

University of Leeds
Early Career Researcher
Development Steering Group



HR Excellence in Research Eight-Year Report 2018

December 2018



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

University of Leeds HR Excellence in Research Award December 2018 Progress Report – 8-year Evaluation and Review

Overview: The University of Leeds received the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2010 in recognition of our ongoing commitment to embed the principles of the [UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#). Our success in retaining the Award through subsequent reviews, including two internal reviews (2012, 2016) and one external review at 4 years (2014), reflects the high priority we place on providing a working environment which enables Research Staff to fulfil their potential. Details of how we continue to implement the Concordat principles can be found in our [Guidance on the Employment of Researchers](#) (Guidance) and our [Concordat Implementation Plan](#), which accompanies this report.

The Organisational environment including changes since 2014

Since our last external review, the department responsible for Research Staff development has been reconfigured as Organisational Development and Professional Learning (OD&PL), with a new director. A major focus for OD&PL is to provide an inclusive range of provision for our researchers, giving them access to all our provision alongside all other university staff. To achieve this, OD&PL works in partnership with our Faculties and Schools and Professional Services including HR, Research and Innovation Services, the Library, IT Services and the Careers Service to provide policies, guidance, resources, training and development. This partnership has proven effective for creating and sustaining a high quality environment with consistent university-wide approaches. The direction and implementation of our approach is informed by analysis of local experience, engagement with developments in the wider sector environment and horizon scanning for future requirements and possibilities.

How was the eight-year review undertaken?

Our previous internal review was overseen by an Award Steering group and the Researcher Development Steering Group (RDSG), responsible for both Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) and Research Staff development. In 2018, to maximise the potential for continuous enhancement the RDSG was split into two separate groups, with the same Chair and some joint members to sustain sharing of ideas and practice. The Early Career Researcher development steering group (ECRDSG), chaired by the Dean of the Doctoral College, leads the implementation of the Concordat principles and as a result it is overseeing this eight-year review. Membership of the committee includes two Pro-Deans for Research and Innovation, representatives from OD&PL (Head of Academic Practice, two leads for Research Staff and PGR development), Deputy Director of HR, an ECR academic champion, Head of Interdisciplinary Research Development and ECR representatives from all Faculties. The steering group reports to Research and Innovation Board, which in turn reports to Senate.

At an operational level, the Researcher Development Operational Group provides a forum for researcher developers to share practice and plans in coordinating and guiding the implementation of policy developed at ECRDSG. All services have wider advisory and networking mechanisms in place to ensure quality and to support progress collaboratively. This collaboration ensures the Concordat implementation plan has been considered alongside other university initiatives and alignment with sector standards including our leadership excellence behaviours framework, Athena Swan and the QAA code of practice.

This eight-year report reviews and provides evidence of progress against our 2016 action plan. Responses by our researchers to the 2015 and 2017 Careers in Research Online Surveys (CROS) were reviewed to collect evidence of impact and identify ongoing needs. In addition, we routinely evaluate our provision, and analysis of the outcomes has informed future planning, as well as supporting continuous enhancement of course content, timing and delivery. It is important to note that in 2015, as part of a pilot exercise requested by the national CROS and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey Steering Group, our survey was expanded to include ECRs seeking to sustain their research outside of their substantive 'teaching only' role, if they were still actively researching or seeking a future academic role. We continue to work to support the breadth of early career roles, whilst acknowledging that the majority of our staff in this category are Research Staff and this has a major influence on our thinking, planning and actions. Survey data and findings have been disseminated to Faculty Research and Innovation Committees for discussion and feedback, and to Research and Innovation Board to support joint ownership of reflections and actions.

Involvement of Research Staff

[CROS findings](#) were summarised in an infographic and disseminated by email to Research Staff. An open meeting with the Chair of the ECRDSG was held in October 2018 to discuss the issues and themes emerging

from the survey, and to consider plans for the next four-year action plan. The ECRDSG has ECR members who have been involved in the drafting of this review and the action plan.

Key Achievements and Progress against actions identified in the action plan 2016-2018.

Full details of progress against the four-year review actions are provided in the updated action plan. Selected highlights are provided below linked to each Concordat principle:

PRINCIPLE 1: Recruitment and Selection

- We continually promote awareness of the Concordat, HR excellence award and our Guidance among Research Staff. In 2018, the Guidance was updated to reflect changes in organisational structure. The Guidance is referred to in letters of appointment and during induction. In addition, OD&PL ran six ECR seminars (2016-2018) attended by 103 researchers, designed to highlight these documents. Work in this area is evidenced by our CROS results reporting an increase in awareness of the HR excellence award from 36% (2015) to 50% (2017).
- HR has an ongoing commitment to revise the language, style and accessibility of our job advertisements and contracts. Promotion criteria and guidance have been revised to inform managers and staff to promote consistent and effective practices.
- Our Leadership Excellence Behaviours Framework provides a reference point for the development and guidance provided to colleagues with leadership responsibilities and/or formal line management roles. The framework is also used in the context of developing leadership and management capabilities throughout the organisation. It provides a reference point for annual staff development and objective-setting conversations.
- Since 2014, we have recruited over 140 University Academic Fellows through our 250 Great Minds recruitment scheme.

