracts of less than 1 year. A key challenge cited repeatedly in the free text responses to CROS 2017 is the uncertainty presented by fixed term contracts, particularly those of shorter duration. Free-text survey comments indicated that employment on short-term contracts affects researcher productivity, ability to engage in their wider departmental communities and professional development opportunities, and overall wellbeing/job satisfaction. Therefore the significant rise in the proportion of Sussex respondents employed on contracts of less than one year is concerning and will need to be monitored closely, with consideration given to additional interventions such as University guidance or policy statements.

*"I have been a research for over 20 years, with at least 16 years as a contract researcher.
The anxiety, stress and insecurity never goes away."*

“Being on a fixed-term contract means I can never feel a valued part of the university and any requirements for further engagement with the department or wider community would only feel like an added burden.”

“Frankly as until fairly recently I was employed though a series of contracts, some only lasting 3 months, I've never felt like joining anything, as it's just a matter of time before I have to leave. Also for that reason, I have never felt my opinion mattered, or indeed it would be considered.”

Figure 2 shows Sussex and national aggregate responses to the question ‘How many individual contracts of employment as a researcher have you had with your current institution?’. In all years the majority of respondents were on their first employment contract with Sussex. Compared to the national aggregate responses, 2017 Sussex respondents are less likely to be employed on multiple (3 or more) successive contracts compared to other UK counterparts.

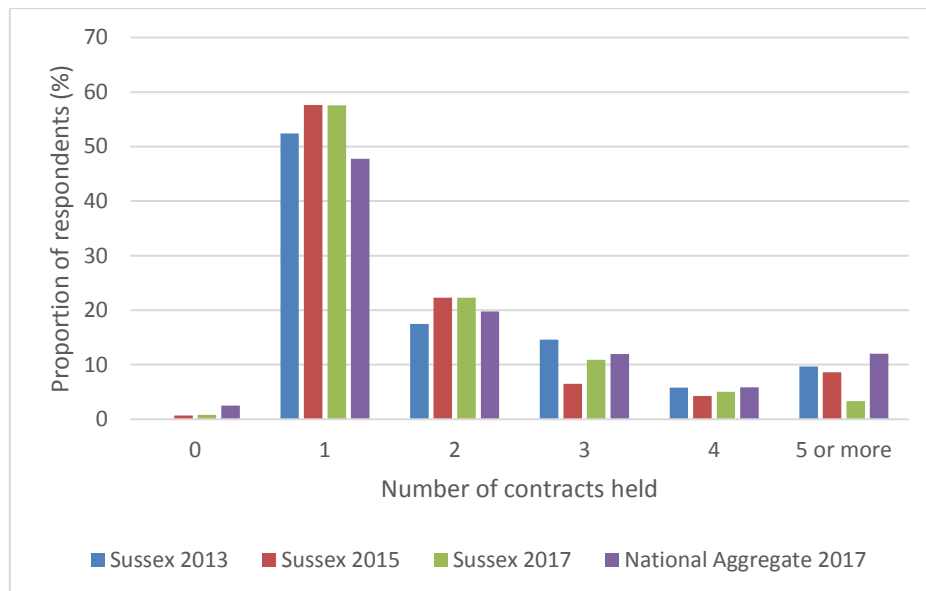


Figure 2 Number of individual contracts of employment as a researcher at current institution

Figure 3 summarises the funding sources of Sussex CROS respondents from 2013 – 2017, along with the national aggregate response for 2017. 2017 responses indicate that funding sources remained largely similar to 2015, with slight increases in EU/EC funding, industrial funding, UK government funding and funding for ‘other’ sources. Compared to 2015 there has been a decrease in respondents funded by charities (16% in 2017 compared to 22.3% in 2015).

In comparison to the 2017 UK national aggregate results, the University of Sussex has greater proportions of respondents funded by EU/EC and UK Research Councils than the national aggregate. Sussex is behind the national picture in terms of self-funded respondents and those funded by UK government and UK industry.

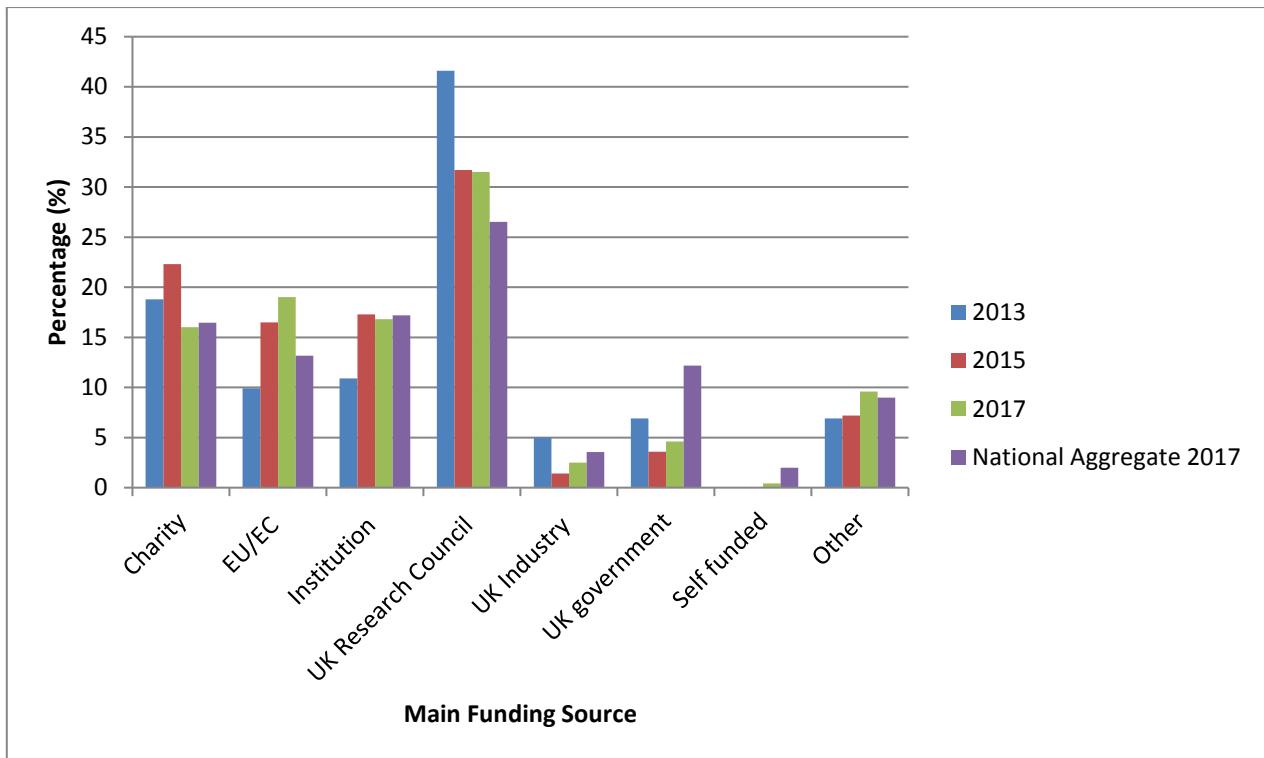


Figure 3. Comparison of Funding Sources of CROS 2013, 2015 and 2017 Sussex respondents and 2017 national aggregate responses.

Research Careers – Recommendations

1. Research alternative approaches to fixed-term contract management adopted by other HEIs (**RSO**)
2. Conduct further analysis of the underlying reasons for the increase in respondents employed on contracts of less than 1 year duration. Consider further guidance and/or policy statement relating to use of fixed-term contracts of less than 1 year duration (**HR and RSO**)
3. Share survey outcomes relating to funding sources of Sussex Researchers with Research Development Team and Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (**RSO**)

2.2 Recognition and Value

2.2.1 Value of contributions

In results that mirror the 2015 and 2013 surveys and in line with the 2017 national CROS results, the 2017 Sussex respondents felt that the University most valued their contributions to publishing, followed by public engagement and grant/funding applications. Managing budgets and resources was deemed to be the least valued activity, followed by peer reviewing and supervision/management of staff. Supervision of students, knowledge transfer/commercialisation, teaching and lecturing were fairly evenly split between respondents that felt these activities were valued and those that did not.

