Loughborough University HR Excellence in Research Evaluation Report 2014

The evaluation of the Concordat Implementation plan was measured by:

Evaluation of our support for research staff and progress against our implementation strategy has been assessed using information from the Careers in Research Online Surveys and the University's Staff Survey. Furthermore, our burgeoning Athena SWAN activity has been useful in identifying good practice and activities supporting our research staff, as well as areas for improvement; the Athena SWAN self-assessment teams (SATs) have research staff representation and look at issues relating to research staff, and so are particularly helpful in this regard. In addition, a review of Research Staff support to consider specific issues concerning Loughborough researchers was commissioned by Research Committee in December 2013, following a meeting between the LU Research Staff Association (LURSA), Pro Vice Chancellor Research (PVCR), Pro Vice Chancellor Enterprise (PVCE), and professional services staff supporting researchers. The Research Staff Working Group that undertook this review has contributed to the Concordat Implementation Review and includes members of LURSA as well as researcher-support staff from across the University's Professional Services, and the PVCR. The internal review was reported to Research Committee in October 2014 and December 2014, Research Committee agreed that recommendations in this paper should be included in the revised Concordat Implementation Strategy. Furthermore, LURSA have been and will continue to be consulted on progressing elements of the Concordat Implementation Plan as representatives of the research staff population (300-350 research staff at any one time from 2010-2014).

Key achievements against strategy

The University continues to make good progress towards improving our alignment with the Concordat, and importantly work to improve the support and prospects for Research Staff is embedded within initiatives across the University. This includes specific actions in the University Strategy Implementation Plan (2014), inclusion in Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Teams and action plans, and in the School Quadrennial Review process. LURSA is well established (with 11 committee members and 51 members) and is going from strength to strength having secured a £5k AHRC grant for a peer training project. Regular dialogue occurs, in particular between the Researcher Development Manager and the LURSA co-chairs. The University monitors the satisfaction of our staff through a staff survey, and in the Red-Amber-Green (RAG) report from the 2012 Staff Survey the Research job family gave the highest number of 'green' categorised responses (10% above the institutional average) and the number of 'red' categorised responses was 10% below institutional average.

Principle 1 - Recruitment and Selection

The number of staff in the Research, and Research and Teaching job families undertaking training in Recruitment and Selection since 2009 is 195. This includes online refresher training. The Recruitment and Selection training includes the revised Code of Practice for the Employment of Researchers, which is available on the Human Resources website. In addition, the University has ended single gender selection panels and there is an expectation that as a minimum the Chair of a recruitment panel will have undergone recruitment and selection training. A re-deployment scheme has been established for staff at risk of redundancy. The scheme was developed in consultation with the Union and provides those on the re-deployment register with a three-day window to apply for a role prior to it being advertised more widely. The University has an induction website including a guidance notes and an induction checklist to ensure that all new staff receive relevant and timely information.

Principle 2 – Recognition and Value

Performance and Development Review (PDR) was introduced in 2009, replacing the existing appraisal scheme, with an expectation an annual PDR for all staff. Due to low uptake, in particular for research staff (43% in 2012 Staff Survey), initiatives are underway to improve PDR uptake. PDR briefing sessions have taken place within Schools, with over 60 research and teaching and research staff having received PDR training. The University has established a HR workstream to look specifically at the PDR process. The RA Support Review from 2014 included a recommendation to this workstream to consider PDR for Research Staff.

A revised Research Staff Code of Practice has been published, which aligns to the Concordat and outlines the University's and Researchers' responsibilities. This is available at induction and in recruitment and selection training as well as on the Human Resources website.

The new University strategy and implementation plan specifically identifies activities relating to research staff development and support as necessary steps in achieving the University's strategy of 'Building Excellence', marking a shift in recognition for research staff as being central to the University's ambitions, and these actions are incorporated into the new, four-year strategy. Furthermore, six key Research Challenge areas have been established, the development of which will provide researchers with additional opportunities to engage with the Research Culture of the University. Representation of researchers has improved with research staff represented at Athena SWAN SATs, invited to Staff meetings, and participating in School Quadrennial Reviews. Grade 7 researchers have been renamed Senior Research Associate to recognise their experience and role. Statutes relating to Research Fellows, that restricted our use of this title have been amended.

