

# Findings from University of Manchester Research Staff Culture Survey 2020

## Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

This report presents the findings of a survey of research staff, at the University of Manchester, about their perceptions and experience of their working environment. The survey, initiated by the [Research Staff Strategy Group \(RSSG\)](#), covered a broad range of topics including training and development, the working environment, research integrity, and bullying, harassment and discrimination. In addition to answering closed questions on these topics, respondents had the opportunity to provide comments about their experiences and to suggest ways to improve the research environment and culture.

### Definitions

**Research staff** are defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are usually supported by grants which are of a fixed duration. This includes research assistants, research associates, postdoctoral research associates and research fellows including Presidential Fellows.

**Research environment and culture** is defined as the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of the research community and how it influences researchers' career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated.

As a signatory to the [Researcher Development Concordat](#), the University is committed to creating a supportive environment in which researchers are able to work and develop their careers. This commitment is also reflected in the research and discovery goal of the University's strategic plan which states that the University will provide a creative, ambitious and supportive environment in which researchers at every career stage can develop into and thrive as leaders in their chosen field.

The aim of the survey is to understand the experiences of research staff, benchmark the UoM researcher experience against sector wide surveys and identify the actions needed to improve the researcher environment at UoM and ensure the University is fulfilling its commitments as specified in the Researcher Development Concordat and the Strategic Plan.

## Key Findings

### Researcher Development

- 71% of researchers agree that the University considers researcher development and training to be important, however, only 55% agree that current training and development provision meets their needs.
- Only a third of respondents are aware of the University's [Statement of Expectations on the Career Development of Research Staff](#).
- The [Researcher Development Concordat](#) requires institutions to provide opportunities for researchers to engage in a minimum of ten days professional development per year; the survey found that less than a fifth (19%) of researchers are accessing ten days or more of professional development activities and training.
- The role of the PI, time pressures and the poor awareness of current opportunities are the three main barriers to accessing training and development.
- Researchers would like to have more career support, access to a mentor and the opportunity to engage with and communicate with non-academic partners and audiences.

### Research Environment

- 54% of researchers agree that their working environment, defined as the local area/group that they work within, encourages a good work life balance and 87% agree that their working environment supports flexible working. However, 59% agree that there is a long hours' culture at the University; surveys from other HEIs, and across the sector, report similar findings.
- There is a perception that whilst long hours may impact negatively on wellbeing it is considered the 'norm' and researchers commented that they see long hours being rewarded by the University.
- A low proportion of researchers (38%) agree that the University offers adequate wellbeing support.

- Feelings of recognition and value are low, less than half of all respondents (39%) agree their work is fairly and adequately recognised by the University.

### **Research Integrity**

- There are high levels of awareness of codes of good research conduct (77%) and University ethical review processes (76%) and 83% of respondents agree that the University supports a culture of ethical research.
- There are low levels of trust in reporting systems. Less than half (48%) of all respondents are confident that the University would listen and take action if concerns were raised regarding research conduct. It is not clear whether responses are based on perception or experience therefore further work with research staff is required to better understand these data.
- More than a quarter (28%) of respondents report that they have experienced others taking credit for their work and the open comments indicate that this was mainly related to authorship in publications and grant applications.

### **Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment**

- 71% of respondents agree that the University is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 14% of respondents reported experiencing, and 23% reported witnessing, bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Less than a third (30%) of respondents agree that concerns about bullying, harassment and discrimination would be acted on. As noted under the Research Integrity section, further work to explore whether the responses are based on perception or experience is needed.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The survey findings identify five broad areas for improvement and these relate to researcher development support, the role of the PI and research leaders, researcher recognition and value, trust and confidence in reporting mechanisms and job insecurity and fixed term contracts. The recommendations are summarised below.

#### *For Researcher Development Group and Research Staff Strategy Group*

1. To improve visibility and accessibility of professional development training and opportunities, Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG) develops a single training and development portal.
2. To address the demand for mentoring, RSSG reviews the Humanities research staff mentoring programme and considers University-wide implementation.
3. To meet training needs, the Researcher Development Group (RDG) provides additional training on engagement with non-academic audiences.
4. To enhance provision of career support for research staff, RSSG uses the tools and resources developed by the Research England funded [Prosper: Unlocking postdoc career potential](#) project.
5. To support research staff in developing their own research portfolio, RSSG allocates funding, via a Faculty-based competitive process.
6. To improve recognition for researchers, RSSG works with Research Services to identify how researchers' contributions to grant writing can be recorded.

#### *For PIs and Research Leaders*

7. PIs create a supportive research environment by having careers conversations, actively encouraging researcher development, facilitating researcher involvement in grant writing and recognising their contribution, promoting appropriate authorship and supporting a good work/life balance.
8. To support PIs in their roles as research leaders, RSSG develops a checklist for PIs on leading research teams. The checklist should include information and guidance on the points outlined above.
9. The University incentivises positive PI behaviour by ensuring that the PI's work in creating a supportive research environment is recognised and valued in the P&DR and promotions process.

*For EDI and Research Governance Leadership teams*

10. To improve trust and confidence in the current reporting mechanisms, the Research Integrity and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team review the effectiveness of current reporting mechanisms in relation to research integrity and bullying, harassment and discrimination and communicate any changes to research staff.

*For the University and HR*

11. To address the concerns around job insecurity and fixed term contracts, the University's contract of employment policy is revised such that research staff are moved automatically to an open ended contract when they reach four years continuous service.
12. To address research staff concerns about the short duration of the contracts, the University encourages PIs to, wherever feasible within the limits of the funding call, design research projects of a minimum two years duration.
13. To recognise the needs of researchers and ensure that their voice is heard and reflected within the University initiatives on wellbeing under the core goal of 'our people, our values', the University should including research staff representation on decision making bodies and continue to survey research staff.

*For Funders*

14. To ensure the Researcher Development Concordat commitment to ten days professional development is met, the University works with the N8 PDRA group and others in the sector to request that funders build time for researcher career development into their funding models for research projects.

## 1. Introduction and Methodology

The UK is internationally recognised as a [research powerhouse](#) with 4% of UK based research accounting for 15% of the world's most highly cited articles. In recent years, concerns have been raised that the environment and culture, the behaviours, norms, attitudes and systems surrounding research in the UK, is having a negative impact both on research and on individual researchers. The Royal Society, through its [Changing Expectations](#) programme, has started a discussion on what an inclusive research system, which recognises the contribution of all, would look like. The Wellcome (WT) survey on [Reimagining Research](#) has highlighted that linking research excellence to research outputs and impact creates pressure to produce positive results, which in turn places enormous pressure on individual researchers. The Wellcome's work in this area focuses attention on systemic issues such as funding models and the way that research is conducted, whereas VITAE have asked individual researchers about their working conditions, career aspirations and career development opportunities through their Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey ([CEDARS](#)).

The University of Manchester (UoM) has a large and diverse community of research staff with around 2,000 researchers working across all discipline areas. Their work contributes significantly to the world leading and impactful research undertaken at the University; however, as a group they report that their work is often invisible and unrecognised. For example in the 2019, University Staff Survey (2019 USS) 73% of research staff reported feeling valued compared with 87% of all staff. The University has recently become a signatory to the revised [Researcher Development Concordat](#), which states that "excellent research requires a supportive and inclusive research culture". The Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG), which is responsible for monitoring the University's commitment to the Concordat, initiated the Research Staff Culture Survey to better understand the experiences of research staff and identify areas of concern. The aims of the survey were to:

- better understand researchers' experiences and perceptions of their working environment and their research culture;
- understand what is perceived to be a positive research environment and culture;
- compare the UoM researcher experience with researchers across the sector using the recent Wellcome (WT) survey and other surveys as a benchmark;
- identify significant differences by Faculty and, where sample size permits, by protected characteristics;
- understand what actions are needed to improve the researcher environment at UoM.