2.2.2. Equal Treatment

The CROS 2017 responses to questions regarding equal treatment in comparison to other staff groups show a marked improvement over 2015 responses, as demonstrated in table 1. The only area where results remained largely static between 2015 and 2017 was respondent perceptions of equal treatment with respect to opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

The most significant improvement over 2015 results was in 2017 respondents' perception of equal treatment with regard to opportunities for promotion and progression. In 2015 only 25.9% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they felt equally treated with other staff groups in this respect, whereas in 2017 this increased to 40.17% agreement; a result higher than the national aggregate response of 34.25% agreement. This improvement is most likely to be attributable to specific actions taken in the 2016/17 academic year to improve clarity of promotions processes for research staff, which included:

- Two promotions workshops for research fellows held in Sept and Nov 2016.
- Newsletter and email communications from the research staff office highlighting research staff eligibility for promotions and signposting promotion criteria and process information.
- A new webpage specifically for the Research Fellow promotions with career pathway information.

Table 1. Respondent perceptions of equal treatment compared to other staff groups. Comparison between 2017 responses compared to [A] 2017 National aggregate response and [B] 2015 Sussex CROS responses. (Colour key: red = >3% points worse than comparison result; yellow = within 3% points of comparison result; green = >3% points of comparison result.)

To what do you agree that your institution treats you fairly in comparison to other types of staff in relation to:	National Aggregate 2017 (% agree/strongly agree)	A	Sussex 2017 (% agree/agree strongly)	B	Sussex 2015 (% agree/agree strongly)
Access to training and development opportunities?	82.22		86.55		81.30
Opportunities to attend conferences and meetings?	77.66		82.43		72.50
Requests for flexible working?	69.22		65.55		59.40
Opportunities to participate in decision-making processes (e.g. committees)?	48.33		39.08		39.60
Opportunities for promotion and progression?	34.25		40.17		25.90
Terms and conditions of employment (excluding any fixed-term nature of contract)?	54.77		51.48		47.50
Visibility on websites and staff directories?	73.64		73.64		67.60

Of the remaining 59.83% respondents that did not select agree/agree strongly to the statement relating to promotions, 35.6% selected disagree/disagree strongly (Nat. 46.83%), 19.25% selected 'don't know' (Nat. 14.04%) and 5.02% selected 'not applicable' (Nat. 4.88%). These results demonstrate that whilst Sussex is

ahead of the national trend with respect to research staff perceptions of promotion opportunities, there is still work to be done to address the quarter of the respondent population that are still unclear about research fellow promotions processes, and the third of the population that perceive unequal treatment with respect to other staff groups.

In addition to promotion, Sussex was ahead of the national picture with respect to perceived equal treatment for access to training and development opportunities and opportunities to attend conferences and meetings. Sussex was behind national results in terms of perceived equal treatment concerning requests for (a) flexible working, (b) terms and conditions of employment and (c) opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. However, in the cases of (a) and (b) there have been improvements over the 2015 Sussex responses indicating institutional progress in both respects.

The main area for concern is the lack of discernible progress since 2015 in perceptions of opportunities for research staff to participate in decision-making processes. Since the CROS 2015 survey, the Research Staff Reps group has grown to 18 members across 9 schools. The terms of reference for School Research Committees have been updated to ensure the committees have at least one research staff member (usually the research staff reps). Research fellows sit on the University's Research Staff Working Group, Athena SWAN SAT, Staff Survey Working Group, and other School/departmental committees. However, the increased committee activity by Research Fellows has not resulted in a difference in CROS respondent perceptions of equal treatment in decision-making opportunities.

Whilst continued consideration needs to be given to additional opportunities for researchers to participate in committees/working groups; perhaps the more pertinent action is to communicate more clearly to the broader research community, how and where Research Fellows are already influencing University decision-making.

Interestingly, between 17-20% of Sussex respondents answered 'don't know' to the questions about equal treatment with respect to decision making/committees, promotion and progression, flexible working and terms and conditions of employment. This indicates around a fifth of researchers are either unfamiliar with, confused about or are not engaged with University policies and procedures relating to their employment and/or career progression.

2.2.3 Integration into research communities

In line with national responses, the majority of Sussex respondents feel integrated into the departmental (76.6%; *nat: 76.3%*), institutional (55%; *nat: 57%*) and wider disciplinary (63.8%; *nat: 65.2%*) research communities. There was a slight 6% increase in positive Sussex responses for integration into the wider disciplinary community since 2015 but a 6% decrease in positive responses for institutional integration. Some of the free text comments in this section help to provide further insight into some of the challenges that researchers face in feeling integrated into the University community:

"Contributions are recognised within my own group and those who I collaborate with but I don't see any support or recognition from those in more senior positions i.e. Head of School. School meetings are held regularly but these seem to be aimed at staff. Postdocs are transient by their nature but there could be more initiatives for senior members of the

department to engage with them and their research activities, even if it was simply a direct invitation to attend school meetings. “

“My immediate line manager is very good, but I never get the impression that anyone above him or in the university as a whole is interested in my work.”

“I have been employed on a 10% research contract and it has been very difficult to integrate with the university or my department. It is a lovely place with lovely people but I feel very far removed and unable to take up some of the opportunities to engage with social and training opportunities offered.”

“People in this department are really under pressures and there is no opportunities to meet or try to collaborate unless one of the seniors takes you under protection. But it depends also a lot on your PI. Mine for example does not really care about my development within this institution so I am completely left alone.”

2.2.4 Appraisal

A total of 66.1% of Sussex 2017 respondents reported that they had participated in an appraisal over the past two years, which is a 10.7% increase on the 2015 CROS survey results. The Sussex result is behind the 2017 national figure (73.04% national respondents have participated in appraisal in last two years), however the gap has narrowed slightly since 2015.

Figure 4 summarises the reasons cited by CROS respondents (2013-2017) for non-appraisal. Since 2013 there was a consistent decline in the proportion of Sussex respondents reporting ‘not invited’ as the reason for not being appraised. In 2017 less than 25% of non-appraised Sussex respondents reported that they were not invited to appraisal. This result is 10 percentage points lower than the national aggregate response, where ‘not invited’ was the most commonly reported reason nationally for non-participation in appraisal.

For Sussex responses, ‘recent appointment’ was the most highly cited reason for non-appraisal. This represents a more reasonable rationale for non-participation in appraisal, as an appraisal discussion would not be expected to take place within the first few months of appointment. The Sussex 2017 results are

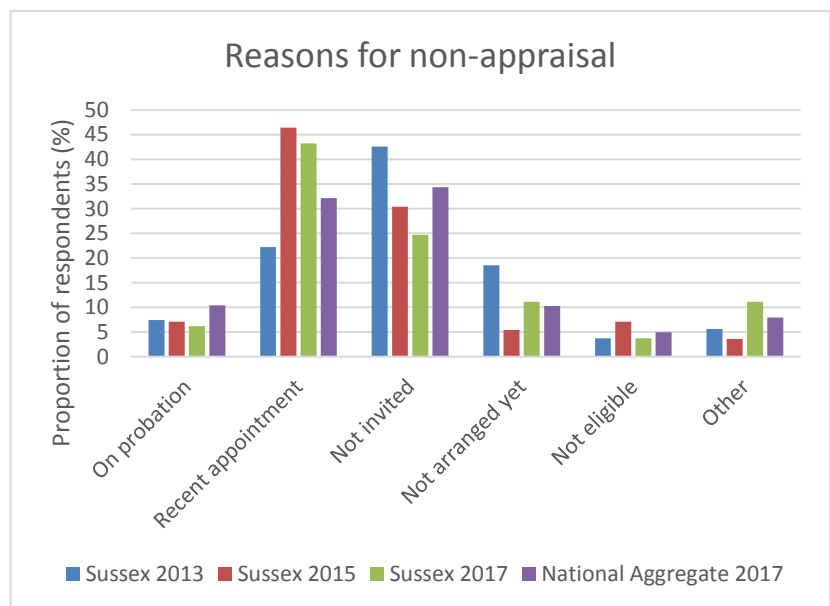


Figure 4 Respondent reasons for non-appraisal

encouraging and demonstrate that in the majority of cases, where eligible/appropriate, researchers are being invited to participate in appraisal.

