

**LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY**  
**HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD: FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**  
**CONCORDAT TASK GROUP, SEPTEMBER 2016**

Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) was awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award in May 2012. The University re-affirmed its commitment and active implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in its successful internal review at the two-year milestone. This report hereby summarises the progress made since against the original plan and latterly since May 2014; it presents a forward-looking strategy underpinned by reinvigorated leadership and a robust engagement plan.

## **1. INTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY'S CONCORDAT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2014/16**

The internal evaluation process started in November 2015, led jointly by the Dean of the Graduate School (GS) and the Research Excellence Manager in Research & Innovation Services (RIS). This approach differed from the process adopted ahead of the 2014 interim review, largely due to sequential departures of personnel managing the Concordat Task group (CTG) during 2015. Importantly, this has enabled an objective appraisal of practice and progress. The University Research, Scholarship & Knowledge Transfer Committee (RSKTC), Chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC-RSKT) has monitored the review process on a monthly basis since March 2016.

The CTG has remained operational since its inception despite several changes in the personnel driving its activities and extended periods with vacant posts; its membership 2014/16 included researcher and academic representatives from each of LJMU's four faculties, RIS, the GS, People and Organisational Development/Leadership and Development Foundation (POD/LDF; formerly Human Resources and Staff Development). This Group reviewed progress against the University's Concordat Implementation Plan (CIP) in April 2016.

Membership of the CTG was re-assessed as part of this four-year review process, and refreshed in June 2016 to include the PVC-RSKT (Chair), the Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives and Enhancement, a research community representative in addition to the four faculty Associate Deans for Research (ADR), the Director of POD, Head of the Leadership and Development Foundation, and the Research Excellence Manager. This reflects a deliberate shift to maximise the influence of the group at institutional level. Going forward, the CTG will assign project-based activities in the CIP 2016/18 to a wider working group (the Concordat Forum) where researchers themselves actively drive project delivery alongside staff working in professional services.

Each ADR has responsibility for the development of researchers and research both within and between the schools in their faculties with direct support from RIS. The various ways in which ADRs, the GS and RIS have engaged with researchers during the review phase/since the start of November 2015 include:

- working through their local committee and staff forum structures to initiate dialogue about CIP actions, including: researcher support provision; the effectiveness of the annual Personal Development and Performance review framework (notably one faculty has hosted a workshop to highlight researcher concerns and line management capability); organisation of the annual staff and PGR research conference in each faculty
- the running of two researcher support workshops dedicated to addressing the needs of attendees with an emphasis on appropriate career-stage guidance and which build on the "*Your career, your choice*" programme delivered at the start of 2015
- preliminary analysis of data from the institutional staff survey 2015, with comparison to the 2013 survey data and benchmarking against peer groups

Due to the personnel changes mentioned above, the CTG did not commission the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2015. However, it will be reintroduced in 2017 and is a discrete action in the CIP 2016/18.

## **2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS AGAINST LJMU'S ORIGINAL CONCORDAT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (2012) AND TWO-YEAR REVIEW (2014), INCLUDING ACTION-DRIVEN REFLECTIONS ON PROGRESS PRESENTED BY CONCORDAT PRINCIPLE**

In this section, the University confirms how each of its six CIP Aims map on to the Concordat Principles, details its key achievements, and flags action-driven progress over the entire period.

**Aim 1:** Improve communication and raise institutional awareness of University's strategic aims, external policies and initiatives to support researchers (Principles 1, 2, 3 & 5)

The University has responded to the plan drafted during the 2014 review to build on good progress; for a number of initiatives, clear evidence of sustained activity can be demonstrated. For example, the researcher induction programme in place at institutional level since the end of 2012 continues to be delivered by RIS with other professional services, including Library Services and the GS. A full programme of 5 workshops was delivered during 2014/15 in a revised format to that adopted the previous year. Participant feedback was overall good, but did not universally have a positive impact. As such, the format and content were re-designed during Autumn 2015 to take into consideration the views of participants and the ADRs, the latter was critical in order to reflect local research strategy, objectives and resources. Three workshops have successfully run in 2015/16 with the updated format. A key action to integrate research induction into the staff probationary review has been completed as part of a defined strand of the POD strategy. It is worth noting that the PVC Research Scholarship and Knowledge Transfer and the Dean of the Graduate School are members of the POD Strategy Steering Group. The new 3 year induction programme for staff new into higher education is due to go live in September 2016.

