

## 1. Introduction

Lancaster University first received the European HR Excellence in Research Award in 2011, with an internal two-year review point of 2013. During the last four years there have been considerable changes to the senior leadership team within the institution with the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, new Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Deans. Lancaster's refreshed [Strategy for 2020](#) places strong emphasis on enhancing both our research capacity and quality. To deliver this, the strategy makes a strong commitment to the appointment, retention and development of high calibre researchers. Aligned with our overall strategy is our [People Strategy](#) which recognises the contribution that all groups of staff make to the institution's success.

## 2. Internal evaluation process

This six 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 and is the governing body with responsibility for ensuring compliance against our [stated actions](#). 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 significant researcher representation) 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 2017-19:

- Lancaster's refreshed 2020 University Strategy and associated People Strategy
- Faculty/Departmental strategic priorities and operational plans
- Surveys: CROS and PIRLS (2015 and 2017); Lancaster's staff survey 2016
- Evaluation of researcher training and development
- Athena Swan priorities and initiatives within the institution

Progress specifically in relation to Lancaster's action plan 2015-17 is shown [here](#). Highlights from this, together with advances over the whole of the two year period, are reported below.

## 3. Key achievements and progress 2015-2017

A newly created vision for the development of research talent foregrounds the contribution that all researchers make to Lancaster's future success. To realise this vision, our overarching goals for 2017-19 are to i) embed a culture of research staff inclusivity and ii) engender excellence in the management practices relevant to our research staff community.

A key enabler of this vision is the 'Code of Practice for the Development of Research Staff' ('Code of Practice'), a comprehensive resource which identifies key roles and responsibilities of research staff, principal investigators and the university. This approach to embedding the principles of the Concordat has been informed by a 'conversational tour' at departmental, faculty, and university-level, eliciting the views of researchers, academics and relevant professional services.

### Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection

Lancaster's recruitment and selection processes continue to be informed and underpinned by the People Strategy, a key aim of which is to attract and retain the highest quality staff. The 2016 Lancaster staff survey showed that 91% of the institution's 288 research staff believes the University acts fairly with regard to recruitment regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, religion or sexual orientation.

The university continues to explore innovative ways of attracting and retaining research staff, recognising the challenges of fixed-term, externally funded employment contracts - specifically the creation of researcher 'pools', and piloting faculty-level research staff induction sessions e.g. Faculty of Health and Medicine.

### Principle 2: Recognition and Value

Recognising the value and contribution made to research excellence is a key element of the Code of Practice. An institution-wide review of Lancaster's Performance and Development scheme has been undertaken and a new process will be rolled-out during 2018, building on the considerable efforts to embed good performance management practice in all departments over the last six years. This is borne out by the 2016 Lancaster staff survey which confirm regular, useful, performance reviews and 88% of researchers confirming recognition for work well done, against a 82% institutional average.

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

Lancaster remains committed to developing and nurturing its research talent, ensuring relevant opportunities for researchers at all career stages. Discipline-specific support is offered at departmental and faculty level, while institution-wide provision principally comes from Careers, the Library, Research and Enterprise Services and Organisation and Educational Development (OED). OED takes a lead in coordinating this institutional offer, all of which foregrounds the value of integrating research staff and academics and learning within a 'borderless research community'.

A key example of this is OED's Researcher Development Programme (RDP). Launched in 2014/15, and unique in the sector, the RDP ran at capacity again in 2016/17. The programme's overarching aim is to enhance researcher effectiveness, aligning with Lancaster's 2020 strategy; the principles of the Concordat and mapped against Vitae's Researcher Development Framework. The RDP has changed practice and enhanced research performance and continues to evaluate strongly, participants identifying as beneficial the opportunity to share experience and develop within a cohort that is an interdisciplinary mix of research staff and academics.

Further initiatives e.g. writing retreats, peer2peer coaching, a 'writing club' and a 'pause day' have been designed, open to research staff and academics, embedding the benefits of the learning further. In the light of this success, a parallel Principal Investigators Development Programme was launched in 2015/16 employing the same model of coaching, plus master-class events. This provides a key vehicle for promoting the good management of research staff and embedding the principles of the Concordat amongst research leaders.

The last two years has also seen the establishment of targeted development for particular career stages. The newly created Deans' Professorial Programme means that Lancaster now has a researcher development offer from postdoc to Professor, thereby enabling the promotion of career pathways and support for progression.

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 all.

## **Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities**

Lancaster recognises that excellent research requires the roles and responsibilities of all participants to be clearly set out and the establishment of open, honest and mutually beneficial working relationships. The new Code of Practice seeks to reinforce this by outlining the roles and responsibilities of both research staff and principal investigators and establish greater consistency of practice.

