

# University of Manchester HR Excellence in Research award

## Progress Report – 4 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 adopt in full the Principles of [The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#). This commitment is made explicit in the University's 2020 Research Strategy.

This report and the associated Action Plan (see **Appendix 2**) outline our internal evaluation of progress made against our original and two-year Action Plan, 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 its ambitions 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 Concordat Implementation Plan.

#### How was the internal review undertaken?

The University has reviewed its progress against the objectives set out in its Concordat Implementation Plans (see **Appendix 1**). The University Research Staff Development Working Group (RSDWG), chaired by the Associate Vice President (AVP) for Research, has overall responsibility for monitoring progress. It works closely with other senior leadership groups, including The University Research Group (URG), and other key stakeholder groups including The University Researcher Development Group (RDG) and The [University Research Staff Association](#) (RSA). The *HR Excellence in Research* award is considered alongside a number of other implementing mechanisms including plans for the Athena SWAN, compliance with the QAA Code of Practice (Ch. 11) and The University's People and Organisational Development Strategy.

The review of progress made against The University's original and 2013 – 15 Concordat Implementation Plans was undertaken in consultation with colleagues across The University, including: the Director of HR; the Heads of the Equality & Diversity Unit and the Staff Training & Development Unit (STDU); Faculty & Professional & Support Services (PSS) Researcher Development Teams<sup>1</sup>. Views from researchers were taken into account as follows: an analysis of CROS 2015 data, and comparing like-for-like responses against 2013 data; analysis of the internal 2015 University Staff Survey aggregated to research staff; the RSA; the Faculty Research Staff Developers who contacted their respective research staff directly; research staff reps and Faculty Research Staff Fora; senior academics and PIs. A draft of the internal evaluation and Action Plan was submitted to the high-level University HR Sub Committee, 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 Action Plan & two-year review

#### 2.1 Overview of progress

Since 2013, significant investment of resources has been made in four areas identified as key priorities:

- Development of University policy that provides extended access for research staff to facilities for up to six months following end-of-contract. This development was supported by the University and led, significantly, by members of the RSA;
- Extending promotion procedures and policy to include research staff;
- Developing and implementing policy that supports open-ended contracts to be the default norm for all staff;
- Improving engagement with, and effectiveness of, the Performance & Development Review (PDR) process for research staff.

Furthermore, a clear line of feedback from all research staff was that The University needed to improve communication with research staff to ensure that they were made aware of relevant and important information, policies and developments. Accordingly, The University has undertaken two major developments: (1) the generation of Faculty-specific Research Staff Handbooks as a principal form of communication, giving the essential information for research staff. The Handbooks have been very well received and, in response to additional feedback from research staff, this important publication is currently undergoing a major upgrading, to ensure that additional information, requested by research staff, is included. (2) To specifically improve communication between institution and research staff,

<sup>1</sup> 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 – e.g. The Careers Service – to maximise efficiency of resources and the depth and breadth of programmes delivered, and to encourage interdisciplinary interactions between researchers.

over the past two years, we have improved and strengthened research staff representation in The University. Two Faculties have developed effective Research Staff Fora and parallel groups are being formed in the other two Faculties.

## 2.2 Review of progress against Principles of The Concordat

### ***Embedding Concordat Principles in Policy and Practice: Concordat Principles 1 & 2 – Recruitment, selection, retention, valuing and recognition of researchers***

It is now University policy that Open-ended Contracts are the default norm for all staff, with fixed term contracts limited to specific exceptional requirements only. This development has been very well received by the Trades Unions and our work has been flagged nationally as an example of excellent practice. Those on Open-ended contracts are given an extra three months, in addition to the statutory period of three months' notice, to exploit career development opportunities (e.g., undertake specific training, complete and submit research outputs). This generous policy goes well beyond minimum legal requirements.

The formal adoption of an **Extended Access Policy** for research staff followed the successful piloting of a project led by the RSA. The Policy provides research staff with extended access to facilities (e.g., University email account) and buildings (e.g., library) for up to six months following end-of-contract to assist research staff maximise research outputs. The policy has raised a great deal of interest internally as well as with external institutions (UKRSA and RCUK) and other universities.

