

University of Manchester two year self-assessment for the HR Excellence in Research award

1. Introduction

In 2012, The University of Manchester gained the *HR Excellence in Research* Award in recognition of the institution's ongoing commitment to adopting in full the Principles of [The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#). This commitment is made explicit in the University's high level [Research Strategy](#).

The HR Excellence award to the University was made on the basis of the institution's [Concordat Implementation Plan](#), which consists of 52 actions that, when complete, will go a very long way towards the University's ambition to adopt in full the Principles of the Concordat for the benefit of its research staff.

This report outlines the key achievements made against the actions listed in the University's original [Concordat Implementation Plan](#).

2. Process of self-audit

The overall responsibility for the monitoring and implementation of The University's Concordat Implementation Plan lies with the Research Staff Development Working Group. The Group, chaired by the Associate Vice President for Graduate Education & Research, is made up of: one research staff representative from each Faculty, a senior representative from HR, the Head of the Staff Development and Training Unit, the University's Skills Development Coordinator, and the Head of Post Graduate Careers Service.

The two year self assessment has involved wider consultation with: the University's [Research Staff Association](#), Faculty Research Staff Developers, the Director of Human Resources, the Heads of Equality & Diversity and the Staff Training & Development Unit, as well referring to CROS 2013 & The University's 2013 Staff Survey, the latter completed by over 1000 research staff.

3. Key Achievements and Progress against the Original Action Plan

A. Recruitment and selection

Work to ensure that open-ended contracts become the default norm for research staff, with fixed term contracts limited to specific exceptional requirements, is now embedded in normal practice at The University and has been very well received by the Trades Unions; the work has been flagged nationally as an example of excellent practice.

In order to mitigate some of the negative effects of instability due to fixed term contracts, however, the **Extended Access** project was introduced by the University's Research Staff Association and the University to extend access to email accounts and e-resources for research staff for a limited period beyond the termination date of research employment contracts linked to finite funding. Since its inception, the pilot has raised a great deal of interest amongst researchers, University staff working with researchers, external institutions (UKRSA and RCUK) and other universities. The high level of interest and support, combined with the high rate of uptake, has prompted the University to make this permanent institutional policy for eligible researchers whose contracts have ended.

B. Recognition and value

Creating conditions where research staff feel valued and better integrated into the local and wider research communities has been a key priority of the University in the past two years with efforts being made both locally (School/Faculty) and institutionally.

All Faculties have Research Staff forum(s) to ensure the research staff voice is input into relevant decision-making processes, and to shape professional and career development training programmes tailored for them. Efforts will be made to coordinate and strengthen representation of research staff locally and centrally, and to link up the different local and institutional fora.

The University's [Research Staff Association](#), formed in 2011, has been extremely prolific in its achievements to date and has already made a significant impact on institutional practice by driving forward a pilot project to better support research staff following termination of a fixed term contract (see above, **Extending Access** project).

A comparison of University like-for-like data returned in the CROS 2011 and 2013 data sets under the heading of *Recognition and value* show some notable improvements in the University's performance. However, data from CROS 2013 and the University Staff Survey (completed by over 10000 research staff) shows where the University needs to focus efforts to further improve the support given through procedure and policy that enhance the career development of research staff.

The University continues to support the publication of a quarterly Newsletter designed and written by research staff for research staff called [Incite](#) which focuses on key, topical issues of career development.

C. Support and Career Development

The Performance and Development Review (P&DR) is a core performance appraisal process of the University for all staff and affords a regular opportunity for managers and staff to discuss work and personal development objectives as well as training needs.

The University has invested significant resources to develop an online system – The Researcher Development Online Tool (ResDOT) – to enhance the uptake and effectiveness of the University's P&DR system for research staff.

Post Roberts, the University continues to invest in the provision of world-class training programmes for research staff. Programmes are designed and delivered locally at Faculty and/or School level by dedicated base-lined Faculty-based Researcher Development Training Teams and centrally by the Staff Development Training Unit, the Careers Service and the University Library.

