

## Lancaster University HR Excellence in Research 8-year report September 2019

### Introduction

Lancaster University first received the European HR Excellence in Research Award in 2011. During the last eight years there have been, and continues to be, considerable changes to the senior leadership team within the Institution with the appointment process of a new Vice-Chancellor; new Pro-Vice-Chancellors; and Faculty Deans currently being undertaken.

With an increased focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Lancaster has committing to raising this agenda through all Institutional activity; with new posts being created, such as, Associate Deans for EDI and People, in new Faculty structures; a new EDI focussed objective for its Senate; to ensure equality across all Institutional practices, which will include representatives from the researcher communities. To raise the visibility of Executive Academic Leadership, our ProVC Education, who chairs the EDI Committee, now has EDI added to her job title. Working alongside her, a new .5 FTE senior role (Dean of EDI) is to be established to lead on operationalising of key areas of EDI. With a new incoming Vice Chancellor and a full review of its [Strategy for 2020 and People Strategy](#) underway there are many opportunities for Lancaster to maintain its strong emphasis on enhancing both research capacity and quality. Lancaster is immensely proud to have attracted a critical mass of highly talented research staff, whose contributions are vital to the success of this world class research Institution. The new ProVC Research, Professor Louise Heathwaite, takes up this role as an internal candidate and brings a wealth of experience of being a Principal Investigator at Lancaster, understanding the needs of Lancaster's research community. For context, Lancaster currently has 3585 staff (2066 professional services staff) (1174 Academic and Research) (345 Researchers)

### Internal evaluation process

This eight-year self-evaluation was initiated by Lancaster's Concordat Implementation Group (CIG), chaired by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development. This Group is formally a sub-Committee of the [University's Research Committee](#). Oversight and strategic input has been provided by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Associate Deans for Research. A final draft was considered by the CIG (which includes the 4 members of the Research Staff Association executive. These are current research staff, three from the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) – the largest population of researchers, and one from Faculty of Social Sciences (FASS)) and the HR Leadership Team. This report draws on data collected from a number of sources, informing both the assessment of progress and the action plan 2019-21:

- Lancaster's [2020 University Strategy](#) and associated [People Strategy](#) (review currently underway)
- Faculty/Departmental strategic priorities and operational plans, which include direct input from the Departmental and Faculty research committees (each research committee now has a researcher representative included in the membership)
- Lancaster's staff survey 2018 (research staff are an identified sub group and reporting on the 2017-19 activities represents their responses)
- Evaluation of researcher training and development (direct feedback from researchers and regular consultation with the [Research Staff Associate executive](#))
- Athena SWAN priorities and initiatives within the institution (research staff are included in the Faculty Athena SWAN committees)

Progress specifically in relation to Lancaster's action plan [2017-19 is shown here](#). Highlights from this, together with advances over the whole of the two-year period, are reported below.

Lancaster maintains two overarching goals in recognition that these are of vital importance to the success and support of researchers at Lancaster: *to i) embed a culture of research staff inclusivity and ii) engender excellence in the management practices relevant to our research staff community.*

These goals are underpinned by the ‘Code of Practice for the Development of Research Staff’ ([‘Code of Practice’](#)), which will undergo a full refresh and re-launch in early 2020, in light of the new Concordat and reflecting any changes in the New University Strategy and the People Strategy.

### Key achievements and progress 2017-2019

Lancaster recognizes the invaluable contribution of its research community, and has spent the last two years focusing on some of the underpinning support and development it provides. Pilot projects and initiatives have been undertaken in a number of departments such as; Faculty funding for bridging contracts; seed funding to assist in the development of new proposals (FASS); Christmas Conference for showcasing researcher’s contributions (FST) etc. The benefits of these will become more apparent in the coming years as the establishment of this good practice becomes wide spread and will be reviewed by the Faculty Associate Dean’s for Research and the [Research Committee](#). These Faculty based initiatives are in addition to a full range of [central programmes](#) and support including a new pan institutional initiative - the Prosper project will further support and develop researchers skills and career opportunities.

#### Prosper Project description

Career development of Post-Doctoral Research colleagues (PDRC) is predominantly directed towards an academic pathway. However, while essential for the research base, the proportion of PDRC who will progress to a permanent academic position is small. As such, it is recognised that the current approach not only fails to support individual PDRC to achieve an optimal career path outside of academia but also fails to address the UK’s economic need for a highly skilled work force. The goal of Prosper is to create a new approach to the development of first-time PDRC s that addresses this issue, aligning to the People Strand of the Industrial Strategy, in a manner which tackles systemic equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) issues which present barriers to training for PDRCs. Prosper has been co-created by employers, principal investigators, funders, other HEIs and PDRCs themselves. It is aimed at increasing the value of PDRCs to the economy by developing a highly skilled workforce with the broader capabilities, attributes and mind-set needed to thrive within multiple careers.

#### Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection

Lancaster’s HR department has launched new initiatives focusing on the recruitment of new staff and the ‘welcome’ they receive including: a full refresh of [recruitment training](#) with a greater emphasis on equality and un-conscious bias; a new [web based induction](#) process, with access to induction information and IT systems, including email as soon as a contract is signed; a parallel process for [hiring managers](#) to ensure all aspects of induction are covered. These initiatives have been underpinned by a new set of on-line [manager’s toolkits](#) to emphasis central process and encourage good practice and diversity in applications.

A new policy is currently out for consultation in recognition of the challenges of fixed-term, externally funded employment contracts. This seeks to reduce the number of fixed term contracts across the institution by 10% per annum. Currently 90% of research staff hold fixed term contracts.

#### Principle 2: Recognition and Value

We have at least one member of research staff on each Faculty research committee. These researcher representatives have also taken on the new role of Faculty Concordat Champions.

Investment by the Institution to improve the Performance Development Review (PDR) of staff has resulted in an increase of 3% of research staff saying their PDR was useful for them and a 4% increase in those who said they now have an agreed learning and development plan (data reported 2018 staff survey results - 125 out of possible 345 research staff responded to this survey). Other notable results from the survey indicated a 10% increase in those who felt; “fairly rewarded for the work I do” and “I am recognised for work done well”.

The [PDR process](#) has been fully on-line since June 2019. Reporting on completion data and key themes will be possible, allowing for a more responsive action to the specific development needs of researchers.

Future new researchers will benefit from a ‘cohort’ approach to induction and initial support, identified as good practice by the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary lecturers review.

[Lancaster’s Research Staff Association](#) continue to actively support the research community with regular termly events, sharing practice and information, workshops and specific focused sessions such as: Transitioning from conference attendee to leader; Demystifying REF; Christmas Café (inc. Lancaster’s response to the Concordat); Is teaching for me? A panel and discussion session.

### Principles 3 and 4: Support and Career Development

Following the success of Organisational and Educational Development’s (OED) Researcher Development Programme (RDP), as reported in the OED programme review 2018, a refreshed and re-branded offer was launched in 2018/19. Now the “[resilient researcher](#)” and the “[balanced academic](#)”, these programmes build on the strengths of the RDP providing researchers with programmes based on a coaching core, with a greater focus on the skills and information needed to work at Lancaster and an emphasis on personal resilience, feedback including “*I’m going to think more creatively and courageously about all possibilities and opportunities*”. A new masterclass and ‘audience with’ series, gives researchers access to those in a range of leadership positions across the institution and also those from other research environments, offering an insight into alternative career pathways and experiences. [Additional programmes for 2019/20](#) will further enhance and develop a broader range of skills for those wishing to move beyond academia.

Mentoring remains a key component of professional development for all staff. Support for finding a mentor is embedded within the above researcher development programmes, in addition to local departmental schemes. Regular training sessions and [online resources](#) for mentors and mentees are available to support the mentoring relationship and encourage good practice. Departmental briefings and targeted skills development sessions have been well received by researchers and potential mentors. These activities were reported at a recent RSA event and other researchers are now planning to set up their own mentor groups. The introduction of peer coaching/mentoring has proved a successful addition, with small cohorts of 8 researchers creating support networks that continue past the end of the programme. Feedback includes “I felt isolated and didn’t feel I could share some of my concerns with my PI as they were not directly related to my research, having the peer coaching, I realized there were others experiencing the same issues, I now feel more confident in addressing these issues.” A new opportunity will be offered from 2019, Lancaster has trained its own coaching bank and [one to one coaching](#) will now be offered to researchers.

### Principle 5: Researchers’ Responsibilities

CIG is working closely with researchers, through the RSA and the Associate Deans for Research in defining the refreshed [Code of Practice](#) and implementation of the Concordat. Close involvement by the RSA and other researcher focus groups, ensures these updates are appropriate and embedded in University practice.

2018 staff survey results show that an increase of over 10% of researchers now say they have an agreed appropriate learning and development plan as part of their PDR since the last survey in 2016. [PDR training](#) for PIs encourages them to explore development options ‘outside’ of standard workshop routes to enhance the experiences for all researchers at whatever their career stage.

Research staff are now appointed to all departmental and faculty research committees (also acting as Concordat champions). This greater visibility and involvement in key decision-making processes has a positive impact, not only on the individual researcher but on the researcher community as a whole, with senior research managers acknowledging the valuable input and insight that the researchers bring to the committees.

### Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

Lancaster has recently restructured its senior management team and initiated a new role ProVC Education and EDI, who will lead a renewed focus on EDI to include an updated Equality and Diversity action plan, an EDI Impact and Implementation Group and other working groups on specific issues such as Gender Pay Gap. These changes have been mirrored across the institution with the introduction of a new Senate strategic priority: “*make positive steps towards improving our diversity profile; evolve equality, diversity and inclusion practice in order to improve student and staff outcomes; improve the University’s performance towards targets set in the Institutional and discipline-based Athena SWAN submissions and in the Access and Participation Plan (APP), according to the timescales in those documents.*”

The University is committed to achieving Athena SWAN bronze for all academic departments.

### Principle 7: Implementation and Review

Recent staff changes have initiated a refresh of the Terms of Reference for the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) to ensure a continued broad committee with all relevant experiences to implement the changes proposed in the New Concordat. CIG, chaired by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, has oversight of the institutional action plan. Researcher representation on this group, through the RSA executive, remains a valuable element in both assessment of progress and raising the profile and visibility of the Concordat and HR Excellence in Research Award.

### Strategy for next two years (2019-21)

World leading research remains a major Lancaster strength and in particular it's expanding interdisciplinary research. With an increasing number of leading research institutes and centres (47 to date) and international collaborations the importance of its researchers has never been felt more strongly. The framework provided by the Concordat and the Lancaster [Code of Practice](#) for the management of research staff are just two elements of the support the Institution recognises as being essential in supporting its researchers.

HR have been developing a number of strategies to support researchers. With the implementation of the new policy for those on short contracts and continued work on career progression routes, this is an area that will see further development in the coming years.

CIG will follow a new schedule of bi-monthly meetings and a new reports matrix – produced to ensure completion of objectives and success measures suggested in the 2019-21 Action Plan. CIG identified these 5 key priorities as having the most positive impact directly on our researcher community.

KEY PRIORITY	BROAD SUCCESS MEASURES
1. Raise the EDI agenda (with a focus on equality for researchers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formation of EDI impact and implementation group</li> <li>- Draw greater parallels with the Athena SWAN objectives and action plan. Now also included in University Senate Priorities.</li> <li>- Continued to increase in Athena SWAN awards at University and departmental level.</li> <li>- Increase the diversity of Researcher representatives on University Committees</li> </ul>
2. Reinforce Principal Investigator responsibilities as leaders and managers of research staff	<p><i>This priority was on previous action plan – Institution recognises that this is an area that needs further development.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A further 10% increase in research leader participation in relevant professional development (e.g. Research Leadership Development Programme).</li> <li>- Continued excellent research leadership as recognised through a sub-set of indicators within Lancaster's 2020 Staff Survey or researcher survey.</li> <li>- Code of Conduct to be reworked in response to Concordat update, and be fully embedded in all PI and researcher development activities. Awareness of Concordat to be 90% as reported through Induction feedback.</li> </ul>
3. Transparency of promotional routes and procedures, internal policies and processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New policies and processes communicated via a variety of media to researchers and to their PIs.</li> <li>- New web links to ensure easy accessibility to information and documentation</li> <li>- New on-line PDR process fully utilised by all staff</li> </ul> <p>Awareness of the above to be 90% as reported through Induction feedback.</p>
4. Foundation of good practice and development of alternative career pathways for researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2% Increase in positive responses re. Career progression in CROS/PIRLS/LU researcher staff survey.</li> <li>- Continue 'career pathways' as a central theme for Research Staff Association activity.</li> <li>- Staff leavers survey data – show destination data and alternative career routes.</li> <li>- Active participation by Lancaster in the setting up and delivery of Prosper career alternatives project.</li> </ul>
5. Enhance Lancaster's practices re. recruitment, retention & development of research staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreement of refined fixed term contract policy with the Trade Unions.</li> <li>- Roll-out and communication plan for this policy developed and implemented.</li> <li>- The sharing of good practices across the Institution by further utilising existing communities and the creation of new working groups.</li> </ul>

Common acronyms used in these reports:

CIG – Concordat implementation Group  
CoP – Code of Practice for the Development of Research Staff  
ECC – Educational Competencies Consortium  
EDI – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion  
OED – Organisational and Educational Development  
PDR – Performance Development Review  
PDRC – Post Doctoral Research Colleague  
PVC (R) – Pro Vice Chancellor for Research  
RDP – Researcher Development Programme  
RSA – Lancaster’s Research Staff Association  
RSO – Lancaster University internal Research Services Offices  
FST – Faculty of Science  
FHM – Faculty of Health and Medicine  
FASS – Faculty of Social Sciences  
LUMS – Lancaster University Management School