The University early career researcher fellowship fund has run successfully since 2012. In 2014/15 and 2015/16, it supported 14 and 9 academic and research staff in each year respectively. School Director and Faculty Dean feedback on the scheme is extremely positive, with calls for continued provision in 2016/17. The fellowship recipients report career-enhancing experiences arising from the opportunity to collaborate with leading researchers in their field (UK or abroad) "*This collaboration allowed me to join a network of experts, which is instrumental to gain visibility and is likely to open up to research funding proposals*". The scheme has a mandatory development component within it whereby researchers must define their training needs in the context of the RDF.

In 2015, the University introduced a new website with staff profiles populated from its research information system. The functionality within the system allows users to search for and view the academic profile of LJMU staff, search by area of expertise/discipline/keyword. Support for researchers in the use of the system escalated in 2015/16, linked to the international open access movement for research publications (and research data), and push for greater uptake of ORCID (unique, persistent identifier for researchers), all of which are key external drivers.

**Aim 2:** Support research staff career development through enhanced, effective and consistent engagement with University's personal development and performance review (PDPR) (Principles 3, 4 & 5)

A refreshed and refocused PDPR form was re-launched in 2015/16 in which research and scholarship is a key performance objective and research outputs can be reported. Responsibility for the monitoring the take up of PDPR activity lies with POD. Annual staff development plans are submitted to then LDF following the PDPR cycle. The process is relatively well embedded across groups of staff (researchers and academics, professional service staff etc.); responses to the 2015 staff survey indicated that 50% of staff agreed that research and scholarship is "deeply embedded" in the University (this is the first time the question has been asked in the staff survey and no trend data are available). The PDPR scheme is subject to ongoing review by POD with input from an academic stakeholder group. Comparison between 2013 and 2015 staff survey data do however indicate a positive trend in terms of the value of the PDPR to staff.

**Aim 3:** Improve consultation with research staff and establish a more comprehensive understanding of the professional development needs of research staff (Principles 2, 3, 4 & 5)

Responsibility for the provision and delivery of researcher support for staff and PGRs lies with RIS and the GS. The Graduate School's Researcher Development Programme is already mapped to the RDP and comprises workshops designed to enhance personal, professional and career development opportunities. In RIS, the roll-out of a new programme of workshops, the 'ACTivator' programme started late in 2015; further personal and professional development and career development provision is being road-mapped for 2016-2017, concomitantly with an evaluation framework. The scoping of requirements for ACTivator involved the ADRs and is in the process of being mapped to the RDP. In-line with institutional and external imperatives around staff being able to demonstrate the impact of research on non-academic stakeholders, centrally provided training and development activity includes three new impact and engagement programmes. These sit alongside support workshops which provide advice and guidance to all staff intending to prepare and submit research grant applications, including fellowships and funding aimed at specific stages of their career. Ninety researchers have attended ACTivator workshops since January 2016. Notably, engagement with PGRs as partners was identified as an area of good practice in LJMU's Higher Education Review by the Quality Assurance Agency in 2016, the case study is available at:

**Aim 4:** Improve internal communication and networking opportunities for research staff (Principles 3, 4 & 5)

The LJMU Research Café programme is now well-embedded within the University events calendar; it started in 2012/13 and is run in conjunction with staff in Library Services. The Café series encourages interdisciplinary conversations and networking between research staff and PGR students. They achieve this through the delivery of high impact, speed presentations by new researchers and more experienced staff in an informal and student-centred setting. The annual Christmas Research Café is held in Liverpool Central Library and is open to the public.

Another action-driven achievement is that the University hosted its first Research Week in 2015 bringing together researchers from across LJMU in a wide-ranging programme of activities from each faculty. Four faculty Research Days showcased staff and PGR research in a series of keynote lectures, seminar presentations and poster sessions. Since its inception, Research Week has emphasised the skills required for presentation and competition in PGR activity, it also included a PGR Student Voice event, facilitated by Liverpool Students' Union. In 2015 this became a forum for discussing the findings from PRES and the starting point for Faculty and University Action Plans towards PRES 2017. Staff attendance at the University's annual Research Day is steady but an action to grow this is our Action Plan. The winners of the Vice Chancellor's Awards for Research Excellence and Social and Economic Engagement are announced at Research Day; these awards honour the outstanding contributions of staff. Since its launch in 2014, winners include both early career researchers and well established members of the Professoriate. An annual Graduate School Conference was inaugurated in April 2016 bringing PGRs from across the University together in poster presentations and the sharing of ideas – for example in the launch of the Three Minute Thesis.

**Aim 5:** Ensure procedures and technical criteria for the conferment of Readers/Professors is objective and free of bias (Principle 6)

This process is managed by the POD Team and led by the Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives and Enhancement. Key changes were introduced for the 2015 conferment process, including rebalancing the gender membership of the panel to 50/50; clarification of areas under which colleagues can apply; clarity on Professional/Support Services applications; and a more structured assessment process.

