

## University of Manchester HR Excellence in Research Award Submission September 2019

### Introduction

The University of Manchester received the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2011 and has retained the award through three reviews (2013, 2015 and 2017). The University is committed to supporting the personal, professional and career development of its large community of research staff (c. 2,000) and to creating a supportive environment in which researchers are able to work and develop their careers.

Responsibility for this area of work lies with the Associate Vice President for Research (AVPR) who chairs the Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG). RSSG monitors the Concordat Action Plan (CAP) and reports progress and concerns to the University Research Group (URG) and to the Human Resources Sub Committee (HRSC). Our governance structure indicates the University's high level of commitment to researcher development and ensures inclusion of the researcher's voice in strategic discussions.

This report highlights our key achievements over the last two years and should be read alongside the detailed comments made against each of the actions outlined in the CAP 2017-19. The University's strategy and initiatives to maintain and enhance support for researchers are also highlighted and should be read alongside the additional detail provided in the proposed CAP for 2019-21. All documents are available on the University's [researcher development](#) webpages.

### How did we undertake our internal review?

A change in senior academic leadership (October 2018) and a revision of governance arrangements has brought new impetus to this area of work. Evaluation of progress against the CAP covering the period 2017-19 was originally the responsibility of the Research Staff Development Working Group (RSDWG) chaired by the AVPR. RSDWG membership included Faculty-based researcher development teams, Human Resources (HR) and Staff Learning and Development (SLD). RSDWG's main remit was to champion the Concordat. From October to December 2018, RSDWG was reviewed, revised and replaced with the Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG) in January 2019. The review highlighted that both the remit and membership of RSDWG were too narrow and three key changes were made relating to membership, remit and governance.

The chair of RSSG remains the AVPR and membership has been extended to include personnel from three key new groups in addition to the Faculty-based researcher development teams, HR and SLD. These are senior academics responsible for research staff in their respective Faculties, research staff representatives from each Faculty and comms and marketing professionals. RSSG monitors and reports on the CAP; however, the group has a broader remit of developing a University-wide strategy for researcher development. Improved governance and accountability is also now in place. RSSG reports directly to the University Research Group (URG) and HR Sub Committee (HRSC) and receives reports from the Researcher Development Group (RDG); RDG coordinates training provision and researcher development activities for both PGRs and research staff. These changes to RSSG have enabled a more effective review of the CAP and over the last year, RSSG has:

- Included discussion of the CAP 2017-19 at every meeting, noting progress, areas of concern and proposing further actions.
- Sought feedback on progress against the CAP 2017-19 from research staff representatives and research staff forums (approximately 65 researchers).
- Liaised with colleagues on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Board (EDI LB) and in the Athena Swan Self-Assessment team (AS SAT) for feedback on EDI actions in the CAP 2017-19 and to ensure that the CAP 2019-21 aligns with the Athena Swan (AS) and Race Equality Charter (REC) action plans.
- Coordinated a University wide response to the ten year review of the Concordat; feedback obtained through this process also informed the development of the CAP 2019-21.

- Commissioned RDG to carry out a review of all career and professional development training opportunities for research staff. In addition to discussion within RSSG and RDG, evidence used to inform the review included:
  - Results from the 2019 University Staff Survey (USS). The USS, which includes questions from the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS), was completed by 1,074 research staff and a sub-analysis of research staff responses has been performed.
  - CROS 2017 results for the sector.
  - Discussions with research staff representatives and research staff forums.
  - Feedback received from individuals and groups to the ten year review of the Concordat.

### **Key Achievements and Progress 2017-19**

The document 'Update on the Concordat Action Plan 2017-19' comments on progress against the 57 point action plan, the key achievements are highlighted here. This work has been aided by a regular monthly update to all research staff from the AVPR. Feedback from research staff reps have confirmed this has been a well received channel of communication.