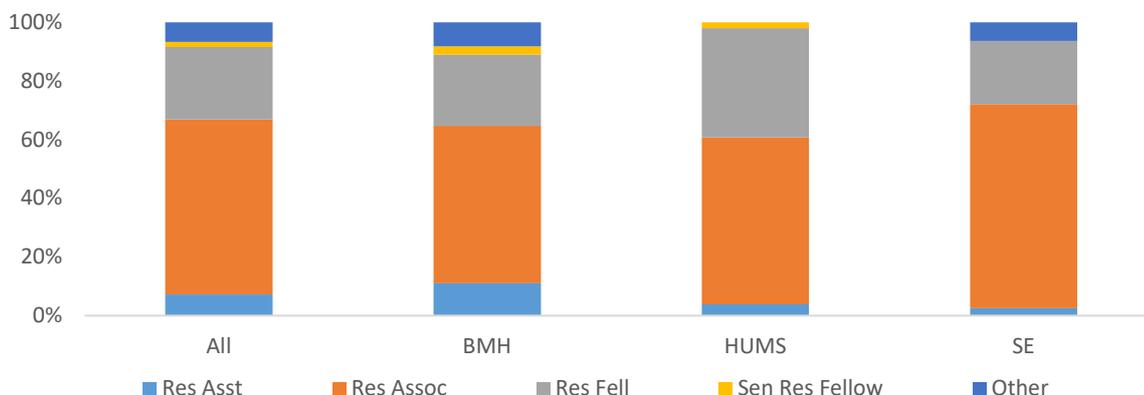
### Methodology

The survey was developed by RSSG with input from research staff, colleagues in the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Research Integrity teams. Following the methodology of the Wellcome survey, culture was defined as the behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes and norms of the research community and how that influences researchers' career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated. The survey covered a broad range of topics including training and development, the working environment, research integrity and discrimination, bullying and harassment. The survey had an estimated completion time of 20 minutes and respondents had the opportunity to provide comments after each section and to include suggestions on how to improve the research culture and environment. The survey was open from 16 January to 28 February 2020 and was promoted via email to all research staff including research assistants, research associates, research fellows, post-doctoral research associates and Presidential Fellows.

## 2. Profile of Research Staff Respondents

A total of 453 researchers completed the survey, the different roles by Faculty are provided below.

**Figure 1 Respondents by Role and Faculty**



The table below shows the split between Faculties and by gender.

**Table 1 Respondents by Faculty and Gender**

	All	Female	Male
Biology, Medicine and Health (BMH)	244	160	81
Humanities (HUMS)	51	29	20
Science and Engineering (SE)	158	53	97
<b>University of Manchester (UoM)</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>198</b>

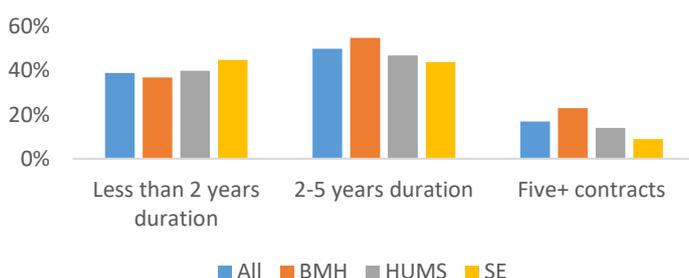
Respondents were not obliged to supply personal information within the 'about you' section and when asked about identity and protected characteristics, 11 respondents preferred not to state their gender, 15 respondents preferred not to state their ethnicity and 15 preferred not to state if they had had a disability. Of those respondents who did provide information:

- 53% of respondents are female indicating that females are over represented in the survey as currently 44% of all research staff at UoM are female.
- 19% of respondents are from a BAME background (13% BMH, 18% HUMS, 30% SE) and this is an under representation as currently 23% of all research staff at UoM identify as BAME.
- 7% (31) of respondents indicated that they have a disability.

### Contracts Type and Length

Respondents were asked about the type and length of their current employment contract. 89% of respondents are on a fixed term contract, 8% have a permanent contract and 3% are on an open-ended contract and this is consistent across all three Faculties. The contract duration of half of all respondents was 2-5 years and a further 38% had a contract which was of less than two years duration. 17% of respondents had had five or more contracts.

**Figure 2 Respondents by Contract Duration and No of Contracts**



### 3. Researcher Development

The University holds the HR Excellence in Research Award as recognition of its commitment to meeting and supporting the career development needs of researchers. As a signatory of the revised [Researcher Development Concordat](#), the University is committed to providing training, opportunities, support and encouragement for researchers to engage in a minimum of ten days professional development. The aim of the ten days is to allow researchers to develop their professional competencies and gain experience to support their future career. Examples include attending training and conferences, workplace shadowing, participating in a mentoring scheme, committee membership, participating in policy development, public engagement, or knowledge exchange activities. This section explores researcher’s awareness; take up and perceptions of this provision and compares UoM data with sector surveys where possible.

#### Sector Comparison

The sector wide Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) provides a useful benchmark in this area as the table below highlight.

**Table 2 UoM and CROS Researcher Development and Training Comparison**

<b>% Agree</b>	<b>UoM</b>	<b>CROS</b>
The Uni encourages me to undertake researcher development and training	55%	76%
Aware of Concordat to Support Career Development of Researchers	42%	43%
<b>No of days spent on training and professional development in the last 12 months</b>	<b>UoM</b>	<b>CROS</b>
Zero	10%	12%
Seven to nine	33%	21%
Ten or more	19%	14%

As noted in Table 2 whilst more than half (55%) of respondents in the UoM survey agree that they are encouraged to spend time on professional development, this compares unfavourably with the sector. However, when comparing actual time spent on training and development the survey indicates that UoM respondents have spent more time on training and development compared with the sector. In line with the sector, 42% of respondents are aware of the Concordat, yet only a third are aware of the University’s own Statement of Expectations on Career Development.

The vital role that research leaders and managers play in creating a positive environment, where training, development, is documented in the [Wellcome Reimagining Research](#) report The UoM survey reveals a mixed picture in relation to whether UoM research leaders are achieving this goal. The open comments indicate that research leaders/line managers can act as a barrier to accessing training and professional development.