The table below summarises the responses of those researchers that had participated in appraisal in the last two years. The 2017 national results [A] and 2015 Sussex results [B] are provided for comparison.

Table 2 Respondent perceptions of usefulness of appraisal. Sussex 2017 responses compared to [A] 2017 National aggregate response and [B] 2015 Sussex CROS responses. (colour key: red = >3 % points worse than comparison result; yellow = within 3 % points of comparison result; green = >3 % points better than comparison result)

How would you rate the usefulness of your institution's staff review/appraisal scheme:	National Aggregate 2017 (% useful/very useful)	A	Sussex 2017 (% useful/very useful)	B	Sussex 2015 (% useful/very useful)
(a) Overall?	61.77		62.5		57.8
(b) For you to highlight issues?	65.92		66.8		61.4
(c) helping you focus on your career aspirations?	60.57		57.1		55.5
(d) identifying strengths and achievements?	64.11		66.5		62.6
(e) In leading to training or development?	53.63		55.1		43.3
(f) In leading to changes in work practices?	32.21		31.9		30.1
(g) In reviewing your personal progress?	70.16		70.7		73.5

The comparison in table 2 shows Sussex respondents' perceptions of usefulness of appraisal are aligned with national results and are slightly higher than national responses in relation to;

- overall usefulness (a)
- highlighting issues (b)
- identifying strengths and achievements (d)
- leading to training and development (e)

This is a significant improvement on the outcomes of the CROS 2015 responses where Sussex was behind the 2015 national picture in (a), (b) and (e). The only area where the Sussex 2017 responses fall slightly behind the national aggregate is perceived usefulness of appraisal for 'helping to focus on future career aspirations'. However, the Sussex 2017 result still represents an improvement over the 2015 Sussex response to the same questions.

In comparison to the Sussex 2015 responses, respondent perceptions of appraisal usefulness have improved across all domains with the exception of 'reviewing your personal progress', where there has been a slight decrease (but still remains within 3 percentage points). The most significant improvements over 2015 Sussex responses have been in perceived usefulness of appraisal for:

- overall usefulness (a)
- highlighting issues (b)
- identifying strengths and achievements (d)
- leading to training and development (e)

The two domains that both Sussex and national 2017 results indicate are the areas of lowest perceived usefulness are 'leading to training and development' and 'leading to changes in working practices'. Unlike the other domains which are generally addressed during the appraisal meeting, for appraisal to lead to training and development and changes to working practices, there is a requirement for follow up on actions resulting from the appraisal discussion. The lower results in these two areas may indicate that longer term monitoring and follow up beyond the annual appraisal is inconsistent. This could potentially be addressed with enhanced guidance for appraisers/appraisees around the expectation of continuing dialogue beyond formal appraisal discussions.

Overall the Sussex CROS 2017 responses to the appraisal questions are very encouraging and show significant improvements over 2015 results and in comparison to the 2017 national responses. The improvements may be the result of specific interventions to the appraisal process for research staff introduced since summer 2015 including:

- Introduction of new research staff appraisal forms and supporting information.
- Appraisal reminder communications to research staff via email and newsletter.
- Inclusion of appraisal information in induction materials and research staff webpages
- Introduction of 'guidance for start of contract objective setting and career development discussions' for new members of staff who may not participate in a full appraisal until later in their research contract.
- Information about research staff appraisal/review and start of contract discussions included on new webpage and leaflet for PIs and Research Staff Managers.

Despite the improvements, the survey results indicate opportunities to make further improvements to ensure longer term follow up beyond the appraisal meeting to help lead to tangible outcomes and benefits in addition to useful appraisal discussions.

2.2.5 Knowledge of UK initiatives relevant to research staff

Sussex research staff respondents have a varying degree of knowledge and understanding of relevant UK initiatives. Unsurprisingly those with funding implications and/or direct benefit to the researcher in terms of career development are more widely known than those with less tangible benefits for the researcher. Initiatives are ranked in the table below in terms of proportions of 2017 Sussex researchers that have heard of the initiative/have some understanding.

Table 3 Comparison of levels of understanding of key UK initiatives relevant to research staff careers

Initiative	% respondents that have understanding/have heard of initiative			
	National Aggregate 2017	Sussex 2017	Sussex 2015	Sussex 2013
Research Excellence Framework (REF)	91.56	91.2	91.4	89.3
Athena SWAN	89.63	84.1	78.3	47.1
RCUK 'Pathways to Impact'	64.33	62.5	59.1	47
Vitae	56.8	56.4	71.8	42.2
European 'HR Excellence in Research' Award recognition	39.79	52.1	38.1	30.4
Concordat on Open Research Data	49.33	41.2	n/a	n/a
Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers	41.29	41	37.7	26.4
UK Professional Standard Framework for teaching and supporting learning	40.37	36.82	n/a	n/a
Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research	42.13	35.6	32.4	19
Concordat to Support Research Integrity	32.69	26.5	23.7	13.9
ECU Race Equality Charter	30.81	25.9	n/a	n/a
National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)	23.86	24.4	14.4	n/a

There was an improvement in the knowledge/understanding of the majority of initiatives since the 2015 CROS survey, particularly with respect to HR Excellence in Research Award due to the University's recent 4-year review process to which research staff members were invited to contribute. It will still be important to look for opportunities to raise researcher awareness of key policies/initiatives relevant to research staff careers and research, particularly those which rank lower down the list in table 3.

Recognition and Value – Recommendations

1. Continue to raise awareness of Research Fellow promotions via case studies of successful promotees to be published in the Sussex Researcher Newsletter and included in promotions related communications. **(RSO)**
2. Highlight, via the usual communication channels, areas where Research Staff are engaged within decision making processes, including case studies of where researcher contributions have resulted in School/Institutional changes. Provide guidance for researchers about options available for contributing to School/Institutional decision making. **(RSO)**
3. Review information for research staff appraisers/appraisees to ensure clarity of guidance relating to follow up and ongoing dialogue following the appraisal meeting. **(HR and RSO)**
4. Introduce a regular 'briefing' section within the Sussex researcher newsletter to provide key facts about policy/legislation/initiatives relevant to research staff. **(RSO)**
5. Develop and record a webinar to introduce core concepts of Research Governance and integrity. Embed webinar and associated content in research staff website and newsletter communications

2.3 Recruitment and Selection

2.3.1 Recruitment

The majority of respondents (56.5%) had been recruited to Sussex in the last two years, 42.7% saw their current role advertised and 25.3% heard about their post through word of mouth.

During the application process over 93% of respondents recruited in the last two years had received a job description, details of required qualifications and details of the specialist research skills required. In all instances these levels were above the nationwide results. 67.67% of Sussex respondents received details regarding transferable/personal/management skills required of the post holder during the application process. This result was lower than the national aggregate response, where 76.8% of respondents had received this information. This indicates an opportunity for Sussex to enhance the information provided to prospective applicants, by providing more detailed information regarding transferable/personal/management skills required of post-holders. Provision of additional information of this nature has the potential to increase the attractiveness of posts to a broader applicant pool.

2.3.2 Induction

Figure 5 demonstrates that since 2013 there was consistent improvement in respondent perceptions of institutional induction with 43% of 2017 Sussex respondents citing institutional induction as useful/very useful. This represents a 40% increase over 2015 results and is 13.5% higher than the national aggregate response.