#### **Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection**

Robust monitoring of EDI data in relation to recruitment and applications is undertaken by HRSC and action plans are drawn up for areas of concern. The data and action plans are shared with RSSG to ensure research staff issues are addressed. The USS 2019 indicated that 86% of research staff agree that the University acts fairly with regard to recruitment.

#### **Principle 2: Recognition and Value**

The 2017 USS indicated that research staff were less likely to feel recognised and valued compared with all staff and a 'research staff action plan' was developed to address this.

- A network of over 50 research staff representatives across the University was established to ensure that the views and contribution of research staff were part of the University decision-making and communications processes. The impact of this is evidenced by the 2019 USS, which reported:
  - 80% of research staff agree they are integrated into their local research community; this compares favourably with the CROS 2017 results for the sector (77%);
  - 85% of research staff are satisfied with their job, which is higher than the proportion of all staff (80%) agreeing with this statement.
- The University launched additional training and resources for line managers including PIs. The manager's essential toolkit provides managers with tools, templates and resources to help them develop as managers. This has had a positive impact on research staff as evidence by the USS:
  - 89% of research staff agreed that their line manager gives recognition for work and this increased from 85% in 2017 and compared favourably with all staff (80%);
  - 78% of research staff agreed that their line manager helps them find a good work life balance compared with 73% in 2017;
  - 82% of research staff agree their line manager helps them develop in their role compared with 73% of all staff.
- The annual P&DR process was moved to an online system from 2018 and in parallel training and resources were developed to encourage researchers to participate. The percentage of research staff completing a P&DR increased from 53% in 2017 to 59% in 2019.
- The research staff reps who are members of RSSG initiated and are leading on the University's first involvement in international postdoc appreciation week. The events and activities, which will take place at the time of the submission of this report, include a video message for all research staff from the President, creation of postdoc profiles to be promoted via the University's main twitter feed, Faculty- and School-sponsored social events and a thank you scheme.

### **Principles 3 and 4: Support and Career Development**

The University actively supports researchers in the development of their careers, offering a range of excellent training and development opportunities from 1:1 mentoring and coaching to a bespoke Researchers into Management programme. The review of career and professional development training opportunities noted the breadth and extent of the training on offer. In 2017/18 PGRs and research staff had access to over 240 courses; 150 of these were exclusively aimed at research staff and attracted 2,557 attendances. The USS results confirmed the positive work in this area and reported that:

- 78% of research staff agreed that they are encouraged to engage in personal and career development, this compares favourably with the sector wide score of 71% (CROS 2017).
- 56% of the University's research staff have a clear career development plan compared with 50% across the sector (CROS 2017).

All researchers with some teaching experience have the opportunity to apply for a national teaching award via the Leadership in Education Awards Programme (LEAP). In 2018/19, 28 research staff successfully completed the LEAP, an increase from seven in 2016/17. In 2018/19 an international conference and research collaboration fund was introduced for researchers.

### **Principle 5: Researchers Responsibilities**

The University has active research staff forums and reps networks particularly where there are large clusters of researchers. Research staff reps are members of RSSG, RDG, Faculty committees and the Athena Swan SAT. The reps and forums have acted as an important channel for promoting announcements and opportunities and they provide valuable input to key groups such as RSSG and RDG.

All research staff can apply to one of four University wide coaching and mentoring schemes, Manchester Gold, Central Coaching, Researchers into Management and Leading at Manchester. One Faculty has introduced a bespoke research staff mentoring programme and roll out of this to the other Faculties is under consideration. In the USS it was reported that 33% of all research staff had received mentoring which compared favourably with 23% of all staff.