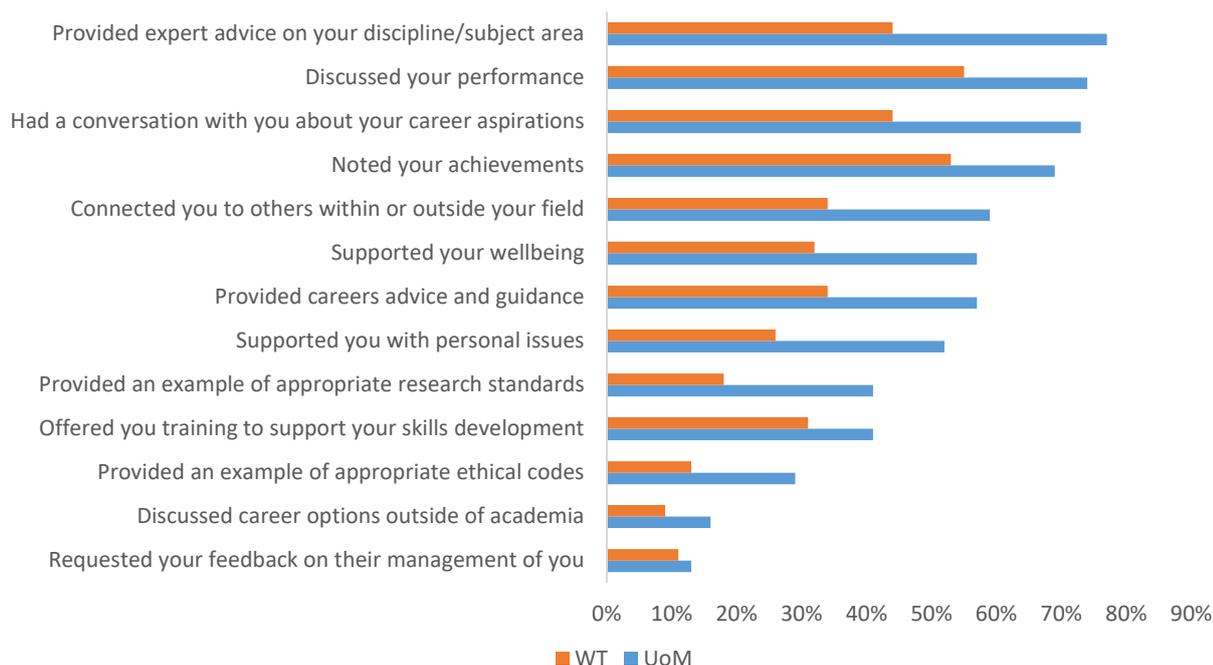
*The department/line managers never mention this as an important part of my role, only work I am doing. Therefore I feel it is completely up to me to sign up for things, and often I don't feel I have the time to do so.*

*Whilst the university encourages researcher professional development, the barrier tends to be supervisor related and the ability to freely make the choice of development.*

However when looking at the range of activities that PI/line managers have undertaken at UoM, the results compare favourably with the Wellcome (WT) survey as highlighted in Figure 3. For example:

- 73% of UoM respondents report that their PI has had a conversation with them about their career aspirations compared with only 44% of those who completed the WT survey.
- 59% of UoM respondents report that their PI has connected them to others outside of their field compared with 34% in the WT survey.

**Figure 3 Activities of PI/line manager in the last 12 months**



It is clear from the open comments that researchers would like to see improvements in how they are managed and led as this undoubtedly impacts on their ability to access training and development. However, there are also positive signs that PIs at UoM are more likely than those in the sector to engage in discussions about careers and performance and provide general support as well as research expertise.

### Faculty and Gender Differences

Table 3 compares the survey results across Faculties and by gender.

**Table 3 Researcher Development Perceptions by Faculty and Gender**

% Agree	UoM			BMH			HUMS			SE		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
University considers researcher development and training to be important	71%	70%	71%	73%	72%	74%	51%	50%	52%	73%	72%	74%
I know how to access researcher development opportunities and training	72%	70%	74%	73%	68%	75%	65%	65%	66%	73%	72%	74%
Overall provision of researcher development & training meets my needs	55%	54%	55%	56%	50%	59%	35%	45%	31%	58%	59%	57%
I feel able to spend time undertaking professional development activities	53%	60%	48%	52%	56%	51%	37%	55%	28%	58%	64%	47%
I am aware of alternative career options outside of academia that could utilise my skills	43%	49%	40%	37%	37%	37%	53%	58%	46%	47%	55%	41%
University provides me with support to navigate the grant application process	35%	36%	34%	33%	34%	33%	33%	33%	29%	51%	55%	50%

Statistical analysis indicates that:

- Researchers in Humanities are significantly less likely to agree that the University considers researcher development and training to be important (51%) than researchers in Biology, Medicine and Health (73%) and Science and Engineering (73%).
- Researchers in Humanities are also significantly less likely to agree (35%) that current researcher development provision meets their needs. This was reflected in the open comments.  
*I feel that in Humanities there is a good PGR offer for professional development but that it is lacking at postdoc level.*
- Comparing female researchers, those in Humanities are the least satisfied with the current researcher development provision.

There are also significant differences between Faculties and by gender in relation to time spent on professional development activities and in terms of awareness of alternative career options.

- Overall, 53% of respondents felt able to spend time on such activities and this increased to 60% for male respondents but fell to 48% for female respondents.
- Humanities researchers are less likely to agree that they are able to spend time on professional development.
- There was a significant gender difference within Science and Engineering where 64% of male researchers felt able to spend time on professional development compared with only 47% of female researchers.
- Male researchers were more likely than female researchers to be aware of career options outside of academia.
- Researchers in Biology, Medicine and Health were less likely to be aware of the alternative career options.

Over a third of the comments in the open section on researcher development related to time and this was often inter-linked with fixed-term contract issues.

*As someone who works full time on a research contract, time for training is often difficult to manage as it takes time away from the project. Furthermore, development and training is only supported if it will benefit the project.*

*Although my manager/PI is happy for me to occasionally attend development training, I currently don't have enough time to do all the other things I feel I need to do in order to develop an academic career, like networking with other researchers, attending conferences and seminars relevant to my wider research interests, and, especially, writing papers and developing grant proposals. I feel like I need to do a large part of these activities outside my normal working hours, such as at weekends or during annual leave.*

*The nature of fixed term contracts and the requirement to work at 100 miles an hour makes it difficult to take advantage of opportunities at times.*

Although a high percentage (72%) of respondents across all Faculties reported that they knew how to access researcher development opportunities and training, the open comments indicate that both the type of training and the way in which it is promoted could be improved.

*I am led to believe that there are a number of offerings out there for staff, ....but these are so poorly communicated that many of us never hear about them. This is confounded by the fact that the faculty intranet sites are so user unfriendly that it is practically impossible to find anything*

*I think training exists but is not always available....Training seems a little hidden away and so although I know where to access it, I tend not to.*

Researchers in Humanities are significantly more likely to agree that they are supported through the grant application process. The open comments indicate that researchers receive mixed messages in relation to grant writing and raise concerns about the credit they receive for this role.

*In terms of grant writing, I am able to get involved but I would say that this is of my own initiative rather than being supported by the university. In any case, it is somewhat pointless as I do not get any intellectual recognition for my contribution as I am not permitted to be a PI or co-I.*

*The only way to survive as a researcher is to get involved in grant writing yet there is no formal structure for access to this, either as a learning experience or actually, and there is often little credit or reward to be had even if successful.*

Overall, the survey found that 59% of respondents had undertaken some type of professional development. Table 4 highlights the types of activity by researchers in each Faculty and indicates the level of demand by showing the proportions who had not undertaken that activity but would like to (WLT).

**Table 4 Professional Development (PD) Activities and Opportunities by Faculty**

% have had or would like to have this opportunity	ALL		BMH		HUMS		SE	
	Have	WLT	Have	WLT	Have	WLT	Have	WLT
Attended any PD training	59%	17%	54%	18%	68%	15%	51%	18%
Attended research/career related conferences	75%	10%	76%	10%	75%	14%	72%	8%
Presented papers/posters at conferences	68%	8%	66%	9%	80%	6%	68%	9%
Submitted papers for publication	75%	7%	75%	6%	75%	10%	76%	6%
Communicated research to non-academic audiences	50%	14%	47%	12%	73%	10%	46%	17%
Engaged with non-academic partners	51%	15%	47%	16%	69%	14%	51%	13%
Internship[/placement	3%	11%	3%	12%	3%	10%	6%	8%
Received careers advice	33%	19%	34%	21%	24%	24%	33%	15%
Had a mentor	24%	23%	22%	24%	44%	18%	20%	24%

The differences between Faculties are statistically significant in two areas; Humanities researchers are more likely to have undertaken professional development and also more likely to have engaged with non-academic partners.