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. These efforts are reflected in the increase from 2013 – 15 by 5% - and 2 %, respectively, in CROS respondents saying they felt integrated into the local and wider research community. As noted above, the development of Faculty-based Research Staff Fora ensures that the research staff voice is included in relevant decision-making processes. Additional efforts will be made to continue to strengthen representation of research staff locally and centrally, and to link up the different groups (e.g., Research Staff Fora and the RSA). The University's RSA has been extremely prolific in its achievements to date and has been a significant partner in the development and implementation of institutional practice for research staff (e.g., **Extended Access Policy**).

A comparison of data collected in the 2011 and 2013 CROS under the heading of *Recognition and value* show some notable improvements in The University's performance. For example, those respondents agreeing that the institution recognises the contribution to public engagement rose from 52% in 2011 to 73% in 2013. This increase may reflect the significant investment that has been made to enhance engagement of research staff with this area of researcher activity. However, data collected in the 2013/15 CROS and University Staff Survey have identified key areas that The University will be focussing further efforts to enhance recognition and value scores collected from research staff.

The University continues to support the publication of a quarterly Newsletter designed and written by research staff for research staff called *Incite*. The Newsletter is published quarterly as hardcopy (print run = 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. 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 which leads to an 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.

As a result of feedback from researchers (2013 CROS & University Staff Survey, Research Staff reps) regarding engagement with - and effectiveness of - The University's Performance and Development Review (PDR) process, considerable effort and resource was invested in the development and of an online system – the Researcher Development Online Tool (ResDOT) - for the delivery and monitoring of PDRs amongst research staff. The system was developed including extensive consultation with the academic and research staff; for example, research staff requested that ResDOT provided a one-stop shop for important information and resources (internal and national) relevant to career development. In the Schools that piloted ResDOT, the system was very well received by academics and research staff alike, resulting in enhanced levels of completion and satisfaction with the PDR (e.g., one School reported an uplift from less than 50% to 82% completion rate after adopting ResDOT; enhanced satisfaction/effectiveness was ascertained from anecdotal evidence) . Interesting, there was an increase of 13% from 2013 – 15 in CROS respondents recording they had participated in a PDR. Following the success of ResDOT, The University is developing the system for rollout to all staff.

A Research Staff Handbook was launched in 2011 which provides a source of essential information to help research staff make the most of their time at The University. The Handbook has been very well received by research staff, academics and PSS and is 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](#). In response to feedback from research staff, the Handbook is undergoing a considerable upgrade to include additional information and to raise awareness of important opportunities available to research staff (e.g. the Extended Access Policy).

Reward for success – e.g., promotion - is an important motivator of staff. Excellent and effective practice has been developed in one Faculty at The University resulting in an increase in the number of successful applications for promotion from research staff (24/30 success rate). Efforts will be made to rollout this good practice in the remaining Faculties.

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

The University is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and students; it holds a number of equality and diversity awards and accreditations reflecting the 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 STEM Schools hold departmental awards (five Silver, ten Bronze). The Athena SWAN Charter for Women in Science expanded in May 2015 to recognise work undertaken in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL), and in professional and support roles, and for trans staff and students. The work to support our five Schools within the Faculty of Humanities to achieve Athena SWAN awards is underway with the support of our dedicated University's Charter Marks Coordinator and the commitment to making a long term cultural change which will benefit all staff. In 2014 the University participated in the Race Equality Charter Mark pilot to support our BME community and ensure colleagues are not disadvantaged. Participation in these Equality Charters, alongside Investors in People, Stonewall, Time to Change and Disability Two Ticks, ensures the necessary framework is in place to report and monitor our progress towards an organisational culture where all experience equality of opportunity for development and progression.

The University's promotion process and policy now recognises and rewards both 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 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 for inclusion 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 Returners from Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave, BME Staff Network Group, Disabled Staff Network Group, International Staff Network Group and Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (WiSET). In June 2014 the University launched the Women Professors Network to support the development of female Professors to senior management positions. 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.

