

HR Excellence in Research Award: 2014-2016 self-assessment, Loughborough University

Loughborough University has made good progress towards the implementation of objectives outlined in our Concordat Implementation Plan, in addition to making further commitments and achievements that bolster our support for the career development of researchers. This report outlines progress to date in this respect and provides a strategy for further development for supporting this group, and marking our ongoing commitment to the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award.

Implementation of the Concordat requires that the University listen to the voices of its research staff, and the University has a number of mechanisms through which the voices of researchers can be heard. The primary route is through the research staff association (LURSA), a voluntary body of research staff drawn from across the university that is run by a small committee.. The LURSA committee includes two members of professional services, who act as liaisons between LURSA and other parts of the university structure and are able to raise issues in appropriate meetings such as the Research Committee. The chairs of LURSA attend relevant Research Committee meetings to present information and seek feedback on issues relating to research staff. Individual research staff can raise issues and concerns through the Associate Dean for Research within their School, and also through support staff based in the professional services.

Internal evaluation of progress towards alignment with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Evaluation of progress was undertaken by a team including the Head of Researcher Development, the Research Staff and Student Development Advisor, the Careers Advisor for Research Staff, the Athena SWAN Planning Officer, staff from across professional services, and the University's Research Committee. During the evaluation process, researchers' views were taken into account via survey responses and specific consultation. This included:

- Results from the Loughborough University Staff Survey 2016 for the Research Job Family
- Results from the Careers in Research Online Survey, which has run bi-annually at Loughborough since 2007, and The Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey 2015
- A number of surveys conducted as part of School-based Athena SWAN assessments
- A draft of the concordat implementation plan was shared with research staff via the Associate Deans for Research, as well as with members of the LURSA committee, for feedback and comments, which were used to inform the final version of the plan.

The Concordat implementation plan continues to complement work towards our Athena SWAN activities and action plans, and the results of the University Staff Survey in 2016 are being shared at a local level, actions plans for tackling concerns raised in the Staff Survey have been developed by each School and Professional Service, and will be incorporated into the Annual Planning process.

Key achievements & progress against implementation plan

Since 2014 the University has made progress in the following areas which were specifically identified in the plan.

Map to Implementation Plan (Principle). Task and measures	Responsibility	Completion date/ Progress
(P2iib, P5.ii) All training sessions delivered across professional services compiled into easily accessible database to improve transparency	Research Office/CAP/SD/Library/ Graduate School	October 2016
(P2iii) All new staff are automatically enrolled onto 'Welcome to Loughborough' and Research Staff were invited to strategic academic induction. Review by Staff Development underway to decide best approach for academic induction.	Staff Development/CAP	Summer 2015
(P2.vii) Performance and Development Review is being revised to be rolled out across campus early 2017. All staff are expected to receive an annual PDR. Training underway for PDR reviewers, including of research staff reviewer. Improvement in uptake of PDR seen to date. Measure: Number of Research Staff undertaking PDR has improved since 2011. From CROS 2011:32% 2013: 36% 2015	Human Resources	On-going since December 2010

52% Staff Survey PDR/probation Review. 2012: 43% 2016 56%		
(P3.i) Since 2015 four research staff have participated in PGCAP, to date one has completed and gained FHEA. Five research staff completed Associate Teaching Course gaining Associate Fellowship of the HEA since 2015/16 and a further 9 in active registration with 6 more about to register 2014-16.	CAP	Ongoing support towards Fellowship/Associate Fellowship of HEA
(P3.i) Recognition of Teaching for Researchers (ROTOR) Scheme established to provide route to AFHEA for research staff. Currently 8 staff members are enrolled.	CAP	August 2016
(P4.iv) 5 internally-funded VC Research Fellows appointed. 2 prestigious EPSRC Doctoral Prize Fellows appointed. Research Development Manager (Research Leaders/IAS) appointed to support Fellowships. New Research Strategy (CALBRE) includes Research Leaders which encompasses support for researchers at different career stages including Research Fellowships	SMT Graduate School Pro-Vice Chancellor Research	Summer/Autumn 2016 October 2015 December 2016
(P4.v and P5.ii) Annual Conference for researchers (includes research staff talks, photographic and poster competition, workshop sessions, topical information). Helps build a supportive and inclusive research culture and community. Measure: 146 research staff and PhD students attended in 2016. A member of research staff was a runner up in 'Researcher talks' at the Conference	Research Office & Graduate School	On-going since 2008
(P5.i) Dedicated funding allocated to support Loughborough University Research Staff Association, and to boost Development Opportunities for Research Staff. Ongoing measure: Use of funding by LURSA to support Research Staff and promote LURSA Participation by Research Staff in Training opportunities	Centre for Academic Practice Research Office, Research Staff	July 2016, ongoing
(P5.ii) Research Integrity Online Epigeum licence purchased Measure: Research Staff to undertake this course. Aim for 5% of Research Staff population to undertake	Research Office/Graduate School	July 2016 Summer 2016
(P5.ii) Management and leadership programmes delivered and open to Principal Investigators and research staff, include ILM levels 2-5 certification, Springboard, Spring forward, Navigator, Fresh Steps Measure: Number of Research Staff Participants: awaiting information from Staff Development	Human Resources (Staff Development)	On-going since 2011
(P5.ii) Dedicated Research Staff Webpages, including news feed, and regular email bulletin to Research Staff, updates and reviews ongoing	Research Office and CAP	Website updated and on-going since 2008
(P5.ii) Mentoring scheme for research staff is now in its seventh year, with over 80 mentor/mentee partnerships having been established since 2009, including 9 in 2015-16 and 11 2014-15. Scheme is evaluated regularly with clear benefits identified. School-based mentoring schemes have developed due to Athena SWAN Measure: Number of Research Staff participating in central and local schemes.	Research Office & Careers network	On-going since 2009
(P6ii) Athena Bronze Institutional renewal achieved and two silver departmental awards received for Maths/MEC and SSEHS. In November, we will have submitted AACME, CBE, Wolfson for awards and Physics will have submitted for JUNO accreditation	Pro Vice Chancellor (Research)/HR/ Planning	2016 and ongoing
(P7.ii) Participated in CROS 2013 and 2015 (26% participation from Research Staff in 2015) and PIRLS (23%)	Research Office/CAP	May 2015

