

University of Manchester HR Excellence in Research award

Progress report – six year evaluation and review

1. Introduction

In 2011, The University of Manchester gained the *HR Excellence in Research* Award in recognition of the institution's ongoing commitment to embed the principles of [the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) into operations and strategy. This commitment is made explicit in the University's highest level 2020 Research Strategy.

This current report outlines the internal evaluation of progress made against our original and 2015-17 Action Plan (see **Appendix 1** for a detailed progress evaluation), our key achievements in the last two years, and our strategy going forward.

Research excellence is at the heart of The University of Manchester and research staff are valued as a significant contributor to the research success of the University. We will continue to support our research staff by adopting the principles of the concordat via our ongoing Concordat Implementation Plan (see **Appendix 2** for the University's 2017–19 Action Plan).

How was the internal review undertaken?

The University Research Staff Development Working Group (RSDWG), chaired by the Associate Vice President (AVP) for Research, leads implementation of the University's Concordat Implementation Plan (CIP) and oversaw the six-year evaluation and review process. The RSDWG includes one research staff (RS) rep from each Faculty and works closely with all key stakeholders across the University to ensure concerted and coordinated efforts are made to support RS in all Schools and Faculties. The review of the University's CIP is considered alongside a number of other frameworks including Athena SWAN, the QAA Code of Practice (Ch. 11) and the University's People and Organisational Development Strategy.

The current review of progress made against the University's original and 2013–15 CIP was undertaken in consultation with colleagues across the University, including: the Director of HR; the Heads of the Equality and Diversity Unit and Staff Learning and Development (SLD); Professional and Support Service (PSS) staff, Faculty Researcher Development Teams¹ and RS representatives. Views from researchers were taken into account via: RS reps; analysis of 2017 University Staff Survey data aggregated to research staff; the Faculty research staff developers who contacted their respective research staff directly. A draft of the internal evaluation and CIPs (2015–17 progress evaluation and 2017–19 actions) was submitted to the high-level University HR subcommittee chaired by the Deputy President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, for comment and final sign off.

2. Key achievements and progress against strategy set out in original 2011 action plan and 2015–17 action plan

2.1 Overview of progress

2.1.1 Notable highlights of progress made against the University's 2015–17 CIP include: **Development of a new online University Research Staff Handbook**. Previously, the well-received Faculty-specific Research Staff Handbook was published as a hard copy/PDF and distributed to research staff via hand and/or email communications. The design, content, and preferred mode of delivery for the new online Research Staff Handbook, (see <http://www.researcher-development.manchester.ac.uk/research-staff-handbook/>) was developed and agreed in extensive consultation with research staff, research staff reps and University staff involved in researcher development. The handbook contains all the essential information necessary to help research staff maximise their time at the University both personally and professionally from day one.

2.1.2 **Contracts for research staff (RS)**. The University's [Contracts Policy](#) states that, wherever possible, staff are appointed on contracts of an indefinite duration. Where a contract offered is for a fixed term or limited term (eg where the need for a particular job to be done is clearly temporary) the policy gives procedures to provide fair, effective and transparent mechanisms by which decisions relating to the use of fixed-term contracts and open-ended contracts can be taken and implemented. The policy, now well embedded into University procedures and practice, was very well received by Trades Unions and is cited in the sector as an example of outstanding practice. An open-ended contract (OEC) carries additional

¹ As part of the ongoing commitment to the development and delivery of world-class researcher development programmes to postgraduate researchers and research staff, each of the four Faculties at The University of Manchester has a dedicated researcher development team. The Faculty teams work in partnership with each other and other key stakeholders in PSS – eg the Careers Service – to maximise efficiency of resources and the depth and breadth of programmes delivered, and to encourage interdisciplinary interactions between researchers.

benefits, including, at termination, staff are given an extra 3 months, in addition to the statutory notice period of 3 months, to provide an opportunity to develop their careers in between contracts eg undertake specific training. This generous approach goes beyond minimum legal requirements and can assist (research) staff in-between contracts to bridge gaps between funding. Work to ensure that all eligible RS are employed on an OEC is ongoing. The first stage of this work – to collect robust data for RS contracts – has been completed. The next stage is to ensure that all eligible RS are employed on an OEC. Furthermore, work is now underway to investigate the feasibility of introducing a single contract type for RS – ie an OEC.