The demand for careers advice was high, for example, a third of respondents had already received careers advice and a further fifth would have liked to. The survey showed that over two-thirds (67%) feel comfortable approaching colleagues for mentorship, advice or peer review, however, only a quarter of respondents have a formal mentor.

## **Researcher Development Summary**

### **Key Findings**

- Current researcher development provision is not meeting the needs of researchers.
- There are low levels of awareness of the Concordat and the University Statement of Expectations on Career Development; the Concordat requirement that researchers undertake at least ten days of professional development and training is not being met.
- PIs are carrying out a broad range of activities; however, there is a perception amongst research staff that they can act as a barrier to accessing training and development.
- The PI, combined with time pressures and poor visibility of the provision, are the three main barriers to accessing training and development.
- Time is a particular barrier for female researchers and awareness of careers outside of academia is also lower for female researchers.
- Researchers would like to have more careers support, access to a mentor and the opportunity to engage with and communicate with non-academic partners and audiences.

### **Recommendations**

1. Improve the visibility and accessibility of professional development and training opportunities through the development of a University wide training and development portal.
2. Address the demand for mentoring by reviewing the Humanities mentoring programme and consider whether that can be implemented in all Faculties.
3. Provide additional training on engagement via the researcher development training programme and via the annual research staff conference.
4. Enhance the career support provision for researchers by using tools and resources developed by the [Prosper project](#).
5. To ensure the Researcher Development Concordat commitment to ten days professional development is met, work with the N8 PDRA group and others in the sector to request funders build time for researcher and career development into their funding models for research projects.
6. Recognise, value and incentivise PIs by adding an explicit question 'how have you developed your research staff' to the academic P&DR review form and revise the guidance for promotions panels and those applying for promotion to explicitly recognise, emphasise the value of and give examples of how excellent researcher development aligns with the promotions criteria.
7. Support PIs in their role as line managers by introducing a checklist for PIs on leading research teams. The checklist should include information and guidance on induction, having careers conversations, building in time for researcher development, supporting researchers to become involved in grant writing and recognising when they do, authorship guidelines and working hours guidelines.

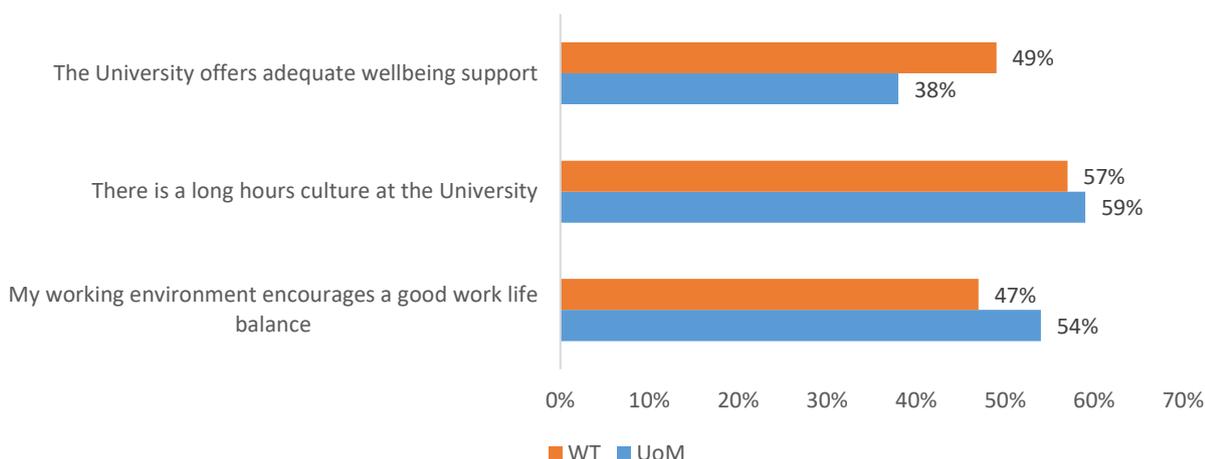
#### 4. Research Environment

The research environment section of the survey included a broad range of questions covering working hours and wellbeing to perceptions of value, recognition and competition. Many of these topics were explored in the WT survey and where possible comparisons with the WT data are made.

##### Sector Comparison

Figure 4 shows the differences between the WT and UoM survey data in relation to questions about work life balance and wellbeing.

**Figure 4 Working Environment Sector Comparison**



More than half of UoM respondents (54%) agreed that their working environment, defined as their local area/group, encourages a good work life balance. However, 59% of UoM respondents reported the existence of a long hours culture at the University. This contradiction between the institutional promotion of a work life balance and the reality of long hours was reflected in the open comments.

Over a third of the open comments in the research environment section related to workload, work life balance and a long hours culture and often these comments overlap with comments about job insecurity and contracts.

*I feel I encourage my own healthy work-life balance/wellbeing, while the University/supervisors do not actively encourage poor work-life balance they do not put any checks in place to ensure a good balance is there. A lot of early career researchers I know seem to consistently work very long hours/most weekends, and this is not discouraged and often seen as the norm.*

*I receive very mixed messages re; work life balance ie public message and what people do are at odds, the reality of research means you do have periods of working long and odd hours.*

*The national fixed-term grant funding system makes it difficult for non-permanent staff to achieve a good work-life balance, especially when it comes to flexible working and long hours.*

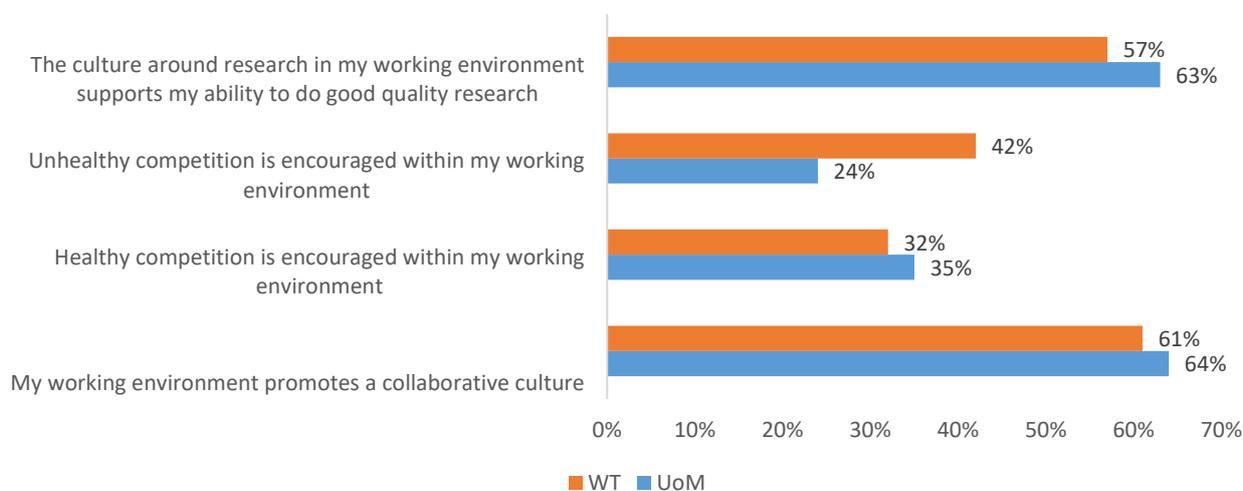
Around four in ten respondents to the UoM survey agree that wellbeing support is adequate. The open comments indicate that this is sometimes related to a lack of awareness or lack of access to wellbeing provision. For example respondents working part-time and on the North campus commented that the provision was not easily accessible. Comments also reflected the contradiction between initiatives and policy, and what researchers see in practice.