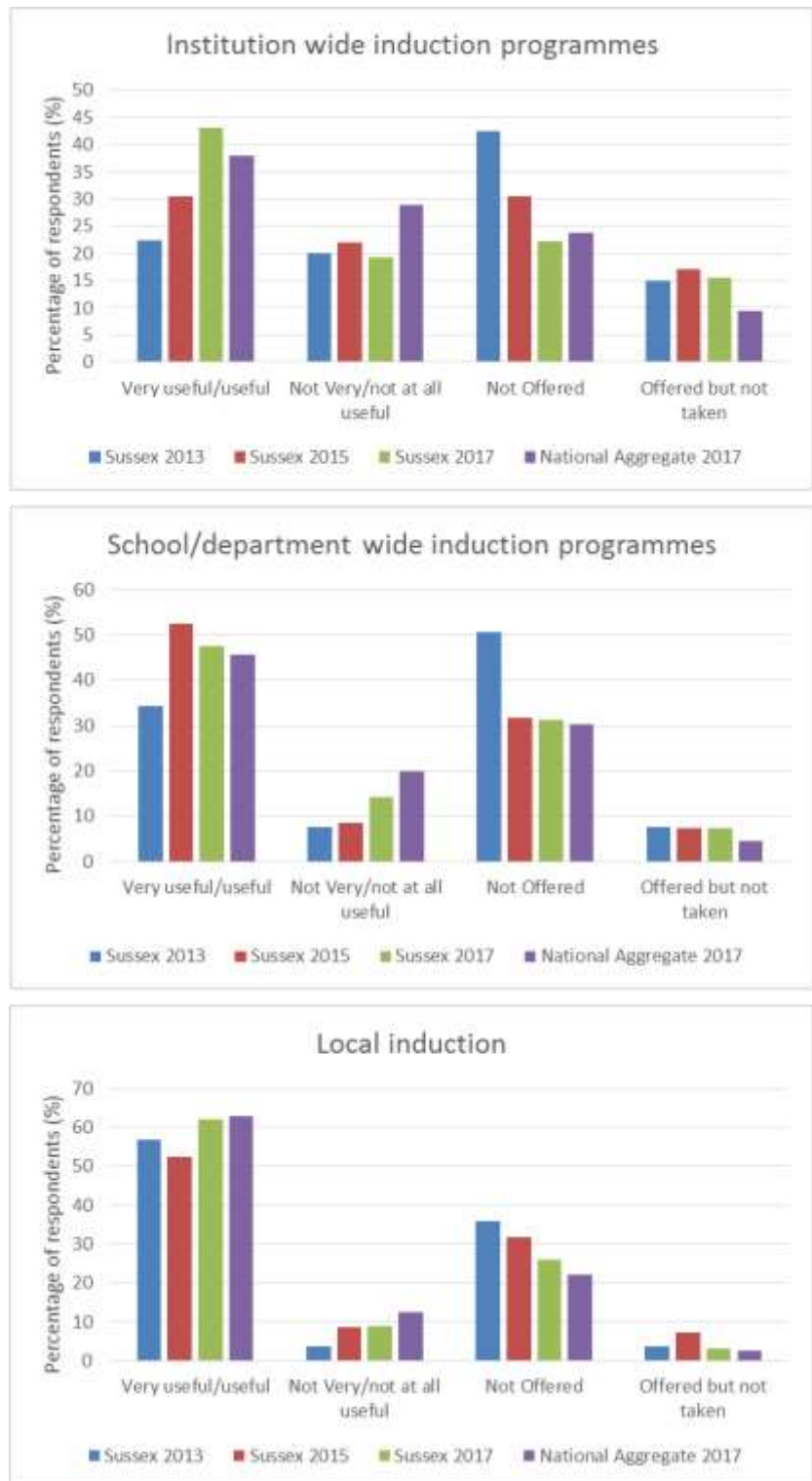


Figure 5 Perceptions of induction at Institutional, School and Local/group levels

Since the 2015 survey a number of enhancements to the induction process for research staff were implemented. These included:

- Introduction of termly Researcher Welcome Lunch (from October 2014) hosted by Research Staff Office
- Format of biannual all-staff welcome events revised
- Research Staff Office Welcome email for researchers to signpost key resources and support (launched Jan 2015)
- Development of webpages for [new research staff](#) and [international researchers](#)
- Researcher [Welcome Guide](#), which is sent to all new research staff with their appointment documentation before they start at Sussex (Launched Jan 2016)

The proportion of respondents stating that institutional induction was not offered has dropped by 47% since 2013 and in 2017 Sussex respondents were more likely than their national counterparts to be offered institutional induction. However, Sussex 2017 respondents were less likely than their counterparts in other UK HEIs to take up offers of institutional induction (15.6% Sussex respondents did not take up institutional induction compared to 9.37% nationally).

The proportion of Sussex 2017 respondents citing School/Departmental induction as useful/very useful (47.4%) declined slightly since 2015 (52.4%) but was still above the national aggregate response of 45.5%. The proportion of Sussex respondents citing that they were not offered School/Departmental induction or were offered it but did not take it up remained in line with Sussex 2015 results and it was slightly higher than 2017 national responses.

In alignment with national results, 2017 Sussex respondents were most likely to report local level induction (i.e. individual induction with PI/research leader/group member) as useful/very useful with 62.2% Sussex respondents providing a positive response. This is an improvement over 2015 results where 52.4% Sussex respondents answered positively with respect to local induction. The proportion of Sussex respondents reporting that they were not offered local induction has declined steadily from 2013 (35.8% not offered) to 2017 (25.9% not offered).

Recruitment and Selection – Recommendations

1. Review of Research Fellow standard job descriptions to ensure reference is included to transferable/personal/management skills where appropriate **(HR)**

2.4 Support and Career Development

The 2017 CROS results demonstrate some changes over the previous survey in relation to the number of days training undertaken by Sussex Respondents (Fig 6). Whilst the proportions of respondents undertaking less than a day/no

training in the previous year have remained relatively static since 2015, the proportion of respondents that report undertaking 1-3 days and

4-10 days training are 11.9% and 13.7% down on the 2015 results. This is accounted for by a significant

(175%) increase in the proportion of Sussex respondents who undertook more than 10 days professional development in the previous year. These results demonstrate that whilst the overall proportion of 2017 Sussex respondents undertaking training/professional development activity (69% 1 or more days) has remained largely the same as 2015 (70%), a greater proportion of these researchers undertook more than 10 days training/professional development activity. This is an encouraging result, which indicates that more Sussex researchers are investing a greater number of hours towards their professional development. This shift may in part be explained by the publication in 2016 of the University's [research staff professional development guidance](#) that sets out the expectations on research staff, managers and the University in relation to researchers' professional development. The guidance recommends a minimum of 5 working days per year for researcher professional development activity.

In comparison to the national aggregate responses, Sussex has higher proportions of respondents reporting that they have undertaken no training (Sussex 18.3%; Nat. 13.9%) or less than 1 day training (Sussex 13.2%; Nat. 8.47%). Some of the free-text responses give explanation of some key reasons researchers still feel unable to engage with training/professional development activity at Sussex:



Figure 6 Professional development undertaken by respondents

“As a part time RA I feel I don't often have time to go on CPD courses and/or they are often on days that I don't work.”

“Knowing I can rely on an employment contract would make training and career planning a lot easier!”

“The PI is pushing us research fellows to work intensively asking to not participate to any activities outside the project”

“A barrier for participation is the time the events are offered, as part-time worker, I can't attend to most.”

The free text survey responses indicate that in order to encourage further uptake of training and professional development, continued effort is required to ensure training/professional development opportunities at Sussex are readily accessible to all researchers, with particular attention given to those working part-time or remotely. In addition, it continues to be critical to communicate the importance and value of professional development activity to research staff managers, via training/briefings, communications and information.

In line with 2017 national responses, over 76% of 2015 Sussex respondents feel encouraged to engage in and 85% take ownership of their personal and career development. A total of 50% of Sussex respondents reported having a clear career development plan and 54% keep a formal record of professional development activities. Only 12% of respondents used the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to support their professional development activity. In all instances these results represent a slight increase on 2015 Sussex figures with the exception of taking ownership of career development, where there has been a slight drop (89.2% in 2015 compared to 85% in 2017).