- 2.1.3 **Extended Access Policy.** This policy was developed by the University’s Research Staff Association working with the University and is unique amongst UK HEIs. It provides access to email accounts and e-resources for a 12-month period beyond the termination of an employment contract. Work has been completed to ensure that all eligible RS are given the opportunity to register for extended access – a letter giving details of the EA service is sent to all eligible RS both six months and three months prior to expiry of contract.
- 2.1.4 **RS representation** at the University has developed considerably in the past 2 years. RS reps and governance structures are well established in two of the three Faculties (School/Divisional RS reps, RS representation on School and Faculty committees and quarterly RS fora). The remaining Faculty is currently overhauling its RS rep structure and governance to ensure full RS representation at School and Faculty levels. University-wide events for RS reps will commence in October to help build effective and supportive connections between RS reps across the University.
- 2.1.5 **Regional collaborations** – driven largely by the difficulty in sustaining its Research Staff Association (due to research staff turnover), the University has initiated discussions with other north-west HEIs to: (i) develop a regional RSA and (ii) run a regional RS conference and smaller events, rotating responsibility between institutions. This has been agreed.
- 2.1.6 **Promotion** opportunities for the University’s RS are attracting sector interest. The University now has an annual promotion round open to all RS irrespective of their contractual status and external funding stream (the institutional success rate for RS is remarkably high at 78% and is likely a result of the significant support provided to RS attempting promotion, including 1:1 coaching).
- 2.1.7 **The University’s staff continue to influence the national and international (eg Australasia, Africa) researcher development landscape** by giving talks and workshops at conferences and sitting on influential national boards and committees.
- 2.1.8 **P&DR effectiveness:** of those RS who reported having completed a P&DR in the past 12 months in the 2017 Staff Survey, 92% agreed that “clear objectives” had been agreed, with 83% agreeing that the P&DR was useful. This represents a significant improvement on comparable CROS 2015 data which showed that 72% of respondents agreed that their P&DR was useful.
- 2.1.9 In 2017, and for the first time, RS-specific questions were included in the University’s Staff Survey (USS). This represented a considerable allocation of resources and reflects the University’s priority to invest in research staff.
- 2.1.10 In 2017, the University restructured its central learning and development provision to form the Staff Learning and Development (SLD) department. SLDs’ 2017–18 operational priorities will include research staff with immediate impact eg doubling the capacity of the ILM-accredited and hugely popular *Researchers into Management* for Research Staff.

Of course, the University faces clear challenges in some areas of implementing its concordat plan. We are aware of these and acting upon them; we have in place the right governance and engagement from senior management to research staff, and we are gathering robust data in order to assess current situations, targets and monitoring procedures to improve our position regarding CIP implementation.

2.2 Review of progress against principles of the concordat

Embedding concordat principles in policy and practice: Concordat Principles 1 and 2 – recruitment, selection, retention, valuing and recognition of researchers

As reported above, the University is currently analysing its RS contract data to ensure that all eligible RS are employed on an OEC and enjoy the benefits that brings. Furthermore, the University is considering the introduction of a single contract type for RS, ie an OEC (see Appendix 1 for details).

The University encourages RS to secure research funding and to be formally recognised for their research ideas. The University has run a focus group with the Wellcome Trust to look at funding barriers for RS which is important as, in some cases, funders for research restrict RS leading grants in some of their calls. The University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team will be capturing data (titles, grades of PIs and COIs on grant applications – both successful and unsuccessful) to analyse current stats to develop an action plan, with targets and monitoring procedures, to increase the numbers of RS submitting grant applications.

Creating conditions to support research staff feeling more valued and better integrated into the local and wider research community has been a key priority of the University in the past two years with efforts being made at School, Faculty and institutional levels (see Appendix 1 for examples of activity).

The University continues to support the publication of a quarterly newsletter designed and written by research staff for research staff called [Incite](#), supported by an accompanying blog. The newsletter is published quarterly as hard copy (with a print run of 2,500 copies)

and is available to all research staff via communal areas/pigeon holes. We estimate that 40% of research staff read *Incite* and more effective ways of distribution, including electronic, are being considered to hit a target of 80% readership.

Supporting career and professional development of research staff – Concordat Principles 3, 4 & 5

The University is committed to providing its research staff with an excellent depth and breadth of training opportunities to support career and professional development (see Appendix 1). Provision for RS will be further boosted by the University's newly formed SLD working in partnership with Faculty Researcher Development Teams.

Dedicated Faculty and PSS Researcher Development Teams provide a wide range of opportunities, from 1:1 mentoring and coaching to flagship, pan-University events such as the annual Research Staff Conference, an annual careers event ([Pathways](#)) and the [Researchers into Management](#) programme leading to ILM Level 5 Award in Middle Management. The implementation of a University online training catalogue provides a searchable repository of all internal training and assists research staff in identifying and planning career development programmes.

The University continues to invest significant resources to support the development of RS, including teaching. For example, the Leadership in Education Awards Programme (LEAP) is open to all RS that have some teaching experience and would like to apply for formal accreditation and a national teaching award (Higher Education Academy Fellowship). Since January 2016, 11 RS have successfully completed LEAP with four awarded associate fellowships and seven fellowships (in the same period, six PSS staff and 59 academic staff have successfully completed LEAP).