Researchers continue to receive a regular e-news bulletin informing them of opportunities and events taking place within the institution and further afield which may be of interest. This saves researchers time searching for opportunities and allows direct communication with this group which is effective and efficient.

Principle 3 - Support and Career Development
Staff supporting researchers are embedded in the University's professional services. A new post, the Researcher Development Manager, has been in place in the Research Office since July 2014 with strategic oversight for research staff and students. The Research Staff and Student Development Officer post moved into the Centre for Academic Practice in January 2014. Although this post has been vacant since July 2014, a new post-holder will begin in January 2015. This additional resource will enhance our capability to provide a range of appropriate development opportunities to researchers, and will work closely with the Researcher Development Manager and Careers Adviser for Researchers to progress our Concordat Implementation Strategy.

The annual research conference has run since 2008, and is open to up to 200 research staff and research students annually, including opportunities to present posters, give talks and speak to exhibitors such as Vitae, LURSA and the Library. Management and Leadership development has been expanded in the University, including a range of ILM accredited programmes available to Research staff and their managers. 121 research and academic staff received training in leadership and management since 2010.

In 2011/2012 a pilot, bespoke, leadership programme took place, aimed at early career researchers including research staff (6/10 participants). This tailored opportunity involved action learning sets and a leadership development grant. Positive outcomes from participants included enhanced career development such as promotion, securing lectureships and a Royal Society Fellowship. The evaluation of this programme will be used to inform the development of future activities to support research staff development.

A range of certificated and externally recognised courses are available to research staff. The Centre for Academic Practice has developed a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework for staff which is mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework, and can be used to provide a portfolio of evidence towards Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition. Five Research Staff have participated in the Associate Teaching Course leading to Associate Fellowship of the HEA, over forty have participated in Successful Teaching and Assessment for Researchers. Researchers are also now able to undertake the new PG Certificate in Academic Practice 2014 leading to Fellowship of the HEA. The Centre also provides training in communication to support those for whom English is not their native language, both online and face-to-face. The Staff Development Unit run a range of ILM- accredited courses, which are open to Research Staff and PIs.

The University has invested in Research Professional, a tool to help staff identify potential funding opportunities, and to increase their awareness of research-related developments, all research staff have received log-in information and bespoke training is in plan for January 2015 to support the use of this tool.

Principle 4 – Support and Career Development

The Careers Adviser supporting researchers' career development is core funded , there is increased awareness of careers support services available to researchers (CROS 2013), the variety of career interventions available to Research staff is diverse with 1:1 appointments, workshops, employer events, and the research staff mentoring scheme.   A new Career Contacts database has been established, putting researchers into contact with research alumni to offer insights into potential careers.

The Research Staff Mentoring Scheme has been operational since 2009, with over 70 successful mentor/mentee relationships in this time. This scheme is fully embedded, forming part of the Athena SWAN strategy and is supported across the Careers and Employability Centre, the Centre for Academic Practice and the Research Office. In addition, the Wolfson School, which is has one of our largest concentrations of research staff, ran a pilot coaching programme as a local version of the mentoring scheme, involving coaches from industry. This again was particularly effective for enhancing researchers' skills. The mentees are expected to drive the mentoring relationship and take responsibility for arranging meetings and taking actions agreed with their mentor.

Principle 5 – Researchers' Responsibilities

In 2011, with support from the Research Office, LURSA was established http://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/research/lursa/ . This group has gone from strength to strength and regularly organises events such as a session on Research Data Management, a session with HR and a 'meet the VC' session. LURSA aims to provide researcher-led opportunities for researchers , represent research staff on committees and influence University policy, develop core competencies of active members, facilitate the training and career development of a well -supported research community, promote the exchange and dissemination of information relating to matters affecting researchers, promote the research and interests of researchers . The Co-Chairs were successful in obtaining £5k AHRC funding for a peer-to-peer training project involving for research staff.

Principle 6 – Diversity and Equality

The University implementation strategy includes a statement to embed equality and diversity principles in all our ways of working. The University has published an equality and diversity statement which includes: "embed a commitment to equality and diversity and value the positive aspects of our differences" http://www.lboro.ac.uklservices/hr/a-z/equality-and-diversity---page.html (Accessed: 26 November 2014)

Following on from our original Concordat Implementation Action plan, we now have a number of Athena SWAN successes: Silver Award for School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences (2013), University Bronze renewal (Sept 2014), Design School Bronze Award Sept (2014). Further applications are in progress with an ambition to receive Athena recognition across all relevant departments.