These results indicate that although researchers generally feel encouraged to engage in professional development, there is still scope for improvement in the support for career development planning and recording activity, which should include raising awareness of appropriate career related resources.

The areas in which over half of Sussex respondents indicated that they would like to undertake professional development activities (either as specific training or in relation to their own work) included: career management, interdisciplinary research, knowledge exchange, leadership and management, research impact, supervision of doctoral/masters students.

Most researchers were quite clear about their aspirations (with only 6.3% answering 'don't know' when responding to 'I aspire to work in...'). However, 14.9% of researchers answered 'don't know' when responding to the statement 'I expect to work in...'. This indicates that careers support and guidance to assist researchers in considering a variety of employment options should continue to be an important feature of research staff provision at the University. In 2017 the University's Careers and Employability Centre (CEC) re-focussed their services meaning that Research Staff are no longer able to access CEC services unless they are a former Sussex student within 3 years of their graduation date. To ensure consistent and high quality careers support for research staff, alternative options for provision of these services will need to be explored.

Over three-quarters of Sussex respondents aspire to continue working in higher education, with the majority (42.2%) aspiring to a career in research and teaching, 34.2% aspiring to a career primarily in research and 1.3% aspiring to a career in HE teaching. The proportions actually expecting to achieve their goal is slightly lower with 39% expecting a career in research and teaching and 20% expecting a research career in higher education. The most popular aspiration outside of an HE career was 'research career outside higher education', which was selected by 9.7% of respondents as an aspiration and 11.9% as an expectation.

Support and Career Development – Recommendations

1. Convene a focus group with Part-Time and Distance researchers to explore professional development access needs and preferences. **(RSO)**
2. As new professional development resources are developed, ensure formats offer opportunities for peer interaction wherever possible.
3. Develop a career development toolkit to assist researchers in career planning activity and to highlight existing career development resources **(RSO)**
4. Develop a business case for investment in specialist careers advisory support for research staff **(RSO)**

2.5 Equality and Diversity

Since the 2015 CROS survey there is a recognisable improvement in the overall perceptions of Sussex respondents in relation to institutional commitment to equality and diversity, with 88.2% agreeing/strongly agreeing that Sussex is committed to equality and diversity (Fig 7). This represents a 5.6% increase over 2015 results and is 2 percentage points higher than the 2017 national aggregate response for this question. Since the 2015 survey, the University has made a public commitment in this area with the appointment of two Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Equality and Diversity. This development, along with institutional and departmental progress with the Athena SWAN agenda and other equality and diversity initiatives may account for this encouraging improvement in respondent perceptions.

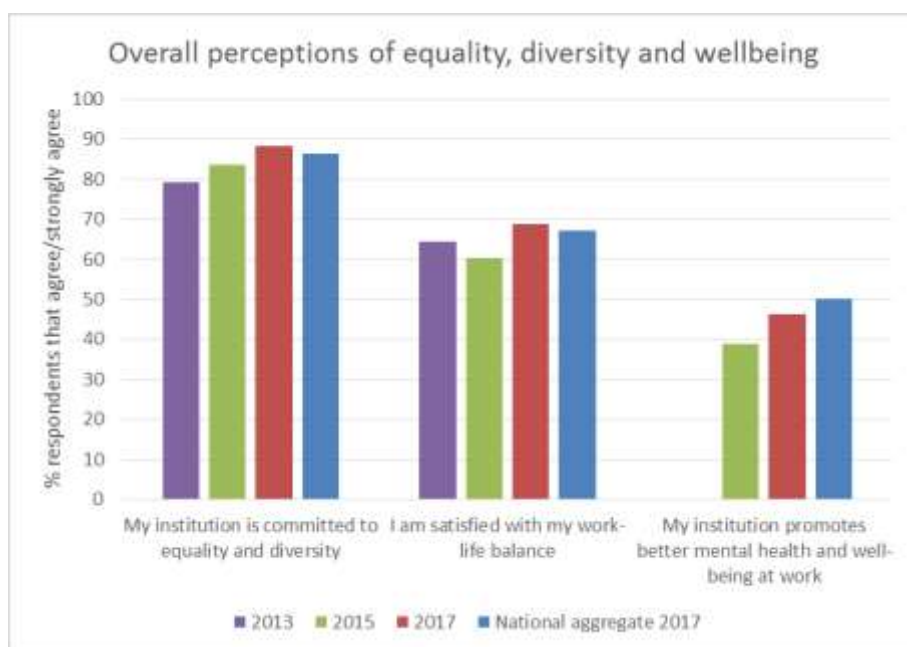


Figure 7. Overall respondent perceptions of equality, diversity and wellbeing

Figure 6 indicates that there have been similar improvements with respect to respondent perceptions of work-life balance, where 68.9% reported satisfaction, a 14.1% increase on 2015 and 2 percentage points higher than the 2017 national response. In comparison, the 2015 Sussex results for this question were 9 percentage points below the national aggregate response, so the 2017 result shows marked improvement where Sussex is compared to the national picture.

Although a higher proportion of 2017 Sussex respondents agreed that the institution promoted better mental health and well-being at work (46.4%) compared to 2015 (38.9%); there was still a significant proportion who disagreed with this statement (27%) or answered 'don't know' (26.6%). The proportion of positive responses from Sussex was 3.7 percentage points lower than the national aggregate result, although

the gap has closed significantly between Sussex and the national response since 2015 when Sussex was 12.3 percentage points lower than the national aggregate for this question. Despite the improvements, the 2017 results highlight that there remain opportunities for both raising researcher awareness of existing support and resources for mental health and wellbeing across the institution as well as giving consideration to options for enhancing mental health and well-being support for researchers.

Figure 8 shows respondent perceptions of equality and diversity in relation to employment processes and activities. In comparison to Sussex 2015 results, the most significant change was a 22.6% increase in the proportion of respondents who provided positive responses in relation to career progression/promotion (57.4% agree/strongly agreed in 2017 compared to 46.8% in 2015). As discussed in section 2.2.2 of this report, this is likely attributable to specific measures taken to raise awareness of the process and eligibility for researcher promotions. There were also slight improvements over 2015 results in relation to 'participation in decision making' and 'recruitment and selection'. The 2017 respondents answered slightly less positively than 2015 with respect to 'day to day treatment at work'.



Figure 8. Respondent perceptions of equal treatment

Sussex responses were >3 percentage points less positive than the 2017 national aggregate with respect to 'day to day treatment', 'participation in decision making' and 'reward'. In all other instances, Sussex 2017 responses were aligned (within 3 percentage points) with the national aggregate response. This is a distinct improvement over 2015, where Sussex was >3 percentage points below the national response in 5 out of the 6 areas.

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Figure 9 illustrates respondent perceptions of staff treatment with respect to a range of personal characteristics. The 2015 survey responses saw a notable decline in perceptions in comparison to the 2013 survey, which was partly attributable to a heightened awareness across the institution of equality and diversity issues due to initiatives such as Athena SWAN. The 2017 results show that, in comparison to 2015, Sussex respondent perceptions of fair treatment have improved across a number of characteristics namely: gender, gender identity, nationality, pregnancy and maternity; with higher proportions of 2017 respondents agreeing that staff are treated fairly irrespective of these characteristics compared to 2015 respondents.