*There is definitely a culture in science where you are judged for taking time off and while this has improved over the last few years with the rising profile of “wellbeing”, we are not encouraged to take our annual leave*

*The university has some fantastic provisions.....However, there is pressure to work and respond to emails outside of office hours...I've noticed the people who progress in my immediate environment are the ones who work evenings, weekends and holidays, and are constantly checking their emails*

This section of the survey also included questions relating to the collaborative and competitive nature of the immediate research environment and explored how that impacts on research practice. These questions were also asked in the WT survey and Figure 5 provides a comparison.

**Figure 5 Collaboration and Culture Sector Comparison**



The open comments reflected a very positive experience of a collaborative culture.

*I am vastly appreciative of my current research group, but I feel that this work environment is rare in the University as a whole.*

*I am fortunate to work in a very supportive department which has very supportive colleagues who all get on well together.*

*Colleagues supporting me when I was searching for an explanation to some odd looking data.*

The open comments indicated that it is the research leader, the PI who has an influential role in creating a collaborative and supportive research environment.

*My line manager creates a very positive local working research environment. I do not think the University supports this however, with an ingrained culture for long hours, and lack of job stability making for a competitive atmosphere amongst research staff.*

*My positive experiences are based on my supervisor, rather than the University itself. I know of other postdocs within my Division, who do not have such positive experiences.*

## Faculty and Gender Differences

Table 5 highlights Faculty and gender differences in relation to questions about the working environment.

In all three Faculties, there is a high level of agreement with the statement that their working environment supports flexible working and some examples of flexible working were provided in the open comments.

*I am able to set my own work hours, and work as flexibly as I need*

*I have been supported to work flexibly and my PI is very understanding about this.*

**Table 5 Working Environment by Faculty and Gender**

% Agree	BMH			HUMS			SE		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
My working environment encourages a good work life balance	53%	53%	55%	45%	60%	34%	59%	60%	63%
My working environment supports flexible working	84%	84%	84%	94%	100%	90%	90%	89%	90%
There is a long hours culture at the University	61%	56%	63%	75%	65%	79%	51%	56%	37%
The University offers adequate wellbeing support	37%	30%	41%	29%	35%	28%	44%	42%	50%
My working environment promotes a collaborative culture	65%	63%	66%	57%	60%	55%	65%	66%	65%
Healthy competition is encouraged within my working environment	32%	33%	33%	30%	35%	29%	39%	45%	29%
Unhealthy competition is encouraged within my working environment	23%	23%	23%	18%	5%	25%	27%	26%	27%
The culture around research in my working environment supports my ability to do good quality research	65%	62%	67%	65%	65%	62%	60%	64%	54%

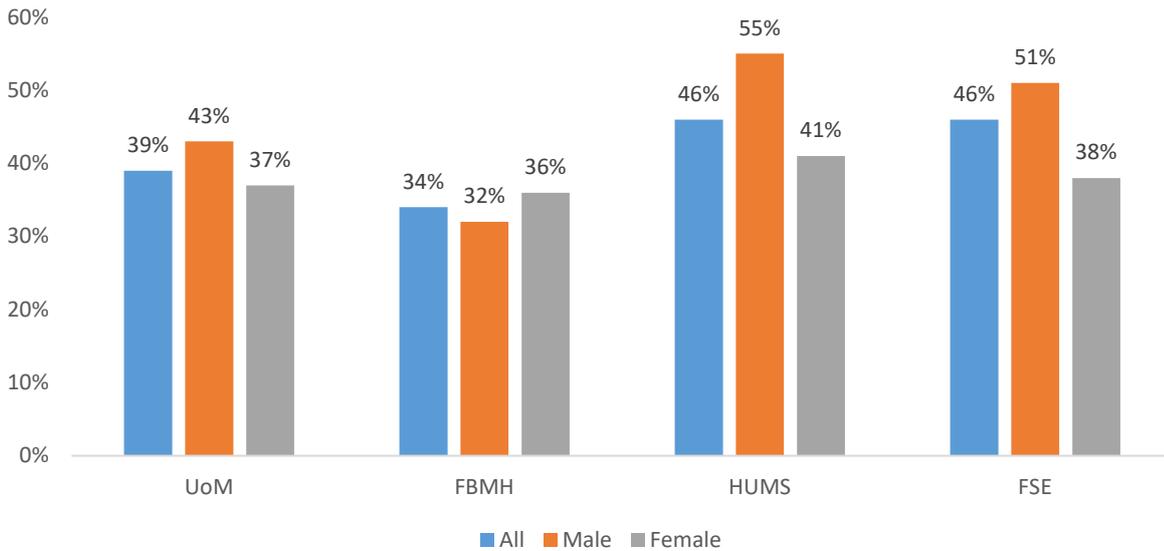
Statistical analysis indicates that:

- Female researchers in Humanities are significantly less likely (34%) to agree that their working environment encourages a good work-life balance compared with female researchers in Science and Engineering (63%) and Biology, Medicine and Health (55%).
- Researchers in Humanities are significantly more likely to agree (75%) that there is a long hours culture at the University.
- The differences in gender are significant within Science and Engineering with male researchers more likely to agree that there is a long hours culture than female researchers.

The University Staff Survey indicated that research staff feel less valued than all staff (73% Vs 87% respectively of respondents agreeing that 'research staff are valued as part of the University community'). Concerns about the value and recognition of researchers is reinforced in the current survey. Figure 6 shows how the answer to the question 'in my current role the work I do is fairly and adequately recognised by the University', varied by Faculty and gender.

Less than four in ten researchers agreed with the statement that 'the work I do is fairly and adequately recognised' and the differences between Faculties is significant. Researchers in Biology, Medicine and Health are least likely to feel recognised with only a third of researchers agreeing with the statement compared with 46% of researchers in Humanities and Science and Engineering.

**Figure 6 Fair and Adequate Recognition by Faculty**



The open comments indicate that value and recognition are also related to the fixed-term nature of contracts.

*I feel that the university relies on research associates to carry out research to a good standard but does not value the role... this is expressed in not employing researchers on permanent contracts.*

*Demonstrate that they do indeed value research staff by initiating a review of fixed-term/ open-ended contracts.*

### Research Environment Summary

#### Key Findings

- There is widespread agreement that at a local level work-life balance is encouraged, however, in reality researchers witness and experience a long hours culture.
- Researchers in Humanities are more likely to agree that there is a long hours culture at the University.
- There is a perception that whilst long hours may impact negatively on wellbeing it is considered the 'norm' and researchers see long hours being rewarded by the University.
- Many researchers report that they work in a collaborative environment, however, the proportion of respondents who feel fairly recognised is low particularly for those in Biology, Medicine and Health.