Lancaster's pan-institutional Research Staff Association (RSA), founded in 2013, continues to provide a voice for research staff at all levels, bringing early career stage and experienced researchers together into the same development space. The Association's Steering Group plans a programme of events which to date has focused on researcher well-being, career development and shaping the research environment. The annual RSA Christmas Fayre features a showcase of university resources relevant to researchers. In direct support of the Concordat agenda, the RSA also held a series of 'World Cafés' in 2017 aimed at eliciting the views of research staff which has informed the development of Code of Practice.

Members of the RSA Steering Group also sit on Lancaster's Concordat Implementation Group (CIG), and make a significant contribution to the leadership, embedding and monitoring of the institutional action plan. This distinctive approach taken by Lancaster has been recognised by the UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA) and has led to the Organisational Developer leading researcher development being invited to act as Regional Research Staff Association Advisor, and appointment to Co-Chair, UKRSA.

## **Principle 6: Equality and Diversity**

Lancaster's institutional [Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2013-16](#) is monitored regularly by the Equality and Diversity Committee, with faculties asked to consider issues such as the diversity profile of their researchers. Recently introduced institution-wide policies have also been introduced which are applicable to researchers such as [shared parental leave](#) and the [Maternity/Adoption Research Support Fund](#) (MARS). Uptake of these initiatives is monitored and promotional approaches adapted to suit. Lancaster holds an institutional [Athena SWAN Bronze award](#), and is currently working towards a Silver submission, actively signifying its commitment to fair employment practice, irrespective of status; and the attraction and retention of a diverse workforce across all academic departments, faculties and professional services.

## Principle 7: Implementation and Review

The Concordat Implementation Group (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 Steering Group remains a valuable element in both assessment of progress and raising the profile and visibility of the Concordat and HR Excellence Award.

Lancaster's 2016 Staff Survey was enhanced to specifically report on role categories, enabling research staff responses to be compared with other groups across the university. Combined with CROS/PIRLS, the consistency of these data sources provide a quantitative benchmark for future reviews and evaluation. In addition, the RSA and growing researcher representation in Lancaster's committee structures provide vital feedback mechanisms to Lancaster's senior team on the extent to which we address the needs of researchers. Lancaster will continue to identify structural mechanisms for enabling dialogue between researchers, PIs and Lancaster's senior team and further embed the 'researcher voice' within the institution's decision-making fora.

### 4. Strategy for next two years (2017-19)

The 2014 REF confirmed Lancaster as a world-leading research university. It is the only one of the eight most research intensive universities in the North of England to have had funding increased because of the quality and volume of our research. A major strength is Lancaster's thriving interdisciplinary research, visible through our Institutes and Research Centres and through the creation of a 'borderless research culture' (referenced in our 2015 submission) where researchers at all levels, from postdoctoral researchers to professors, are encouraged to learn and develop together.

However, far from complacent, we will continue to culturally embed the principles of the Concordat across the institution. Lancaster has updated its [Action Plan](#) which sets out the focus for 2017-19 and the following key priorities for this period are particularly significant (as referenced in the action plan):

	Key priority	Success measures
1	Secure greater buy-in to the Concordat agenda & commitment to the 2017-19 action plan	-Briefing and discussion of the Concordat agenda at the University Leadership Team. -Appointment of a Concordat Lead in each Faculty. -Develop a reporting structure which facilitates the embedding of actions within faculties. -Identification and sharing of good practice in faculties/departments.
2	Reinforce Principal Investigator responsibilities as leaders and managers of research staff	-Impact of the new Code of Practice for the Development of Research Staff identified by CIG and reported to University Research Committee. -10% increase in research leader participation in relevant professional development (e.g. Research Leadership Development Programme). -Continued excellent research leadership as recognised through a sub-set of indicators within Lancaster's 2017 Staff Survey.
3	Pro-actively identify and develop future research leaders	-Increase the number of fellowship applications by 10%. -Evaluate the effectiveness of the 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lectureship Scheme to explore wider opportunities for talent development. -Effective use of Lancaster's revised Performance and Development Review scheme as evidenced by the Staff Survey/CROS/PIRLS.
4	Promote and expand mentoring practice across the research community	-50% of the first cohort on the new 2017/18 'Odyssey Mentoring Programme' comprise research and academic staff. -10% increase in mentor-matches made within relevant development programmes (e.g. Researcher Development Programme/Research Leadership Development Programme) -Promote and encourage mentoring amongst research staff and research leaders.
5	Enhance awareness of research career pathways	-Engage with faculties to identify appropriate, discipline-specific career pathways. -Increase in positive responses re. career progression in CROS/PIRLS/LU Staff Survey. -Continue 'career pathways' as a central theme for Research Staff Association activity. -20% increase in the number of research staff accessing the Careers Service.
6	Enhance Lancaster's practices re. recruitment, retention & development of research staff	-Agreement of refined fixed term contract policy with the Trade Unions. -Roll-out and communication plan for this policy developed and implemented. -New initiatives such as researcher 'pools' piloted and evaluated.
7	Ensure researcher representation within Lancaster's internal governance structures	-Expand the role of the Research Staff Association to enable research staff representation on all relevant university committees.