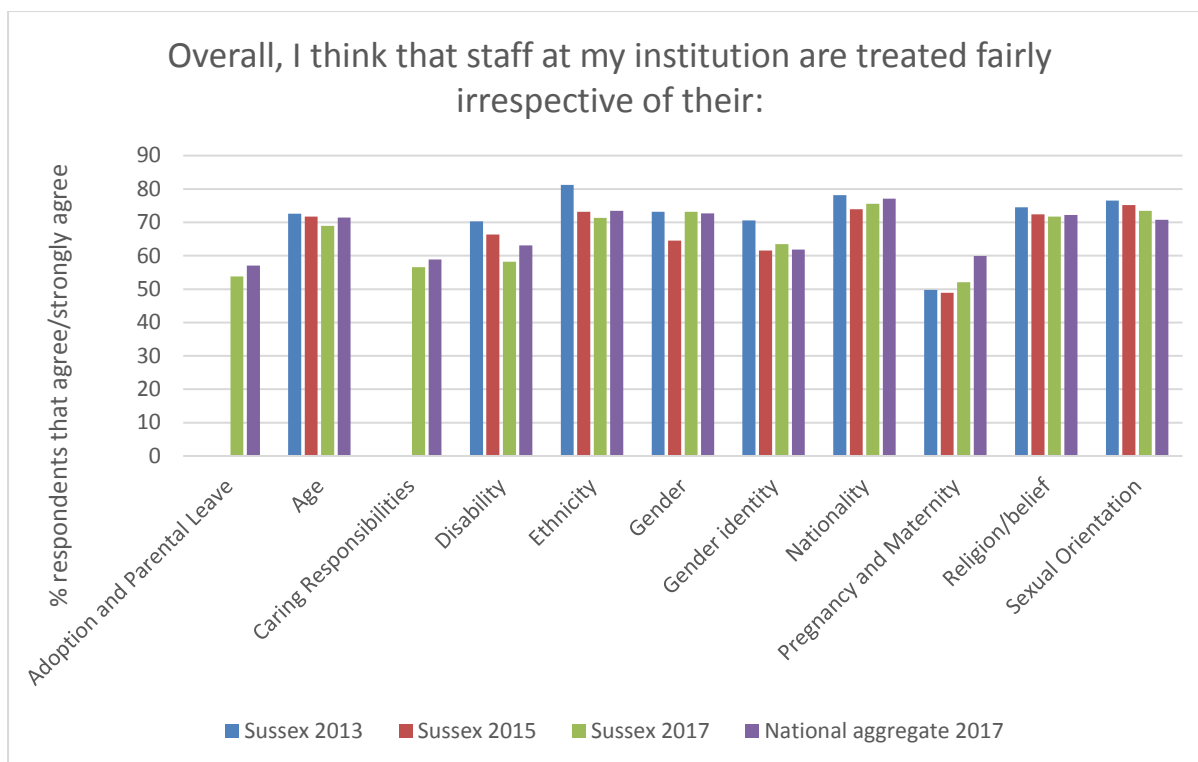


Figure 9. Respondent perceptions of fair treatment with respect to personal characteristics

For the characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation the downward trend continued with lower proportions of positive responses from 2017 respondents compared to 2015. With respect to the responses for age, ethnicity and sexual orientation, it should be noted that the 2017 Sussex response is within 3 percentage points of the national aggregate response (in the case of sexual orientation Sussex was more positive than the national aggregate response); however the proportion of positive responses from Sussex for disability is 4.9 percentage points below the national aggregate.

Compared to the 2017 national aggregate response, Sussex respondents were closely aligned with other UK HEIs (within 3 percentage points of the national result) in terms of the perceptions of fair treatment of staff irrespective of age, caring responsibilities, ethnicity, *gender*, *gender identity*, nationality, religion/belief, *sexual orientation* (characteristics in italics denote those where Sussex responses were slightly more positive than the national response). These results are a distinct improvement over 2015, when Sussex was >3 percentage points less positive than the national results with respect to all but one characteristic (sexual orientation). This demonstrates a significant narrowing of the gap between Sussex and the national results for equality and diversity.

Sussex responses were less positive (>3 percentage points lower than national aggregate) with respect to fair treatment irrespective of: adoption and parental leave (3.3 percentage points lower), disability (4.9 percentage points lower), pregnancy and maternity (7.8 percentage points lower). Despite being less positive than the national picture for these three areas, the gap between Sussex and national results has narrowed significantly. In 2015 the Sussex results were 7.9 percentage points lower than national in terms of disability and 16.1 percentage points lower than national for pregnancy and maternity (adoption and parental leave was not listed in the 2015 survey).

In response to the question ‘Have you ever felt discriminated against in your post’, 91.5% of Sussex respondents answered ‘No’. Sussex fared better in this question than the national aggregate where the overall proportion of ‘no’ responses was 88.1%. Respondents who answered ‘Yes’ had the option to expand on their answer with a free text response. Incidents of discrimination reported were varied. Out of 16 free text responses, seven pointed towards discrimination related to protected characteristics. Others described issues of inequality or unfair treatment due to employment status or position within institutional hierarchies.

The 2017 results demonstrate that Sussex has made distinct progress across all aspects of equality and diversity examined by the CROS survey. This is encouraging and demonstrates that institutional E&D initiatives are starting to have positive impact within the research staff community at Sussex. Care needs to be taken to ensure continued progress across all areas, with particular attention paid to aspects where Sussex is still behind in comparison to other UK HEIs.

Equality and Diversity – Recommendations

5. Communicate CROS results relating to mental health and wellbeing into the broader University review of institutional mental health and wellbeing support. **(RSO)**
6. Communicate CROS Equality and Diversity results to Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Equality and Diversity to inform University initiatives. **(RSO)**
7. Communicate gender related CROS results to the University’s Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team. **(RSO)**

2.6 Demographics

The age profile of Sussex respondents is illustrated in figure 10 where approximately three quarters of respondents aged 40 or below. There was a greater proportion of female responders (48.95%) than male (44.73%) with 6.33% responders preferring not to state gender. A total of 92.7% responders did not consider themselves disabled, with 4.3% stating a disability and 3% preferring not to answer.

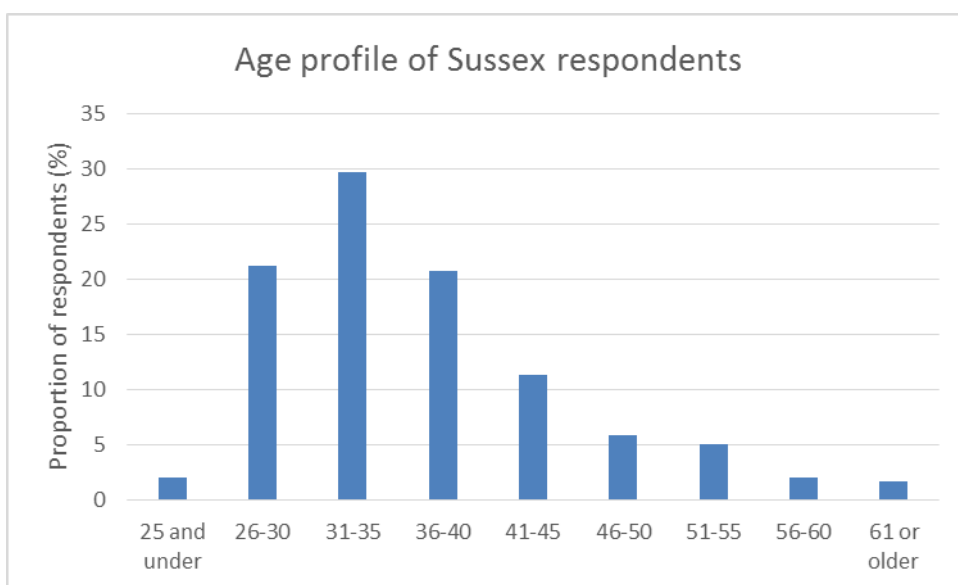


Figure 10. Age Profile of Sussex Respondents

Figure 11 illustrates that in 2017 50.6% Sussex respondents were UK nationals with 33.5% from other EU member states and 15.9% from outside the EU. This represents a 12.2% decrease in UK nationals, a 3.4%

increase in respondents from EU member states and a 57.4% increase in non-EU respondents compared to 2015. In comparison with the national aggregate response, Sussex has a distinctly higher proportion of respondents from other EU member states compared to the national picture. This is particularly pertinent to note in light of Brexit, as the University of Sussex research community will be significantly affected by any changes in legislation for EU nationals living and working in the UK.