Commitment to improve recruitment and employment experiences of all staff – Concordat Principle 6 – Diversity and Equality

The University holds a number of equality and diversity awards and accreditations reflecting our strong commitment to supporting a vibrant academic community where all can flourish. The University has held an Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award since 2008 and all 15 STEMM Schools* have achieved departmental awards (seven Bronze; eight Silver). In 2015, the Athena SWAN Charter expanded to include arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL); professional support roles; and trans staff and students. We have successful applications under the expanded charter, including two departmental Bronze awards in humanities. The two largest Schools in humanities are preparing Athena SWAN applications for submission later in 2017, with an application from a third School already submitted for review. Work to support these, and Schools already progressing gender equality actions, is underway with the help of our dedicated University's Charter Marks Coordinator. The commitment to making long-term cultural change is further strengthened by the establishment of Faculty Equality and Diversity Committees and a pan-University Athena SWAN Networking Group, sharing best practice and support with local actions. In 2015 the University successfully participated in the Race Equality Charter Mark pilot to support our BME community achieving a Bronze award. In the Stonewall Employer Index our ranked position as an LGBT-inclusive organisation leapt from 235th in 2012 to 41st in 2017. In particular, our LGBT staff network group 'ALLOUT' was 'highly commended' for its inclusivity. We partnered with DisabledGo to launch the 'AccessAble Uni of Manchester App', the first bespoke university access app for disabled staff, students and visitors. Participation in the Equality Charters, alongside Investors in People, Stonewall, Time to Change and the Disability Confident employer scheme ensures the necessary framework is in place to report and monitor our progress towards an organisational culture where all experience equality of opportunity.

The University's promotion process and policy recognises and rewards teaching-focused and research-focused career pathways, as well as accounting for career breaks and part-time working, hence reflecting flexibility in career paths. Faculty-wide Academic and Research Promotions Masterclass workshops are advertised with a positive action statement to encourage women and BME staff.

The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team has delivered unconscious bias training for recruitment/promotion panels. This is being developed for inclusion in mandatory recruitment and selection training for all recruiters. In 2017 the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team, in collaboration with Staff Learning and Development, offered a pilot workshop 'Trans*fer – A Journey' on trans awareness, this is in line with our commitment to support gender-equality more broadly. The University has strong network groups for staff and students, including a Peer Support Group for returners from maternity, paternity and adoption leave, BME Staff Network Group, Disabled Staff Network Group, International Staff Network Group and various 'Women in....' groups. While staff network groups offer peer support for staff experiencing issues, the University takes a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment, recognised most recently by the 2017 Universities Human Resources Equality and Diversity Award for our 'We Get It' campaign. As part of this campaign, we offer an online platform to anonymously report bullying and harassment or to access support from trained Harassment Support Advisors.

The University offers a substantial enhanced maternity leave package which includes six months full pay, plus three months statutory pay and three months unpaid. While on maternity leave the University offers ten 'keeping in touch' days, which are paid and not taken out of the maternity leave period. The three-month paid extended redeployment period is still available to staff who are on maternity leave when their funding culminates. Our Shared Parental Leave policy offers new parents more flexibility and enhanced pay to partners who share leave with the mother or primary caregiver. The University provides a long-running staff network group specifically for those returning to work after having a child. Additionally, following an information event specifically for early-career researchers with parental

responsibilities in 2015, a monthly peer-support group for researcher parents is now available to research staff and postgraduate research students. There are a number of family-friendly policies including flexible working, career break and special leave, and family-friendly support includes childcare initiatives to help reduce costs, with a salary exchange scheme for paying for childcare, childcare vouchers and two on site nurseries. We offer a centrally-located set of rooms for mothers to express breastmilk and feeding.

*before the restructure to create the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health

A continuing commitment to undertake regular and collective review of progress in action plan implementation, and learning form and sharing best practice: Concordat Principle 7

The University has contributed actively to national and international initiatives relating to researcher careers. University staff are regular contributors to national and international conferences and workshops (ARMA, UKCGE, Vitae, Westminster Forums). The University AVP for Research (chair of the University's senior RSDWG) sits on the External Advisory Board of Vitae. The University encourages RS to complete the bi-annual USS; indeed, for 2017, the University invested considerable resources to include a set of RS-specific questions in the survey. Furthermore, a high level dedicated USS RS Action Plan Group was set up to provide the central SS board with a set of RS – specific actions to be included in the University's APR. The views and opinions of RS are also fed back to the University via the RS rep network and RSDWG.