#### Recommendations

1. To recognise the needs of researchers and ensure that their voice is heard and reflected within the University initiatives on wellbeing as part of the 'our people, our values' core strategic goal, the University should include research staff representation on decision making bodies and continue to survey research staff.
2. To improve feelings of recognition, research staff should continue to have access to a dedicated fund to support the development of their own research portfolio.

## 5. Research Integrity and Misconduct

Recent reports from [Wellcome](#) and [UKRI and VITAE](#) have noted that the prevailing research environment, which focusses on results and impact rather than on research conduct, integrity and process, creates a highly pressurised research environment leading to negative individual behaviour and may make cases of research misconduct more likely. The survey explored researchers understanding of research integrity policies and processes as well as their experiences of positive and negative research practices.

### Sector Comparison

Responses to questions around awareness and reporting of research misconduct and how this compares to the Wellcome (WT) and UKRI surveys is provided below.

**Table 6 Research Integrity Sector Comparison**

% Agree	UoM	WT	UKRI
I know how to report instances of research misconduct	62%	46%	50%
I would feel comfortable reporting instances of compromised research standards and misconduct without fear of personal consequences	46%	47%	53%
I have experienced issues with others taking credit for my work	28%	40%	NA
I am aware of the University's Code of Good Research Conduct	77%	NA	54%

Although 62% of researchers know how to report research misconduct, the survey found that only 46% of respondents are comfortable that reporting would not have a negative personal impact. The open comments indicate that there are low levels of trust and confidence in whether the current reporting mechanisms have an impact and are consistently applied.

*In my experience while the university provides training and policies on research integrity it does little to enforce this among senior members of staff.*

*Despite the university as a "body" endorsing these views strongly, there is a lack of enforcement. Individual research groups are thus able to have different standards and choose the level of compliance to these standards.*

Over a quarter of researchers (28%) at UoM have experienced other taking credit for their work and the open comments indicate that this is mainly in relation to authorship on publications, grant applications and teaching.

*On top of people taking credit for my work, the university systems have meant that others have taken credit for teaching that I have done (as I'm not allowed a teaching profile) and money that I have brought in (as the university would allow me as a post-doc to be a PI, in spite of the funder allowing it).*

*Sometimes I feel that it is not clear exactly how much I have contributed. For example, I write the grant applications, but as a research associate, I don't get a % share of the credit.*

*Other members of research group added as authors to a previous publication despite not being involved in the design, lab work, analysis, discussion or editing of manuscript.*

### Faculty and Gender Differences

There are high levels of awareness of the University's Code of Good Research Conduct and Ethical Review processes (77% and 76%) and agreement that the University supports research integrity and ethical processes and Table 7 shows differences by Faculty and by gender.

**Table 7 Research Integrity by (RI) Faculty and Gender**

% Agree	UoM			BMH			HUMS			SE		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
I know how to report instances of research misconduct	62%	59%	64%	67%	66%	68%	65%	70%	62%	52%	52%	54%
I have experienced others taking credit for my work	28%	24%	32%	33%	25%	36%	10%	11%	10%	25%	24%	29%
I am confident that the University would listen and take action if I raised a concern	48%	50%	40%	45%	46%	44%	45%	45%	48%	55%	55%	59%
My research team values negative results that don't meet an expected hypotheses	61%	61%	63%	65%	59%	68%	31%	35%	29%	66%	68%	65%
I have felt pressured my research team to produce a particular result	12%	16%	8%	9%	13%	7%	10%	10%	7%	17%	20%	12%
The University values speed of results over quality	32%	36%	27%	31%	38%	28%	41%	35%	41%	29%	36%	17%
Uni supports a culture of RI	72%	73%	75%	71%	68%	74%	73%	65%	83%	74%	78%	71%
Uni supports a culture of ethical research	83%	82%	84%	86%	86%	87%	73%	60%	83%	81%	83%	87%
Uni supports a culture of open access	77%	79%	75%	75%	79%	75%	67%	55%	76%	82%	85%	75%
Uni could do more to promote research best practice	58%	65%	53%	59%	65%	55%	51%	45%	52%	60%	68%	49%
Aware of Uni ethical review processes	76%	70%	80%	82%	79%	84%	92%	85%	97%	59%	60%	68%
Aware of Uni code of good research conduct	77%	77%	78%	81%	83%	81%	84%	90%	83%	68%	69%	65%

Statistical analysis indicates that:

- Researchers in Science and Engineering are significantly less likely to be aware of the codes of good conduct and ethical review processes and are significantly less likely to know how to report instances of research misconduct.
- Experience of others taking credit for their work was particularly prevalent (33%) in Biology, Medicine and Health.
- In terms of gender, male researchers were more likely to report that they felt under pressure to produce a particular result and were more likely to agree with the statement that the University values speed of results over quality.

The open comments reflected some concerns around the implementation of open access.

*More financial support is needed to facilitate open access publications in the highest quality journals.*

*I haven't been able to get any financial support from the Uni for making publications open access, I think it's meant to be built into grants but I'm often doing secondary analyses or publications that didn't have a specific grant so there's no funding available.*

Overall there is a high level of understanding of good authorship practice, however more than half of the open comments in this section focus on the impact of the pressure to publish on quality and on behaviour as the following comments highlight.

*I do not feel confident to collaborate fully and openly with my colleagues as I would like to as I have experienced others gaining ultimate credit, e.g. author credit on publications, for work that I have done.*

*Key issue is being left out of ongoing work or being moved down the list of authors on a paper when work continues after the end of a project / contract. In my experience, most projects are not completed until after the end date and end of researcher contracts.*

*Often the author list on papers does not reflect the contribution accurately.*

More than half (58%) of all researchers agreed that the University could do more to promote and encourage best practice in research and this was significantly higher for male researchers (65%) and this is reflected in the open comments.

*Whilst I would definitely report any instances of compromised research practice or conduct, I am not confident that there would not be any personal backlash*

*In my experience while the university provides training and policies on research integrity it does little to enforce this among senior members of staff.*

*I would be very wary of reporting issues of malpractice as I would not trust the University to ensure these are handled sensitively and/or protect my career.*

## **Research Integrity and Misconduct**

### **Key Findings**

- There are high levels of awareness of codes of research conduct and ethical review policies and processes although awareness levels are significantly lower in Science and Engineering.
- Across all Faculties, a high proportion of respondents agree that the University supports a positive environment and culture in this area, however, confidence and trust in the effectiveness of reporting systems is low.
- Over a quarter of respondents reported that they had experience others taking credit for their work.

### **Recommendation**

The Research Integrity team work with RSSG to better understand the experiences and perceptions of research staff and review current reporting mechanisms and ensure any changes are communicated to research staff.

## 6. Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment

This section explores respondents' views about equality, diversity and inclusion policies and initiatives as well as the witnessing and experiencing of bullying, harassment and discrimination. These issues were also explored in the Wellcome (WT) survey allowing comparisons with the sector to be made.

### Sector Comparison

Comparisons between UoM survey results and the Wellcome survey data are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8 Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Sector Comparison**

% Agree	UoM	WT
Raising concerns about discrimination or harassment would be damaging for my career	30%	40%
The University is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion	71%	66%
The University's diversity and inclusion initiatives are tokenistic	28%	40%
I feel comfortable speaking about bullying, discrimination and harassment	43%	37%

It is of concern that less than a third (30%) of respondents answered yes to the question that 'my concerns related to experiences of bullying and/or discrimination would be acted on' and this is reflected in the open comments.