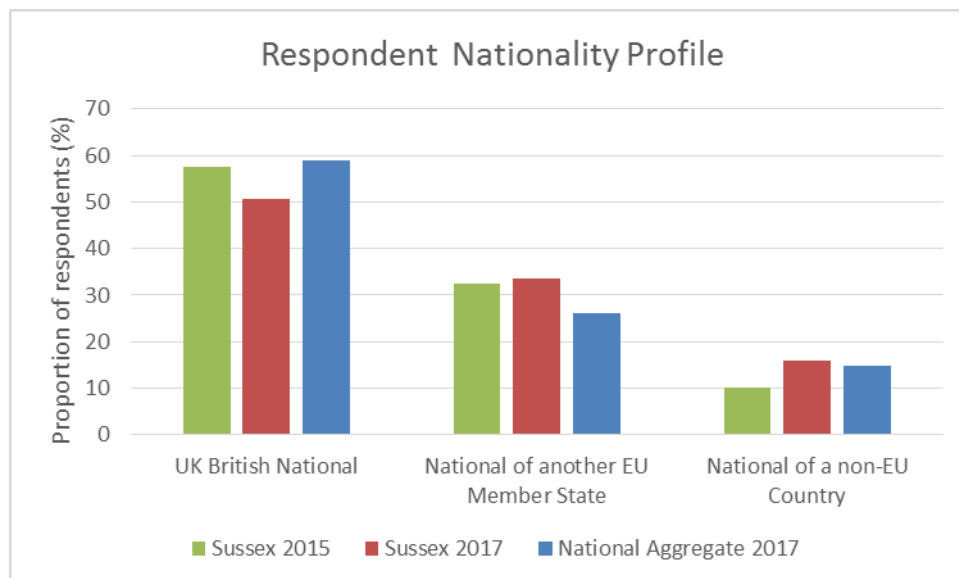


Figure 11. Respondent Nationality Profile

Demographics – Recommendations

1. Continue to publicise the University’s Brexit related information and briefings via the standard research staff communication channels. **(RSO)**
2. Organise a Brexit briefing for the Research Staff Working Group, Research Staff Reps, Directors of Research and Knowledge Exchange and others supporting EU Research Staff **(RSO and HR)**

2.7 University of Sussex Specific Questions

In addition to the national question set, some specific institutional questions were posed, outcomes of these questions are summarised here.

2.7.1 Answers to “In the last two years (or since you joined Sussex if within the last 2 years), what changes (if any) have you noticed in the way the University supports research staff?”

There were a total of 92 free text responses to this question with 47 of these citing a variety of positive changes including:

“Great support from Research Staff Office, diverse opportunities for training and Development”

“I’ve noticed that there is a much greater communication about our rights - ie. pay increases, promotion.”

“Transition onto open ended contracts”

“Promotions procedure is clearer and better advertised.”

“Increasingly wide range of support on offer, e.g. one-to-one coaching.” “There has been increased encouragement for ECR to attend CPD programs.”

“We have funding for post-doc informal meetings”

“Support over end of contracts, encouraging mentoring and increased use of appraisals”

“There seems to be more awareness of bullying and harassment as well as discrimination at the workplace.”

“The information about support is distributed better than it was”

“The university has become much more supportive of research staff, including improved staff appraisals, increased mentor opportunities, and better advertisement and execution of development activities.”

A total of 31 responses stated that they had not noticed any changes although six of these indicated that their reason for this response was that they were new to the institution.

Not all change noted was positive, with 14 responses citing negative changes including;

“we've taken on a lot more students, especially MSc students, and there seems to be no additional support in place for the new challenges we face.”

“We seem to be in a transitional period as to timetable for decisions about further extending employment, which affects me as someone on a fixed term contract. This leads to a degree of professional uncertainty.”

“High support staff turnover, more and more paperwork and auditing, research development initiatives that do not cover research staff time, top-down developments that seem ill-informed by day to day realities of working in research”

“Loss of HPC/IT staff leading to more delays in answering support requests.”

“Less technical and admin support. Sluggish central procedures and response.”

“The university has made it harder each year to do simple things, and the level of trivial bureaucratic interference with mundane tasks is spiralling out of control; the university will not be happy until we spend all our time answering emails and providing information about teaching or whatever else we are doing;”

2.7.2 Engagement with University resources to support, communicate and develop research staff

Researchers were asked to what extent they engaged with the following resources for research staff:

- Research staff Webpages
- Research Staff Newsletter (the Sussex Researcher)
- Research Staff Forum
- Research Staff Development Series Workshops
- Research Staff Office
- Research Staff Representatives

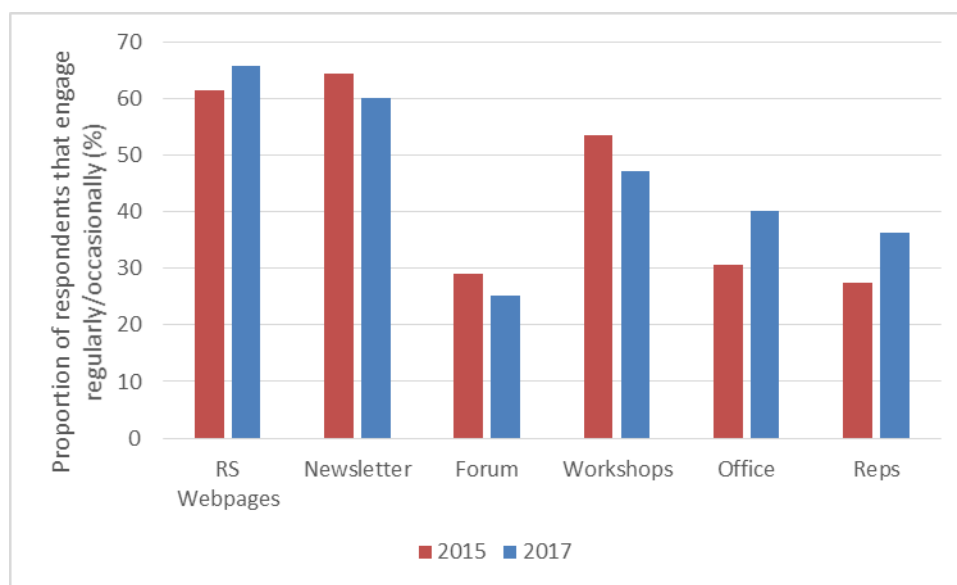


Figure 12 Engagement with research staff resources

The results indicate that similar to 2015, the resources that most respondents engage with are the webpages, newsletter and workshops. A comparison with 2015 results (Fig 12) shows an encouraging increase in engagement with the Research Staff Office, Research Staff Representatives and webpages. Conversely the respondent engagement in the newsletter, forum and workshops declined slightly since 2015. This implies that consideration of the format and accessibility of these resources is required to ensure that they continue to meet researcher needs into the future.

2.7.3 Preferred mechanisms for undertaking learning and professional development

Respondents were asked to select up to three of their preferred mechanisms for undertaking learning and development activity. Figure 13 shows the results of these selections and demonstrates the most preferred mechanism as 'interactive training workshops' and the least preferred (with the exception of 'other') to be 'work shadowing and placements'. In general, the mechanisms which involve interaction with others tended to be more popular than the more solitary mechanisms of learning such as online courses and self-directed learning.