PRINCIPLE 2: Recognition and Value

The University's Strategy 2015-20 has a strong focus on creating a "vibrant research community" which recognises, values and maximises the contribution that Research Staff make to the quality and reach of our research and innovation.

- Research Staff are active participants in Athena Swan groups at both university and Faculty level. Several Faculty Research and Innovation Committees have researcher representatives. We increasingly find that university leaders at all levels recognise the need to ensure that the diversity of staff voices is represented as standard in decision-making groups. The Chair of the ECRDSG is proactive in reinforcing this, for example, she has recently written to any relevant Faculty committees that do not have Research Staff representation to highlight the benefits of researcher involvement.
- OD&PL in conjunction with Research and Innovation Services run workshops to encourage researchers to secure funding and to be formally recognised for their contributions to funding applications via the use of named researcher or researcher co-investigator status. This is having an impact: responses to CROS show an increase in the number of Research Staff who felt their contributions to funding applications had been recognised, from 41% (2015) to 50% (2017).
- To assist researchers in building interdisciplinary networks and applying for funding, Research Staff were allocated places on the second University of Leeds Crucible programme (2018). This programme joins researchers across disciplines to generate ideas to tackle global challenges. They can apply for pump-priming funding from the university to undertake preliminary projects before making a larger external bid application. A total of 9 projects were submitted to the university expert review panel, and it is notable that Research Staff were included in 2 of the 4 projects awarded.
- Researchers gaining their first Fellowship receive a letter of congratulation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, Professor Lisa Roberts. Colleagues report they welcome this personal approach.
- In 2017 OD&PL launched the Professional Recognition in Student Education (PRiSE) scheme. This enables Research Staff engaged in teaching to gain HEA recognition, to date 76 have engaged with the scheme and we will be monitoring how they progress to ensure we are providing the most effective support.

PRINCIPLES 3 & 4: Career Development

Since the reconfiguration into OD&PL we have worked to enhance our provision for all staff.

- Our 'support for researchers' webpage (<https://peopledevelopment.leeds.ac.uk/services/academic-practice/support-for-researchers/>) highlights opportunities to ensure Research Staff can easily identify and access relevant sessions.

- OD&PL has a dedicated researcher developer for leading Research Staff development, which has enabled the delivery of our Concordat implementation plan. They work closely with colleagues to ensure our provision is relevant for the breadth of our target audiences.
- Provision tailored for Research Staff supports careers with research, including applying for funding, skills identification and development. This is an area we will continue to enhance, based on the level of interest and need. Since 2016, 588 researchers have engaged with this provision.
- Our fellowship support scheme has been revised in conjunction with Research and Innovation Services. Candidates are assisted throughout their application through a series of workshops, one-to-one sessions and internal peer review. Each fellowship candidate is assigned a senior member of academic staff as a mentor. Since introducing the support sessions success rates have improved from 5% to 50% (EPSRC). A fellowship guide has been created to raise awareness of the evidence required and timescales involved in putting together a successful application. Further guides on funding and careers support are being produced.
- The Research Staff Conference ran for the third time in 2017, focussed on career skills, with 93 participants. The evaluation indicated that this was well received and feedback will inform further careers-focused events.

PRINCIPLE 5: Researcher Responsibilities

The university continues to invest resources to support the development of its Research Staff.

- Our staff review and development scheme (SRDS) encourages researchers to evaluate and pro-actively engage in their professional and career development. Findings from our 2017 CROS survey show a similar number undertaking SRDS as previous years. More significantly 61% considered their SRDS to be useful, up from 39% in 2015. We are pleased with this progress, whilst recognising we need to continue to reinforce the benefits of SRDS through working with reviewers and reviewees to ensure they can make the most of the opportunity presented.
- 80% of respondents had been encouraged to engage in CPD with 66% undertaking 1-5 days a year.
- Researcher-run early career groups, supported by the specialist research developer in OD&PL, hold careers-related sessions. The longest-running of these groups has successfully secured a budget from their school, to hold regular careers focussed workshops and seminars.
- Mentoring is an essential part of development, since 2015 our university-wide mentoring scheme has matched 59 Research Staff with academic mentors.
- For researchers pro-actively considering careers with research outside academia, our Career Architect programme brings together career resources, skills training, peer mentoring and individual coaching. This self-selecting programme has helped 80 researchers since 2013, with 81% moving out of post-doctoral roles. A further 15 staff are currently being supported. We are now reviewing the format to see how we could make it accessible to a higher number of participants.