In addition to Faculty offerings, the University also delivers pan-University programmes, including a flagship professional development programme covering the theory and practice of management and leadership called [Researchers into Management](#). The programme is designed for research staff who are interested in developing these key skill areas, both to support their current roles and their career development – whether in academia, industry, business or other contexts. Participants are equipped to work more effectively in their current roles, and to take on future challenges.

The University has a number of innovative mentoring schemes for research staff organized and delivered locally in Faculties and centrally by the Staff Training & Development Unit. Mentoring is regarded as an important opportunity to supplement other training offerings to enable research staff to develop their careers of choice.

A Handbook for Research Staff was launched in 2011, and provides a one-stop source of essential information to help research staff make the most of their time at The University. The Handbook has been very well received and is now distributed by central HR in a welcome pack to all newcomers that also includes a hard copy of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#).

D. Diversity and Equality

The University is committed to Athena SWAN Charter for Women in Science and its principles. The University has held a Bronze Award since 2008 and to date, four awards are held by Schools. The other eleven STEMM Schools have either applied or are currently working towards awards, with the support of a dedicated University's Athena SWAN Coordinator and a commitment to making a long term cultural change which will benefit all staff.

Faculty-wide Academic Promotions Masterclass workshops are delivered every year and are advertised with a positive action statement to encourage women and BME staff to attend and support staff in submitting promotion cases. Furthermore Schools offer CV clinics for individually tailored support.

The University's Equality & Diversity Unit has delivered unconscious bias training for the benefit of those on recruitment/promotion panels, to raise awareness of this issue and for them to consider their own biases during

recruitment/promotion processes. This is being developed to be included in mandatory recruitment and selection training for all recruiters.

The University has strong network groups for staff and students, including a Peer Support Group for Women Returning from Maternity Leave, International Staff Network Group and Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (WiSET). The groups organise events throughout the year and the university allows members up to eight hours per year to be dedicated to network group activities from their standard working hours.

4. Evaluation and Monitoring

Progress against the University's [Concordat Implementation Plan](#) has been monitored on an on-going basis by the University Skills Development Coordinator and the Research Staff Development Working Group. The process of evaluation and monitoring will be reviewed to ensure it is focused and effective. Research staff opinion has been sought via CROS and an internal University Staff Survey. The data from these two surveys are currently being assembled into one data set to enable action plans to be formulated and monitored by the Research Staff Development Working Group. Research staff have also been consulted directly through the University's Research Staff Association and through Faculty representatives. Once available, the combined results of CROS 2013 and the 2013 University Staff Survey will be mapped against the actions listed in the University's Concordat Implementation Plan which will be updated accordingly.

5. Next Steps and Focus Going Forward

Whilst The University has achieved many of the objectives set out in the original Implementation Plan and has made significant progress in embedding the Principles of The Concordat into policy and procedure, there remain areas in which the institution needs to focus efforts in the next two years.

These areas include:

- The University will exploit ResDOT as a tool to help deliver its Researcher Development Agenda by, for example, using the system to raise awareness of the RDF, the RDF Planner and supporting material provided by *Vitae* for both researcher and managers alike;
- Although significant cultural shifts have been made within the University to embed the Principles of the Concordat into policy and procedure, one major area of focus over the next two years will be to raise awareness of the University's commitment to researcher development amongst senior academics. All new academics must complete a mandatory *New Academics Training* programme, which includes information on PhD supervisory and research staff manager responsibilities. However, there is little on offer for more senior academics and this will be addressed in the next two years;
- Mentoring has been identified as a potentially powerful intervention that supports research staff in their career development. Although there is a great deal of excellent provision currently available to research staff, the University will undertake a review to assess the need for enhanced provision, in particular to help engage more research staff with mentoring;
- The University will continue to support the development and influence of The University's Research Staff Association, by providing encouragement and support from senior management and to link up the Association with other key stakeholders across the University who are working to support research staff.

Broad measures of success will be included where appropriate (for example, the numbers of PIs engaging with Supervisory Briefing Sessions, and the numbers of research staff undertaking a P&DR with effective outcomes).

Progress will continue to be monitored by strategic groups and stakeholders involved in the Implementation Plan, informed by results from CROS, the University Staff Survey and by direct feedback from research staff.