In 2014-2015, 7 Professorships and 15 Readerships were conferred by the University; in 2015-2016 7 Professorship and 14 Readerships were awarded.

**Aim 6:** Build on current recognition of equality and diversity (in relation to female staff) and establish a better understanding of the under-representation of female professors within the University (Principle 6)

In 2014, LJMU applied for the institutional Athena Swan Bronze Award and was successful. This continues to be a significant measure of commitment to equality and diversity principles, and faculties, departments and schools are in the process of submitting application for their own awards; the School of Natural Sciences and Psychology, the School of Sport & Exercise Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering & Technology are all intending to submit applications in 2016/17. The University Athena Swan working group continues to meet to discuss issues relevant to women in both STEMM and non STEMM areas. There have been 3 lectures organised to further encourage women into STEMM careers.

Since a pilot in 2014, the University has annually sponsored four places on the Aurora Women in Leadership programme for female academic staff (Organisational Development Fund); a number of further places have been funded from departmental budgets.

Across 2014-2016, the LJMU Women Professors Network has run focus groups in each faculty to explore barriers to the career progression of female academics/researchers. As a result of these and as part of their wider communication strategy, the need for an equivalent network for female staff at Reader level has been proposed and which would give this group greater visibility. International Women's Day events are held across LJMU. Work is underway to look at the conferment criteria to ensure there is sufficient support for women. The conferment panels have been reviewed to reflect an equal gender balance.

The review of equality and diversity procedures at LJMU, and the analysis of equal opportunities data continues to be undertaken by POD. A conference aimed at raising the profile of equality and diversity in LJMU took place in November 2015. Over 250 delegates attended the conference and gave excellent feedback. An equality impact

assessment was conducted for the institutional REF2014 submission involving Faculty and School level analysis. In Spring 2016, the University conducted its consultation with staff and students, seeking their engagement to formulate a new set of equality and diversity objectives as required by law. These have now been agreed by SMT and the Board of Governors.

### **3. LJMU STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS (2016-2020)**

The University outlines here its strategy for a four year period which charts the connection between the Concordat Principles and LJMU's aims and objectives far more clearly than in the original plan and previous reports.

#### **Concordat Principles 1 & 2 (Recruitment & Selection, Recognition & Value)**

- To introduce from September 2016 a three year probation, induction and transition system for early-career academics as part of an institutional POD strategy implementation plan. Alongside this, a modified (leaner and shorter) process specifically for contract research staff will be designed, piloted and rolled-out
- The PDPR scheme will overtly recognise the importance of researchers, as set out in the Concordat. Within this, the existing PDPR scheme will be expanded to ensure that contract researchers are a defined stakeholder group and are supported to engage with the process by their managers. Management development activities to facilitate this will be provided.

#### **Concordat Principles 3, 4 & 5 (Support, Career Development and Researchers' Responsibilities)**

- To develop a comprehensive Researcher Development Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2020 to support research staff development in-line with the University's core strategic aims and then implement a cohesive development framework bringing all the University's provision together and mapping career stages with guidance, recommended accredited and non-accredited development activities
- As part of the three-year probation, induction and transition system for academics, the postgraduate certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education is to be redesigned to include a research module
- To commission CROS 2017, with a commitment to encourage staff engagement and act on survey findings
- To continue to embed actions that support the representation of researchers in university forums (including equality and diversity) e.g. Research Staff Associations
- To develop and implement long-term (highly participative) evaluation processes for all institutional learning and development interventions for researchers
- To continue to increase research staff engagement with the ACTivator programme and GS provision
- To conduct an institutional review of the structure of the PhD by Published Work award and the provision of support systems around it, will be conducted 2016-17

#### **Concordat Principle 6 (Diversity & Equality)**

- To pursue accreditation for Athena Swan for all University departments, with all STEMM departments to submit for an award by April 2020

#### **Concordat Principle 7 (Implementation and Review)**

- URSKTC and Strategy Delivery Forum to receive regular updates on progress on staff related matters including all researcher development activities and action plans.
- Annual Review of ACTivator and Researcher Development support by Directors of POD and RIS.

### **4. MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

Our success will be measured in terms of timely achievement of the actions as set out in the Action Plan. In addition, our success measures include the following, with a more detailed list provided in the Action Plan 2016/18:

- Evidence of participation CROS in 2017 and improved engagement since 2013 e.g. >35%
- Retention of institutional Athena SWAN Bronze and the submission for departmental Athena Swan Awards within all STEMM departments
- 50% increase in staff and PGR engagement in University development opportunities events
- Impact of learning and development interventions identified and reported (evaluation outcomes)
- Greater visibility of the Concordat and researcher support in the POD strategy 2017-2022