PRINCIPLE 6: Equality and Diversity

The university holds a bronze Athena Swan award with a further 8 Faculty/department awards (4 silver, 4 bronze). Our Equality and Inclusion Framework 2014-2019 shows how we are actively working to promote diversity and inclusion through our recruitment and career management processes. Priority areas include undertaking initiatives in recruitment and progression, to “investigate and address any barriers to staff from protected characteristics...” and to “...commit to undertaking activity to encourage applications for promotion or development for staff from identified under-represented groups.” Our commitment to this area is summarised by our ‘everyone included, everyone involved’ intent. Details about the framework, including rights and responsibilities, are available as downloads from the Equality Policy Unit. The Chair of the ECRDSG sits on both the institutional Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team and the university’s Gender Action Plan Oversight Group.

- We have published the Leeds Gender Framework which guides the Gender Equality Mission.
- 91% of our CROS respondents believed the University is committed to equality and diversity, pleasing feedback on the impact of work to date, with 68% having access to flexible working if required.
- Since 2017 the Women Rising project, in part funded by the EPSRC, has worked with 37 female participants on two linked developmental retreats to support their retention and progression in academia.

PRINCIPLE 7: Implementation and Review

As referenced in other sections of this report, the University has continued to participate in the CROS survey. The most recent response rate of 26% (2017) was in line with the national average (24%). Findings were reported to Research and Innovation Board and Faculties for their discussion and comment.

OD&PL continues to work closely with the ECRDSG, researcher-run ECR groups, the operations group (RDOG) and other university initiatives to ensure development is aligned with the university strategy. Progress against the Concordat implementation plan will be evaluated on a bi-annual basis by the ECRDSG, with information and updates available on our OD&PL researcher webpages.

Members of OD&PL have been part of a group of researcher developers (Researchers14), who meet regularly to share best practice and to inform partners and influence policy. The group recently fed a collective response into the Concordat 10-year review and had a member on the Concordat Review Expert Panel.

Strategy and plans for the next 4 years (2019-2022)

We have held the HR Excellence Award since 2010 and in this time have made significant improvements, but also recognise there is more to be done. Our newly created ECRDSG and the current Concordat review have provided a renewed enthusiasm to build on the progress already achieved. Our plan is ambitious but achievable and will impact positively on both our Research Staff and the institution.

Progress against our previous plan shows actions that have been completed, and those ongoing have been incorporated into the new 4-year action plan. Below are a few examples of some of our more ambitious actions.

Strategies to support Principles 1 and 2

- Develop and introduce an induction programme for Research Staff highlighting their importance to the university research strategy and engaging them to take control of their development. This action overlaps with the action in Principle 5 to develop an online portal for Research Staff. Our aim is for 50% of new starters to engage with this induction programme by October 2020.
- Increase recognition for the supervision and teaching Research Staff undertake by introducing the role of 'advisor' for Research Staff actively engaged in supporting PGRs, and continue to encourage Research Staff to gain HEA accreditation for their teaching. Our target is 50 researchers to be credited as advisors by October 2020 and a 10% increase in the number of researchers gaining HEA accreditation in 2019.

Strategies to support Principles 3 and 4

- Review and develop a blended version of our successful Career Architect programme to cover all careers in research and to increase access. Some existing elements will be offered face-to-face as part of our current Research Staff development programme with the ability to increase the number of participants. Uptake and engagement with this provision will be monitored via the Minerva portal.
- To further support the career development of our researchers, a dedicated role will be created to provide career advice and development, working with the OD&PL researcher developer. We aim to have the post advertised by July 2019.

Strategies to support Principle 5

- To enable Research Staff to access development opportunities we will include the recommended 10 days a year in Research Staff contracts by October 2019. We will work towards increasing this to 15 or the minimum specified by the new Concordat, by October 2020.
- Research Staff often state that it is difficult to find or access information. To provide a better Research Staff experience an online Minerva portal for researchers will be created, to include online training materials, HR documentation and guides created to support development, with the aim of bringing everything to one place. Our target is 300 self-enrolments on the system by June 2020.

Strategies to support Principle 6

We are committed to equality and diversity, for example we hold several Athena Swan awards. We have an Equality and Inclusion Framework and Strategy, led by our Equality Policy Unit (EPU), to deliver a university wide culture promoting equality and inclusion. EPU initiatives are embedded throughout our provision for all staff.

Strategies to support Principle 7

The ECRDSG will lead actions within this plan and monitor progress with regular updates. Research Staff will continue to have representation on this group to ensure we maintain a two-way dialogue with our researchers. A communication strategy will be developed with our Comms team to ensure actions in our implementation plan and changes in the revised Concordat are effectively disseminated to all staff. Members of the group will continue to contribute to regional, national and international groups and initiatives including Researchers14 and N8.