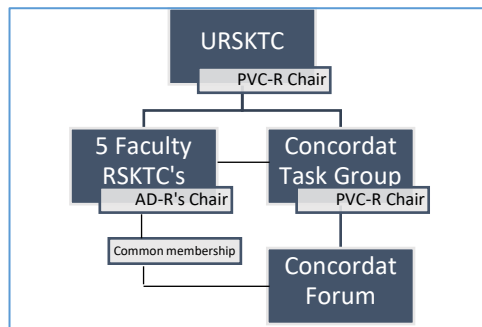


HR Excellence in Research Award: six-year internal self-assessment of LJMU's Action Plan (Concordat Implementation Strategy) 2016-18

1. The six-year review in context

Since our successful retention of the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2016, the University has transitioned smoothly into a new [strategic plan](#) delivery phase (2017-2022). LJMU recognises that staff are its principal asset, and our current plan clearly augments the contribution of research and scholarship to the development and impact of the institution, its staff and students. The University's continued engagement with the Concordat principles validates a clear commitment to the development of academic staff, and in nurturing and supporting "a thriving postgraduate community" (p.32).

The year of our four-year review (2016) marked several changes to the membership of the Concordat Task Group (CTG) and the way in which it was governed. Since that time, LJMU's Pro-Vice Chancellor for Scholarship, Research and Knowledge Transfer (PVC-R) has Chaired the CTG with oversight and accountability provided by the University Research Scholarship and Knowledge Transfer Committee (URSKTC). These changes were effected to ensure that where necessary, sufficient influence could be exerted at institutional level to give visibility to initiatives related to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, and our Action Plan (Concordat Implementation Strategy). We also created a wider working group (the Concordat Forum; CF) to help drive operational activities on behalf of the CTG at local (school/faculty) levels. For clarity, the membership and inter-relationships of these groups with other structural entities is provided in the box below. These structural and governance arrangements will continue into the next review period.



Concordat Task Group membership:

PVC-R (Chair), Director of P&OD, Dean of DA, Head of LDF, 5 Faculty Associate Deans for Research (AD-R), Head of Research Excellence & Research Strategy, 2 representatives from the CF (ECR & Reader), 1 PGR

Concordat Forum membership:

2 academics from each of 5 faculties (one ECR & an established academic from Faculty RSKTC [common membership]), Professional Service representatives: Library Services, DA, RIS, L&DF, P&OD

Panel feedback from the four-year review process in 2016 included the following recommendations - that the University:

- makes greater use of metrics to demonstrate the impact of the activities in its Action Plan;
- has more than one researcher representative (and different grades of staff) on the CTG;
- provides further clarity on communication and consultation between relevant University and Faculty groups.

This six-year review report and accompanying Action Plan 2016-18 (Appendix 1) and Action Plan 2018-20 (Appendix 2), include evidence to demonstrate that we have progressed the above requirements.

2. The internal review process

Members of the CTG review and discuss the Action Plan (Concordat Implementation Plan) on an ongoing basis at each CTG meeting. The following additional activities have specifically informed the internal evaluation process:

- the Concordat Forum surveyed researchers (May/June 2018) on a snowball sampling basis regarding their training and development needs, their awareness of current support, and barriers to engagement in current provision. The survey findings (based on 24 respondents) have fed directly in to the Action Plan 2018-20 and specific issues are highlighted in sections 3 and 4 below;

- the outcomes of a formal evaluation of the University's Early-Career Research Fellowship scheme (ECRF) conducted in April 2018 which was directed at 83 successful and unsuccessful Fellowship applicants;
- the Head of Research Excellence & Research Strategy who has coordinated the six-year review preparation, held dedicated review meetings in May 2018 with the main professional service stakeholders with responsibility for supporting researchers and delivering the actions in the implementation plan. The stakeholders consulted were in: People & Organisational Development (P&OD), the Leadership Development Foundation (L&DF), the Doctoral Academy (DA), Research & Innovation Services (RIS), and the Concordat Forum;
- the Concordat Forum meeting in July 2018 was dedicated to reviewing the Action Plan 2016-18. Members have since provided written feedback to the CTG on progress against particular actions and have proposed key elements to be included in the 2018-20 plan.

3. Key achievements and progress

Progress against the actions within our Concordat Implementation Strategy 2016-18 show a broad spread of good progress and positive outcomes based on overall RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status (Appendix 1). In combination, the evaluation activities outlined in section 2 have signalled i) that there are some areas of excellent practice that we can highlight; ii) there are some areas where data collection/reporting should and can be improved-upon; and iii) that there is scope for the University to further develop its strategically-driven supportive culture around researcher development.

a) Examples of good practice - Support & Career Development (Concordat Principles 3 & 4)

We have responded to feedback from a variety of sources to evolve LJMU's development provision for both postgraduate researchers (PGRs; the Researcher Development Programme) and research/academic staff (ACTivator and L&DF programmes). Typical participant testimonials for ACTivator workshops are: *"Good mix of information and activity"*, *"Interactive, relevant, inspiring"*. The first Doctoral Academy 'Thesis Writing Boot Camp' was over-subscribed and gained 100% positive feedback. Also for the first time, RIS and L&DF collaborated to support a cohort of staff undertake a 2-day, externally-facilitated 'Research Team Leadership' programme, again with unanimous reports regarding its value. The latter provision fills a gap in support for researchers who are beyond early career status. One academic respondent to the CF survey observed:

"When I first arrived at LJMU there was a sense that the staff development provision largely ignored our needs and roles as researchers. This is no longer the case, and I am pleased and proud to observe the transformation in researcher development provision within LJMU". Survey respondent (July 2018)

External validation of LJMU's innovative and comprehensive approach to researcher development is embodied by our involvement (DA and RIS) in the Erasmus Plus funded TRANSPEER international researcher development project (from 2017). The project exposes academic participants to the importance of personal and career development and planning, but specifically in an international context. Our involvement as a partner in this 3-year project will help to ensure that the University's forward strategy for researcher development is framed within a global perspective.

b) Influencing University culture: the importance of researcher development and the role of researchers - Recognition & Value and Researchers' Responsibility (Concordat Principles 2 & 5)

Section a) has shown that our evolving researcher development provision is very well-received by those who attend workshops and other training events (approx. 16% of LJMU academic staff). As part of this six-year review process we have acquired information from researchers who have struggled to engage with provision. The primary reason cited by staff (CF survey) as to why they have not been able to take-up development opportunities is a lack of time (63% of respondents) with high teaching loads being a causal factor. Half of all respondents did not feel adequately supported in their career planning, with qualitative data indicating that line managers can be a barrier in this regard *"My line manager is not a researcher so does not know how to help"*. Responses suggest that line managers are not universally proactive in encouraging their staff to undertake development opportunities or in facilitating a conversation about this within the personal development and performance reviews. These survey outcomes mirror messages that emerged from CROS and PIRLS in 2017. Although low response rates to all three of these surveys preclude the findings from being more than tentative, the rigorous evaluation of LJMU's ECRF (response rate 51%) do triangulate the findings. The University is progressing two new initiatives that have the potential to impact on both the practical issue of time, and inconsistent line manager (Programme/Subject Leader) support for researcher development; these are

summarised in section 4. Postgraduate researchers demonstrated very good engagement with PRES in 2017 (61%) up from 57% in 2015, and the Doctoral Academy is well positioned to effect positive change though its accompanying Action Plan 2017/18. Examples include the creation of a peer training network of qualified PGRs representing particular research skills to facilitate subject specialist training and supplementary opportunities to support the practical application of research methods,

c) Enhancing reporting requirements for Action Plan evaluation (Concordat Principle 7)

Sequential self-assessments for the HR Excellence in Research Award have helped to facilitate dialogue between the University’s professional services and academic communities and the nature and specificity of evidence to demonstrate the impact of initiatives aligned to the Concordat have improved (Appendix 1). However, further consolidation will address some deficiencies in reporting across multiple areas and continue to enhance the visibility of the Concordat and CTG across the University. Specific examples include:

- Improvements and standardisation in the reporting of attendance/engagement figures (Concordat Principle 4); evaluation of the effectiveness of the three-year probation, induction and transition system for academics who are new to higher education (Concordat Principle 1); consistency in the structure of sequential staff surveys to allow direct comparison of satisfaction data (Concordat Principle 2);
- Greater advocacy about the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the University’s commitment to it are required based on tentative survey findings (Concordat Principle 7). Noting low response rates, 68% of respondents to the CF survey were not aware of the Concordat and 73% of LJMU’s CROS respondents had not heard of it.

4. Overarching plans for 2018 to 2020 and broad measures of success

LJMU will continue to embed high-quality support for the career development of researchers. We will build-on positive progress to-date to evidence good practice, and strive to grow the rigor and reach of the evaluation activities we undertake. Appendix 2 outlines priority areas for 2018-20 in detail, and the following examples highlight significant institutional endeavours to promote a positive culture for researchers and which is founded on joined-up/collaborative approaches:

Future Plans aligned to Concordat Principles	Broad Measure of Success
To monitor and evaluate both the implementation process and impact of the University-wide roll-out of the new workload allocation model (WAM), specifically in relation to the process of designating a time allowance for staff with significant responsibility for undertaking research (Principle 2)	The proportion of staff with significant responsibility for undertaking research to increase to 60% (from 56%) by September 2020 (Action 2 Appendix 2)
The L&DF and Teaching & Learning Academy are preparing to roll-out a mandatory Academic Leadership Development Programme for Programme Leaders (2018/19). The CTG wishes to ensure breadth in its scope and content to include the importance and significance of the Programme Leader role supporting research and research career development (Principle 2)	A 10% increase in the proportion of academic and research staff agreeing that their training, learning or development has helped them to do their job more effectively (57% in 2017). See Action 3
To grow the involvement of research leaders in mentoring designed to support less experienced researchers realise their potential to become independent researchers (Principles 3 & 4)	A minimum of 20 mentor-mentee relationships supported annually in 2018 and 2019 through a competitive application process (Action 9)
Translate the desire of the Concordat Forum to create faculty Staff Research Associations (SRA) into real and engaged entities, with designated academic leaders who are supported by leadership development professionals (Principle 5)	SRA’s established in two faculties in 2018/19. All SRA leaders engage with leadership development programmes (100% uptake). See Action 11
Having successfully retained Athena SWAN Bronze Award at institutional level (November 2017 submission), a priority is to ensure <u>all</u> LJMU Schools/departments submit for an award (Principle 6)	Submission by all eight of LJMU’s STEMM areas and at least three non-STEMM Schools/departments by April 2020 (Action 12)