All Schools Senior Management Teams are now provided with annual gender data including breakdown of male and female staff on academic and research grades, application, shortlisting and appointment data for academic and research staff and submission in RAE/REF. The University is taking steps to address the 'leaky pipeline' for female researches from Research Staff (34%) to academic staff positions (27%), including a range of events and workshops aimed at promoting women in academia such as the Claudia Parsons Lecture Series.

Respecting diversity training is mandatory for all probationary staff, and online refresher training is available and is recommended that staff undertake a refresher every five years, 305 people in the Research and Research and Teaching job families have undertaken this training since 2010. In CROS 2013 63.7% Loughborough research staff had undertaken Equality and Diversity Training compared to 22.6% and 23.5% in Russell and 1994 Groups respectively.

Principle 7 – Implementation and Review

Review of support for our research staff has been undertaken in 2014 at the request of Research Committee, through the Research Staff Working Group. This group has also reviewed our Concordat Implementation work and includes LURSA representation. The group will continue to meet and review progress against the 2015-2017 strategy.

We have participated in CROS since 2009 and continue to do so to gather data and provide benchmarking against previous CROS surveys and the sector, and future Staff Surveys will inform progress. The University has started a programme of School reviews (Quadrennial Reviews), the first of which took place in the Wolfson School and included a focus group with research staff. Research staff and students have a pivotal involvement in the processes underpinning the Quadrennial Reviews of Schools. Research Committee took the decision not to undertake PIRLS in 2013, however this will again be considered for 2015.

Next Steps, Focus and Success Measures

In order to continue to progress a culture that improves and maintains our alignment with the Concordat, with a key aim is to for the University to continue embed researcher support and development across a number of strategic initiatives. The University Strategy Implementation Plan (2014) provides a framework for developing our future Concordat Implementation plan and for embedding the principles of the Concordat throughout the University, as does the University Athena SWAN action plan and School-level action plans. The Research Staff Working Group will continue to monitor progress and to identify further areas for improvement. Key to this next phase of our strategy will be to continue build upon previous work, and many of the actions from previous plans are being carried forward into the next phase to allow consolidation to take place.

Concordat Principle	Strategy	Source	Success measure
Principle 1 - Recruitment and Selection	Ensure our recruitment processes are high quality and fit for purpose	University Strategy	Recruiting high quality researchers Researchers' experience through CROS, Staff Survey
Principle 2 – Recognition and Value	Ensure job families provide appropriate career structures and allow for appropriate specialisation	University Strategy	Attracting and retaining high quality researchers
Principle 3 - Support and Career Development	Develop an environment for research staff which is commensurate with academic staff and supports career development.	University Strategy	CROS and Staff Survey responses destination questionnaires and Career Contacts Database
Principle 4 – Support and Career Development	Establish a suite of relevant staff development programmes for RAs.	University Strategy	Attendance information. Feedback and evaluation. Outcomes, such as e.g. successful Fellowship applications, positive career moves, accreditation
	Provide research staff with opportunities to gain teaching experience	University Strategy	Accreditation, e.g. AFHEA. Participation, e.g. extend peer-learning with LURSA
	Establish competitive Fellowship schemes. Fellowships to allow the most outstanding RAs to develop an independent research portfolio	University Strategy	Recruitment of quality Research Fellows
Principle 5 – Researchers' Responsibilities	Enhance Research Staff Mentoring Scheme	Athena SWAN	Increased participation by mentors and mentees
Principle 6 – Diversity and Equality	Embed equality and diversity principles in all our ways of working	University Strategy	Positive Staff Survey responses. Positive CROS responses
	Achieve Athena SWAN recognition for the University and in all relevant departments	University Strategy	Retain and increase Athena Awards
Principle 7 – Implementation and Review	Implementation and Review of progress will continue take place through Athena SWAN, Research Staff Working Group, CROS, Staff Surveys, and Quadrennial Reviews	Athena SWAN SAT, Research Committee, Planning	Athena SWAN recognition. Improvements in CROS and Staff Survey Results Retention of HR Excellence Award