*I am confident complaints would be 'followed up', but not sure they would be resolved/acted upon effectively*

*Some of my colleagues have tried to raise complaints about bullying. They are either ignored, or the procedure takes an extremely long time. This puts those on short term contracts at a disadvantage, and allows people with permanent positions to carry on bullying. As such I would not want to raise a grievance about bullying - the process is long and stressful and it would result in my contract not being renewed.*

There is widespread agreement that the University is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, it is the implementation and impact of the policies and initiatives that is questioned as highlighted in the open comments.

*The University has excellent policies and initiatives surrounding diversity and inclusion, but given the lack of diversity within senior positions, these are obviously not implemented very effectively.*

*I have heard of several cases where bullying/harassment by senior staff has been reported and taken to a higher level but with no consequences, often because the researcher making the complaint has since moved on so the problem has "gone away". This leaves the remaining researchers unwilling to speak out as they feel it would jeopardise their career and not make any difference anyway.*

Comparing the numbers and proportions who experience and witness either bullying and harassment or discrimination, the UoM survey findings are more positive than the findings of the reported in the WT survey. For example:

- 14% of UoM respondents experienced bullying and harassment compared with 43% of WT respondents.
- 20% of UoM respondents witnessed bullying and harassment compared with 61% of WT respondents.
- 13% of UoM respondents experienced discrimination compared with 35% of WT respondents.
- 15% of UoM respondents witnessed discrimination compared with 46% of WT respondents.

Although the numbers are low, this amounts to 63 experiences of bullying and harassment and 58 experiences of discrimination and is of concern given the University's zero tolerance policy and report and support mechanism.

## Faculty and Gender Comparison

Table 9 highlights the differences by Faculty and by gender.

**Table 9 Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination by Faculty and Gender**

% Agree	UoM			BMH			HUMS			SE		
	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F
I have experienced discrimination	13%	7%	16%	16%	14%	16%	12%	0%	14%	9%	3%	17%
Research leaders are clear that bullying and harassment is not acceptable	65%	73%	61%	61%	68%	58%	69%	80%	62%	72%	76%	68%
Confident that researcher leaders would follow up complaints	56%	65%	50%	50%	62%	46%	59%	70%	55%	63%	67%	60%
I feel comfortable speaking about bullying, discrimination and harassment	43%	54%	35%	39%	48%	35%	45%	74%	29%	49%	57%	39%
I would be listened to	64%	70%	60%	60%	68%	57%	60%	75%	54%	70%	70%	71%
My concerns would be acted on	30%	33%	28%	27%	32%	25%	24%	30%	21%	36%	35%	41%
I have witnessed successful diversity and inclusion initiatives in action	25%	28%	22%	19%	21%	19%	26%	32%	24%	34%	34%	30%

The results that are of statistical significance are:

- Female researchers are significantly more likely to report that they have experienced discrimination, 16% compared with 7% of male researchers
- Overall female researchers are less likely to agree that researcher leaders in their workplace are clear that bullying and harassment is not acceptable, 61% compared with 73% of male researchers.
- Female researchers are less confident (50%) than male researchers (65%) that research leaders will follow up complaints of bullying and harassment compared with 65% of male researchers.
- Female researchers are less comfortable to speak out about bullying, harassment and discrimination. The difference is significant in Humanities, with male researchers more than twice as likely as female researchers (74% Vs 29%) to agree that they are comfortable speaking about bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Within Humanities the proportion of female researchers who agree that their concerns would be acted on is significantly lower than male researchers (21% Vs 30%).
- Respondents in Biology, Medicine and Health are significantly less confident (50%) that research leaders would follow up complaints of bullying and harassment and are less likely to report that they have witnessed successful diversity and inclusion initiatives (19%).
- Researchers in Science and Engineering are more confident that any concerns they raised in relation to bullying, harassment and discrimination would be acted on (36%) and are the most likely to agree that they have witnessed successful diversity and inclusion initiatives in action (34%).

In terms of experiencing / witnessing discrimination and views about feeling comfortable talking about different types of biases and discrimination, there were some differences by ethnicity:

- BAME researchers were significantly more likely to report that they had experienced or witnessed race discrimination (19%) compared with white researchers (7%).
- 57% of BAME researchers feel comfortable taking about race biases and discrimination compared with 69% of white researchers. 55% of BAME researchers feel comfortable taking about gender biases and discrimination compared with 70% of white researchers.

- four in ten BAME researchers agreed that initiatives were tokenistic compared with 28% of all researchers.

### **Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination**

#### **Key Findings**

- Whilst the University has a zero tolerance policy of bullying, harassment and discrimination, there are still instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination and female and BAME researchers are more likely to have experienced discrimination.
- Less than a third of respondents had confidence that effective action would be taken in response to concerns being raised.
- Female researchers are less comfortable speaking about bullying, harassment and discrimination and have less confidence that research leaders will follow up complaints.
- Experiences differ by gender and ethnicity. Female researchers are less likely to have confidence that their research leaders will follow up complaints of bullying, harassment and discrimination and BAME researchers are more likely to agree that the University's equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives are tokenistic.

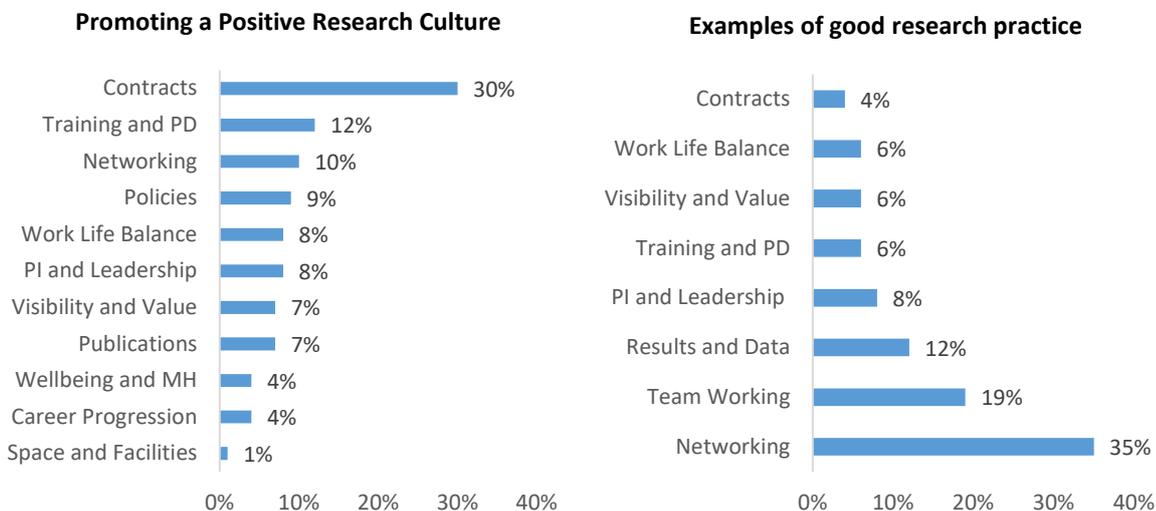
#### **Recommendations**

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team work with RSSG and research staff reps to review current reporting mechanisms and to understand what changes are needed to improve robustness and appropriateness for research staff.

## 7. Creating a Positive Research Environment

In an open question, all respondents were asked to provide ideas on creating a positive research environment and to give examples of good research practice that they had experienced. Figure 9 shows the themes emerging from the 219 idea comments and the 103 example comments.

**Figure 8 Ideas to Promote a Positive Research Culture and Examples of Good Practice**



Almost a third of the ideas on promoting a positive research environment and culture focussed on the need to address job insecurity issues, as the following comments highlight.