3. Strategy for the next two years, including measures of success

The University's CIP is aimed at developing an institutional research culture that benefits both the individual researcher and the institution's ambitious research aims. The latter are set out in the high-level Manchester 2020 document and the accompanying University Research Strategy. We have written an updated action plan (see **Appendix 2**) that sets out the details of our focus of our RS strategy for the next two years (and beyond).

A brief summary of our strategy and next actions is provided below.

Strategies and actions to support Principles 1 and 2: Recruitment, selection, recognition and value

The University has nationally recognised policies that support the career progression of research staff (eg, Extended Access Policy). More work will be done to raise awareness and uptake of these policies by both research staff and PIs. Specific activities will include:

- In partnership with the University's central communications office and RS rep networks we will implement a communications strategy and plan for research staff;
- Establish and maintain consistent research staff representation in all Schools, Faculties and at institutional levels;
- To implement and monitor the completion and satisfaction scores for the University's new online P&DR system when it is rolled out to RS
- To regularly monitor RS promotion data to ensure equal opportunities for all RS;
- To develop and implement a University fellowship scheme to attract the very best national and international researchers to the University, and continue to build on the very successful Fellowship Academy, Deans Prize fellowship schemes and supporting fellows through the University's New Academics programmes, all for existing Research Staff.
- Ensure that all eligible RS are employed on an OEC, and to conclude investigations as to whether a single contract type for RS, ie an OEC, is feasible for RS.

Strategies to support Principles 3 and 4: Career development

The University has established a comprehensive suite of career development opportunities at School, Faculty and institutional level to support the career development of researchers. Specific actions include:

- Guidance documentation for RS and PIs to accompany the new online P&DR system explaining how the P&DR can be used as an effective career development tool;
- Increase completion rates (target is a 90% completion rate by 2019) and satisfaction scores amongst research staff with respect to annual P&DRs (as measured in the bi-annual USS);
- To build on the successes of switching to a local induction model of delivery to increase induction satisfaction scores reported in the USS amongst RS;
- Develop guidance – including case studies – for PIs with respect to good practice in supporting the career development of research staff, with reference to resources both local and national, eg, Vitae;
- Develop a suite of short films showing case studies of career paths and progression of research staff at different stages of their career, eg, 1st and 2nd post doc);
- Increase awareness of – and participation in – mentoring schemes available to research staff (uptake target of 60% of research staff by 2019);
- Raising number of applications and success rate to promotion rounds for research staff (targets to be agreed).

Strategies to support Principle 5: Researcher responsibilities

Developing a University culture that encourages researchers to take responsibility for their own career development from day one is a key institutional priority. While 2017 USS data suggest that this work has been successful (84% of respondents agreed that they had been encouraged to engage in personal and career development) there is room for improvement. Specific actions include:

- Ongoing review of information given at induction and the Research Staff Handbook to ensure it emphasises the importance of engaging with career development from day one, the opportunities available to RS, the use of Personal Development Plans (PDP) and the electronic resource available (the University training catalogue) to plan and manage participation;
- Review the role of the new regional RSA and the University's RS rep network to enhance engagement and responsibility amongst RS.

Strategies to support Principle 6: Equality and diversity

The University is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and students and holds a number of equality and diversity awards and accreditations reflecting our strong commitment. Future enhancements include:

- Ongoing review of data and mechanisms to support equality, recognition, promotion, reward and support for all RS;
- Continue to support School submissions for Athena SWAN awards, and to achieve institutional Silver;
- Continuing participation in Equality Charters, Investors in People, Stonewall, Time to Change and Disability Two Ticks;
- Continue to examine equalities recruitment data for all staff at University and Faculty level on a bi-annual basis.

Strategies to support Principle 7: Implementation and review

Implementation, evaluation and review is embedded and linked to other initiatives such as the University's People and Organisational Development Strategy and Athena SWAN charter. Although marked progress has been made in the University to seek evidence of progress and identifying measures of success for future goals, there is more work to be done to raise awareness of this work amongst research staff. Strategies will be developed and implemented to rectify this knowledge gap amongst researchers including the development and implementation of a communications plan for research staff and building on work to establish governance structures for RS matters to the University.

The University is committed to continuing to contribute actively to regional, national and international networks and initiative.

Broad success indicators

Our success will be measured against the timely achievement of the actions set out in the 2017–19 action plan. In addition, our success indicators include the following:

- Evidence of progress/improvement in University Staff Survey data aggregated to RS when compared with previous years;
- Increase in numbers of RS engaging in *effective* PDRs;
- Increased awareness amongst PIs of all issues relating to researcher development, including internal policies and procedures as well as resources both internal and national;
- Achievement of Athena SWAN awards;
- Achievement of relevant University Strategic Plan/Research Strategy KPIs.