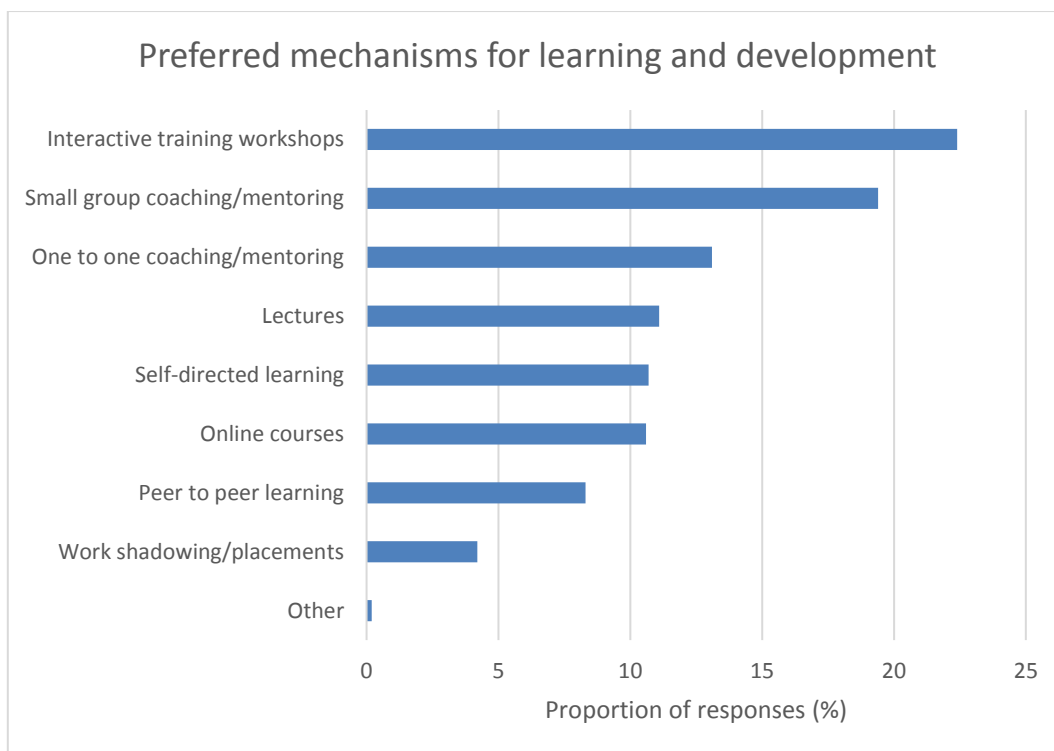


Figure 13. Preferred mechanisms for undertaking learning and professional development

This aligns with common feedback from workshops that a key element of the learning experience is being able to discuss ideas and challenges with the facilitators and workshop participants. However, this has implications for researchers that are not able to engage in the standard workshop sessions (e.g. distance and part-time researchers). As new resources are developed to increase accessibility of training and development content, it will be important to consider how to maintain a level of interaction for the participants.

2.7.4 Researcher workspaces

In response to recommendations from the Research Staff Representatives, CROS 2017 respondents were asked about the physical space allocations for their desk-based work. Figure 14 shows that the significant majority (70%) of respondents have a workspace within a shared office. A smaller number of researchers (16.6%) had their own office, while 6% worked in a hot-desk environment. A small number of researchers (3.8%, 9 individuals) did not have an allocated workspace, which is of concern as it could lead to frustrations and difficulties in engaging with the broader school/department.

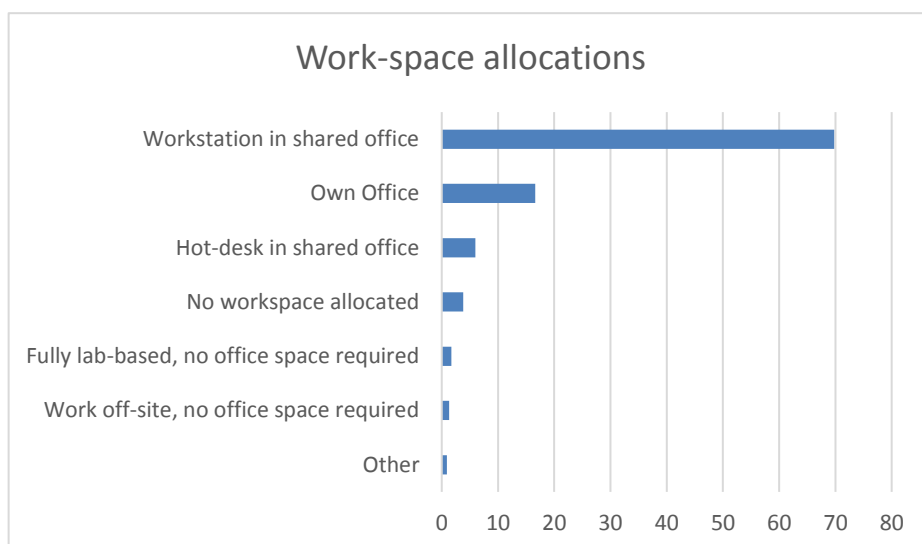


Figure 14 Respondent workspace allocations

It took 2 years before I was allocated any desk space at all. I found this utterly demotivated me in terms of being part of the department, as clearly there was no interest in my physical presence there.

Respondents were invited to provide free text comments on the space/physical environment in which they worked. There were 68 free text comments in total, which grouped into a number of general themes, which are listed below in order of frequency of mentions:

- Generally satisfied (14 mentions)
- Overcrowded workspaces (12 mentions)
- Lack of communal spaces and/or meeting spaces (8 mentions)
- Noise/distractions from office colleagues (8 mentions)
- Inadequate equipment/furniture (7 mentions)
- Non-allocation of space/general lack of space (7 mentions)
- Maintenance issues – leaks, broken amenities etc. (6 mentions)
- Extremes in temperature (5 mentions)
- Lack of natural light/windows (4 mentions)

2.7.5 Responses to ‘What 2-3 changes would make the biggest positive difference to the support you receive from the University for your career development?’

There were 79 free text responses to this question with a wide variety of suggestions. Those that were mentioned by 4 or more responders included (in order of number of mentions):

- More stable employment contracts (11 mentions)
- Access to a supportive mentor (11 mentions)
- More encouragement and support from line managers for career and professional development (10 mentions)
- More support and resources for career planning (9 mentions)
- More opportunities and space for networking and collaboration with other researchers (8 mentions)
- Appropriate mechanisms to recognise and reward experience and performance (7 mentions)
- Clearer routes to engage in teaching and supervision (6 mentions)
- Further support for applying for funding/research grants (6 mentions)
- Funding opportunities specifically for non-independent researchers (5 mentions)
- Less crowded/more comfortable work space (5 mentions)
- Clearer routes for progression (4 mentions)
- More technical support (4 mentions)
- Encouragement and support from senior management (4 mentions)

General University of Sussex– Recommendations

1. Highlight the Research Hive in the Library as an alternative workspace and meeting space for research staff **(RSO)**
2. Explore research funders and other HEIs expectations/guidance with respect to researcher workspaces and develop best practice information to share with Schools **(RSO)**
3. Develop business case to expand professional development support to include tailored provision for new, existing and aspiring PIs/research staff managers **(RSO and HR)**
4. Communicate CROS outcomes to research staff community, Schools, relevant University committees and senior management. **(RSO)**
5. Run CROS 2019 to monitor progress in the support for the career development of researchers at Sussex. **(RSO)**

3. Concluding Remarks

The 2017 Careers in Research Survey demonstrated the exceptional engagement of Sussex research staff, with 63% of researchers taking the time to participate in the survey. The results demonstrate improvements over 2013 and 2015 outcomes across the majority of areas explored by the survey; and in most instances Sussex responses compare well with the national aggregate response and indeed exceed the national picture in a number of areas.

Particularly noteworthy improvements were; researchers' awareness and understanding of promotions processes, perceptions of the usefulness of appraisals, investment in multiple days training and significant improvements across all aspects of equality and diversity examined by the survey. Particular areas in which the survey indicates there are challenges/room for improvement were; use of fixed-term contracts (particularly those of less than one-year duration), perceptions of opportunities for participation in decision making, support for career development planning, ensuring line manager support for professional development activities, supporting EU researchers in light of Brexit.

Due to the volume and quality of the survey responses, the 2017 Sussex CROS data set provides a rich insight to the progress made to date with respect to researcher support and the challenges that still remain. The Research Staff Working Group will work with research staff, and colleagues in Schools and professional services to take forward the recommendations from this report in order to continue to make improvements to the support and provision for Sussex researchers.