In addition to the progress outlined above, £15k in funding for Santander Mobility Awards has been awarded over 2 years to support research staff with grants for up to £1k for travel associated with research collaboration and networking. The achievements of the researchers in receipt of the funding were recently celebrated at an event with Santander, where Dr Barry Mason explained the benefits of the funding to his career and his research.

Future Strategy

Loughborough University takes seriously its commitment to providing a positive working environment for all staff, including research staff, as highlighted by the 'Investing in Staff' strand of the University Strategy. Four strategic areas, with direct impacts on Research Staff are the focus for the next two years. These are the 'CALIBRE' research strategy, which specifically includes support for researchers at different career levels (Research Leaders); the University's revised PDR process and structure; responding to the 2016 staff survey; and a process review of the research life cycle including grant writing.

A new post has been created through the CALIBRE strategy, which will improve opportunities for researchers at different career stages from early-, to mid-, to late- career to become research leaders. This includes career progression and Fellowship support. A new Institute of Advanced Studies is being established and will specifically engage researchers at different career stages. Success will be measured by engagement of researchers in the opportunities afforded, and through engagement with a new development programme for mid-career researchers. For PDR, all reviewers are receiving training which includes information on the particular challenges facing RAs and the need for a PDR, including development and career planning. All post-probation staff at the University will undertake a PDR between January and March 2017, success will be measured by PDR completion for Research Staff, and identification of development needs for RAs and research leaders through this process.

The process review underway within Research Office is looking at the entire research process, and provides opportunities for further promoting the consideration of researchers as staff to grow and develop, be that including training and support within grants, or making more transparent the routes to successful grant applications. Success will be through the numbers of RAs engaging in preparing applications, and their confidence to do so. We would like to make more progress in understanding the use of open-ended contracts, which is not consistent across the university, to ascertain how we may effectively reduce the reliance on fixed term contracts. Success will be through the identification of good practice around open ended contracts for researchers, and looking to share this more widely. For this this review, through consultation with researchers, we have gained insight into some university-wide policies in place that may disproportionately impact on the career progression of research staff. As a result the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) will lead further work over the coming year to identify such policies and consult with interested parties to explore potential means to resolve any identified issues.

The Staff Survey (2016), with an overall response rate of 70% and a response rate from research staff of 49% (166 researchers as compared to 134 in 2012), highlighted areas of strength and areas for improvement. Each School/Service will identify key areas for improvement for their section. An institution-wide set of measures and actions will be established, and key areas for development for specific groups within Schools will be identified. In 2016 the Research job family had 22 'green' (above University average) responses, 11 orange and 15 red responses (below University average). The Staff Survey, 2015 Careers in Research Online survey data, and Athena SWAN activity have highlighted specific concerns for research staff, including 'feeling concerned for their job security at the University'. Over the longer term we will use future surveys to assess whether we have addressed these concerns through interventions put in place following the survey. We recognise that researchers have a responsibility for their own development and we encourages this, for example through the Research Staff Association, the on-going mentoring scheme, the PDR process and schemes such as Recognition of Teaching for Researchers (ROTOR) and ILM to enable researchers to gain professional recognition.

Key measures of success for the above areas and those in the plan will be apparent through: responses to future CROS and PIRLS, outcomes from Athena SWAN applications, future Staff Surveys, and direct feedback received from research staff, for example those involved in the Research Staff Association, and through School management structures (Associate Deans Research) into the Research Committee.

Action Plan: The action plan is available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/research-staff/concordat/>.