*A genuine commitment to addressing insecure contracts, with the potential for a clear career trajectory where possible. It's hard to plan for long-term futures on short-term contracts.*

*Offer more opportunities for permanent contracts. It has made a lot of recent changes to support researchers but it does not take away the stress of fixed term contracts especially for those with young families.*

*Enforce a 2-year minimum research contract to reduce the "short-term" thinking and a culture of quick, but low quality results.*

*Provide better job security for non-permanent research staff who 'hold up' your permanent staff.*

As noted in section 3 on researcher development, the survey indicates that the current training and professional development provision does not meet the needs of researchers and a range of ideas on how to improve the current provision, accounting for 12% of all ideas, were provided.

*Have guest speakers on how career progression pathways outside the University can map to translatable skill they have acquired.*

*Have yearly review and give training days as part of contract.*

*Develop a "Lead in research" Mentoring programme that covers impact, relevance, and positioning for highly impactful, highly fulfilling research careers.*

Many ideas focussed on improving the visibility of the work of research staff by 'giving researchers more exposure in terms of news articles', providing more support for collaboration and networking by 'providing sufficient research/conference funds' and recognising and rewarding researchers through 'more celebration of achievements' and 'more rewarding of good research papers/groups/individuals'.

The importance of role of the PI and research leaders and the need to incentivise, recognise and value that role that PIs play in supporting research developments, collegiality and creating a positive environment were also reflected in the comments.

*I would incentivise senior scientists to apply/support/co-author responsibly with early career independent researchers. For example, a senior staff member who supports/collaborates on a junior grant application. Or a senior staff member who guides more junior staff in implementing research integrity, for example by reviewing the raw data in a manuscript expertly.*

*Train line-managers on the importance of positive research culture. Highlight the importance to line-managers that just as it is important to get high-impact publications it is also equally important to give their researchers opportunities to grow and get promoted*

*Recognise and celebrate managers, leaders and mentors for their dedication to promoting better work environments, not just for their research and public engagement.*

Respondents were also asked to provide examples of good research practice and over a third of the 102 responses related to examples of collaboration and networking and a further fifth related to collaborative team working as the comments below.

*I am allowed to continue collaborating with a previous line manager who now works at a different University, allowing us to continue producing high quality publications.*

*Events like the FSE 2k collaboration fund sandpit meeting are very good at promoting and creating an inclusive collaborative good research culture.*

*Regular meetings within my research group (a weekly tea) facilitate exchange of ideas in an otherwise very individualistic environment*

*Group meetings where everyone can get together and honestly discuss problems they are having with their research*

Examples of valued training and support were also highlighted.

*I think recent grant retreats, mentorship within the Faculty and even just the feeling that it is getting further up the agenda has helped. So, more of the same please.*

There were also examples of 'good leadership and inclusivity' where PIs offered 'opportunities', acted as 'role models' and created supportive research environments.

The report's recommendations incorporate many of the examples and ideas related to mentoring, the role of the PI and support for collaboration and networking.

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey has revealed that in order to meet our commitment of providing a supportive research environment, actions are required in five areas.

The survey indicates that the overall perception is that the University's current researcher development provision is not 'good enough' and not visible enough. There is a demand for more support and advice on careers and for the provision of mentors. Researchers report that they have little time for anything other than project work within the working week and therefore taking advantage of career development training is performed outside of the project, if at all.

Consequently, a broad set of recommendations are proposed, which are aimed at improving researcher development support and at working with the sector to request that funders to build time within projects for development so that researcher and career development is considered a fundamental part of the project.

Open comments emphasised the importance of the culture of the local research group and the role that the individual PI and research leader plays in setting the tone. It is notoriously difficult to change the culture of an organisation but the findings presented in this report suggest that influencing local practices and individual behaviour will impact on the broader environment and culture. Therefore a recommendation aimed at recognising and valuing PIs who support researcher development, collegiality and create a positive environment is proposed along with additional support to help PIs fulfill this aspect of their role. Researchers report that they continue to feel undervalued and unrecognised and two recommendations are made to ensure that dedicated funding is made available to support researchers in establishing collaborative projects and attending and presenting at conferences and to ensure that the researcher's voice is represented in wider University initiatives for example on wellbeing.

At an institutional level, there are positive results in the area of governance, research integrity and good practice and bullying, harassment and discrimination in comparison with the sector. Nonetheless, the data suggest that UoM has not achieved the goal of zero tolerance of bullying, harassment and discrimination. It is recommended that reporting mechanisms relating to research misconduct and bullying, harassment and discrimination are reviewed with the involvement of research staff reps.

Throughout each section of this report the open comments indicate that the systemic issues around job security and the culture of short-term and fixed term contracts that the research system relies on does not foster a positive working environment and a research culture in which researchers can thrive. Insecure contracts affect every element of the research environment and culture from the pressure to work long hours in order to secure the next role, through to the concern about speaking out about misconduct or discrimination from a position of insecurity and weakness. This is not a UoM-specific issue. The Researcher Development Concordat commits the University to working with the sector, including funders, to address such systemic issues. It is recommended that the University takes a lead by automatically moving researchers with four years continuous service onto open-ended contracts, removing the need for researchers to apply for this right.

**Recommendations** are provided below.

*For Researcher Development Group and Research Staff Strategy Group*

1. To improve visibility and accessibility of professional development training and opportunities, Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG) develops a single training and development portal.
2. To address the demand for mentoring, RSSG reviews the Humanities research staff mentoring programme and considers University-wide implementation.
3. To meet training needs, the Researcher Development Group (RDG) provides additional training on engagement with non-academic audiences.
4. To enhance provision of career support for research staff, RSSG uses the tools and resources developed by the Research England funded [Prosper: Unlocking postdoc career potential](#) project.
5. To support research staff in developing their own research portfolio, RSSG allocates funding, via a Faculty-based competitive process.
6. To improve recognition for researchers, RSSG works with Research Services to identify how researchers' contributions to grant writing can be recorded.

*For PIs and Research Leaders*

7. PIs create a supportive research environment by having careers conversations, actively encouraging researcher development, facilitating researcher involvement in grant writing and recognising their contribution, promoting appropriate authorship and supporting a good work/life balance.
8. To support PIs in their roles as research leaders, RSSG develops a checklist for PIs on leading research teams. The checklist should include information and guidance on the points outlined above.
9. The University incentivises positive PI behaviour by ensuring that the PI's work in creating a supportive research environment is recognised and valued in the P&DR and promotions process.

*For EDI and Research Governance Leadership teams*

10. To improve trust and confidence in the current reporting mechanisms, the Research Integrity and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team review the effectiveness of current reporting mechanisms in relation to research integrity and bullying, harassment and discrimination and communicate any changes to research staff.

*For the University and HR*

11. To address the concerns around job insecurity and fixed term contracts, the University's contract of employment policy is revised such that research staff are moved automatically to an open ended contract when they reach four years continuous service.
12. To address research staff concerns about the short duration of the contracts, the University encourages PIs to, wherever feasible within the limits of the funding call, design research projects of a minimum two years duration.
13. To recognise the needs of researchers and ensure that their voice is heard and reflected within the University initiatives on wellbeing under the core goal of 'our people, our values', the University should including research staff representation on decision making bodies and continue to survey research staff.

*For Funders*

14. To ensure the Researcher Development Concordat commitment to ten days professional development is met, the University works with the N8 PDRA group and others in the sector to request that funders build time for researcher career development into their funding models for research projects.