### **Principle 6: Equality and Diversity**

The University is committed to an environment that values and celebrates the diverse nature of its staff and students and takes positive steps to achieve equality in the workplace and to meeting and exceeding equality legislation obligations. 87% of research staff believe that the University is committed to equality of opportunity for all of its staff. The University has been a member of the Athena Swan Charter since 2008 and currently holds a bronze award. 15 out of 17 Schools hold AS awards (seven silver and eight bronze). Two members of the AS SAT are also members of RSSG and the AS SAT includes research staff representation. Two members of RSSG are also members of EDI Leadership Board and this coordination has enabled a closer alignment of the CAP actions with Athena Swan and REC actions.

### **Principle 7: Implementation and Review**

Progress on the CAP has been overseen effectively by RSSG. The inclusion of research staff reps in RSSG has ensured researchers voices and opinions are heard. The establishment of a research staff action plan following the 2017 USS has also ensured monitoring of this area of work has continued. The overlap between RSSG and the EDI LB and Athena Swan SAT has promoted alignment between action plans.

### **Strategy and Priorities for Action 2019-2021**

An updated CAP covering the period 2019-21 sets out the key actions and initiatives that will be undertaken to ensure that all research staff feel valued, integrated and able to thrive. RSSG will continue to monitor progress. A summary of the key initiatives are highlighted below.

## **Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection**

Over the last 12 months, in response to feedback from research staff forums, RSSG has developed a statement of expectations on the career development of research staff. The statement sets out the expectations and mutual responsibility of research staff, PIs and the University with the aim of creating a supportive environment in which researchers are able to work and develop their careers. A key action over the next two years is to embed this statement in practice with high levels of awareness of the statement amongst researchers and PIs. Awareness will be measured via a staff survey with a target level of 70%. Research staff views on whether PIs and the University are fulfilling their obligations will be gathered via research staff forums.

A second key action in this area is to review and relaunch the University wide induction materials. Whilst the USS results indicate satisfaction with local inductions, the percentage of research staff who valued the University-wide induction is low.

## **Principle 2: Recognition and Value**

The University already has an established promotion criteria for research staff, however awareness of this and applications from research staff are low. The promotion criteria will be reviewed, refreshed and widely advertised along with the development of online resources and training.

RSSG will continue to support researcher led initiatives such as international postdoc appreciation week and the establishment of a regular research staff conference. RSSG will work with reps and research staff forums to develop additional ways to recognise researchers.

## **Principles 3 and 4: Support and Career Development**

Whilst the USS results are positive in relation to access to learning and development, the results also indicate that researchers would like more opportunities in relation to grant writing and working with industry. The review of professional and career development training also noted gaps in provision in these areas. Therefore, the actions in the CAP 2019-21 include working with grant writing and strategic funding teams to develop annual grant writing programmes and working with business and knowledge exchange teams to deliver an annual programme of training and events on engaging with industry.

## **Principle 5: Researchers Responsibilities**

The work around the dissemination of the statement of expectations will encourage research staff to take responsibility for their training and development and will encourage them to undertake wider activities such as teaching and public engagement.

## **Principle 6: Equality and Diversity**

The USS indicated that there was a low level of awareness of key EDI policies amongst research staff and this will be addressed via training and key messages targeted specifically at research staff. Other actions in this area include ensuring Unconscious Bias observers are involved in promotions panel and evaluating the impact of an inclusive advocacy programme for BAME researchers.

## **Principle 7: Implementation and Review**

The CAP 2019-21 will be monitored by RSSG. A research staff action plan developed in response to the USS 2019 will also ensure work in this area is progressed. A University wide researcher development network will be introduced to ensure all researchers have a forum to contribute to discussions on research staff related issues.

## **Abbreviations**

AS – Athena Swan, AS SAT - Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team, AVPR – Associate Vice President Research, CAP - Concordat Action Plan, EDI LB - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Board, HR - Human Resources, HRSC – Human Resources Sub Committee, RDG – Researcher Development Group, REC – Race Equality Charter, RSDWG – Research Staff Development Working Group, RAG - Research Strategy Group, RSSG - Research Staff Strategy Group, SLD - Staff Learning and Development, URG - University Research Group