The University offers a substantial maternity leave package which includes six months full pay, plus three months statutory pay. Whilst on maternity leave The University offers 10 'keeping in touch' days, which are paid and not taken out of the maternity leave period. Our Shared Parental Leave policy offers new parents more flexibility and enhanced pay to partners who share leave with the mother. The University also has a staff network group specifically for those returning to work after having a child. 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.

## ***A continuing commitment to undertake regular and collective review of progress in Action Plan Implementation, and learning from 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 hosted the Vitae's NW Regional Hub, and the AVP for Research (chair of the University's senior RSDWG) sits on the External Advisory Board of Vitae. The University continues to participate in CROS and encourages research staff to contribute to the bi-annual internal Staff Survey.

### **3. Strategy for the next four years, including measures of success**

The University's Concordat Implementation Plan is aimed at developing an institutional research culture that benefits both the individual researcher and the institution in its ambitious research aims. The latter are set out in the high level Manchester 2020 document and the accompanying Research Strategy. We have written an updated Action Plan (see **Appendix 2**) that sets out the details of our focus of our researcher development strategy for the next two years. Identifying specific actions beyond 2016 will be led by The University's RSDWG in consultation with other stakeholders (including The University Senior Leadership Team) as required. A brief summary of our forward-going strategy and next actions is provided below.

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

The University has nationally recognised policies that support the career progression of research staff (e.g., 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 Research Staff rep networks, we will develop a Communications Strategy and Plan for research staff;
- New sections in the upgraded Research Staff Handbook will include information about relevant contract-related policies, especially end-of contract arrangements;
- Establish and maintain consistent research staff representation in all Schools, Faculties, and at institutional levels;
- Implementation of a new online PDR system supported by a comprehensive training programme for PI/line managers of research staff to include information on policies and procedures relevant to research staff retention, talent spotting, recognition and value;

- Raising the number of applications and success rate to promotion rounds for research staff;
- Investigate the development of a University fellowship scheme to attract the very best national and international researchers to The University;
- Undertake a review of The University's advertising strategy including maximising the opportunities available via the EURAXESS advertising route.

### **Strategies to support Principles 3&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 in line with the Manchester 2020 document and the People and Organisational Development Strategy. Alongside this is the development of a culture, supported by appropriate mechanisms, in which researchers are encouraged to take responsibility for their own career development from day one. Specific actions include:

- Functionality to support the career development of research staff to be built into The University online PDR system, supported by appropriate training and guidance documentation;
- Increase completion rates (target = 75% completion rate by 2017), and satisfaction scores, amongst research staff with respect to annual PDRs;
- Improve induction mechanisms for research staff, including making the induction section in the revised Research Staff Handbook more prominent;
- 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 (e.g., Vitae);
- Develop a suite of short films showing case-studies of career paths and progression of research staff at different stages of their career (e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> post doc);
- Increase awareness of – and participation in – mentoring schemes available to research staff (uptake target = 50% of research staff by 2017);
- 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 culture at The University that encourages researchers to take responsibility for their own career development from day one is a key institutional priority. Whilst CROS data suggest that this work has been successful (72% of respondents to CROS 2015 agreed that they had been encouraged to engage in personal and career development) there is room for improvement. Specific actions include:

- Review of information given at induction and the Research Staff Handbook to ensure it emphasises the importance of engaging with career development, the opportunities available (including 1:1 coaching and mentoring), 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 RSA in enhancing engagement and responsibility amongst research staff.

### **Strategies to support Principle 6: Equality & Diversity**

The University of Manchester is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff and students. The University holds a number of equality and diversity awards and accreditations reflecting the strong commitment to supporting a vibrant academic community where all can flourish. Future enhancements include:

- Review mechanisms to support equality, recognition, promotion, reward and support for researchers who are working across disciplines and/or in business-orientated research groups;
- Continue to support School submission for Athena SWAN awards, and to achieve institutional silver by end of 2017;
- 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 establishing academic champions across 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 Action Plan. In addition, our success indicators include the following:

- Evidence of progress/improvement in CROS and University Staff Survey data when compared with previous years
- Increase in numbers of research staff 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