



## University of Salford HR Excellence in Research Award Two Year Report

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents progress on the University of Salford's implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. In September 2019 an institutional mapping exercise took place that mapped current commitment to the revised Concordat principles. This has been provided in the revised action plan (mapped against the new Concordat principles). The exercise helped us to identify that the actions set in 2018 for the 2018-2022 period largely focussed on Environment and Culture institution level responsibilities and Professional Career Development for Managers of researchers and the researchers themselves. In the 2020-2022 action plan, this still progresses critical activity in these areas but also identifies actions to address the new areas of the revised Concordat. Progress on these activities is provided in this document by relevant Concordat Principle heading. Both plans will be used to progress key actions over the next two year period as we fully transition fully into the revised Concordat principles.

#### How this evaluation was conducted and how researchers' views were taken into account

This review was undertaken by the University of Salford Researcher Development Working Group who act as an advisory and consultative forum at key stages of the design and development of researcher training. The group has representation from researchers at all levels and staff involved in researcher training and development. Salford continues to work closely with ECR and PGR communities through regular focus groups, informal discussions with researchers and through the continuous feedback model during and after training (formal evaluation) and the anonymous online suggestion box. Annual training reviews and evaluations took place, the progress and future priorities are discussed as regular items at the PGR Forum and Research & Enterprise Committee (REC) meetings. Consultation on the Concordat engagement took place in 2018, a mapping process to the revised Concordat took place in 2019 and a progress review on the Concordat action plan and priorities for further development of the plan took place in September 2020. Additional evaluation measures and consultation with the ECR community were in place during the University's Festival of Research in June/July 2019 to also feed back into this review. The University participates in the annual staff survey, and Research & Knowledge Exchange works with Schools and the Organisational Development (OD) teams to identify data of relevance to researchers and define future recommendations and actions.

### 2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2018-2020

Progress against specific actions identified on the 2018-22 Action Plan are provided in *italics*.

#### A. Recruitment and Selection

- Flexibility and accessibility in PGR programmes by developing a new PhD by Alternative Formats, new structured MPhil and additional employability/skills based programmes.
- Training and development to support teaching and onward employability for ECRs in the Academic Citizens programme that is aligned to teaching, developing eLearning and participants have the opportunity to submit to AdvanceHE to receive Associate Fellowship recognition. As part of the most recent programme, 12 PGR students successfully completed the programme and were awarded AFHEA status.
- *All research staff now complete 3 year plans which are mapped to the Academic Career Framework (ACF).*
- *536 individual bespoke training and development plans (ITPs) have been developed and 100% of plans developed for those submitted 3 year plans.*
- A package of support for researchers returning from a career break is underway. The package will include confidence development support for specific tasks such as grant writing, publications. Individuals' training and support needs will be identified through 3-year personal research strategies.

#### B. Recognition and Value

- *Our REF2021 Code of Practice was accepted for implementation in August 2019 by Research England. This sets out, in full, all necessary processes and timelines occurring between summer 2019 and the submission deadline of November 2020.*
- *A programme of raising your researcher profile online launched in 2018 has increased engagement with using online platforms such as ORCID. In a recent 2020 report, 291 out of 305 (95%) of staff with significant research responsibility has an ORCID connected to USIR.*
- *Development of training and development tools to support career management was made available to all researchers in June 2019 and uses newly purchased software 'Idea Puzzle@' (from Sept 2020) to develop and plan the research project.*



- *Creation of opportunities to develop new research methods through funding and dedicated time investment that includes external opportunities to develop new research methods. A programme of opportunities was available from Sept 2020.*
- The approach to training development included building confidence with one-to-one mentoring to develop writing style and mentoring support has been extended so that PGR's have access to a bespoke offer of support for the development of their thesis writing. This includes an RLF Fellow and development that focuses on wellbeing whilst writing.
- Specific promotional and employability workshops for staff such as 'Exploring the role of Reader' have been piloted with a view to rolling this out more widely across the University. Optional CV clinics also ran alongside the sessions to further support development and applications.

### **C. Support and Career Development**

- *Creation of an external network for PGRs was launched in October 2020 with the Inaugural Northern PGR Networking online event.*
- *An increase in the digital skills capability of ECR and PGR communities by increasing the number of digital outputs or assets (e.g. videos, media etc) by 20% by Jan 2020. This has now been achieved and the digital skills training has now been embedded into the core researcher development programme, co-created with the researcher community and developed into an ebook: Digital Skills Development: <https://usir.salford.ac.uk/49242/>*
- RKE funded a pilot Graduate Enterprise Studentship in our Acoustics Labs, helping us to refine and develop a model of engagement with industry and academia which is distinctive from iCASE because the researcher is positioned within academia and within industry, acting as an interpreter and fluent translator of the needs of one to the other.
- A new Orthotics and Prosthetics Doctoral Training Centre has been established.
- There's specific emphasis on wellbeing in training with additional and specialist sessions including: Hugh Kearns lectures, Writing and Thriving, RLF Fellow and peer-led seminars.
- The Impact coordinators have had specific development support and are now all researchers with significant research responsibility. Their wealth of research and impact experience has meant that they take on a mentoring role as part of their impact responsibilities to assist other less experienced colleagues, such as ECRs and Doctoral students.
- Specific support for PGRs during the Covid period including a 6 months fee waived extension to deadlines, Covid-affected thesis statement, electronic submission, online viva's and assessments.
- Mid-Career Researcher support in the form of an interinstitutional mentoring programme has been established to rollout a mentoring scheme in January 2021. The aim of the scheme is to support collaboration, networking and career development and expose researchers to different research environments, institutions and practices.

### **D. Researchers' Responsibilities**

- *Enhance compliance processes such as Research Ethics and Researcher Integrity with 100% of new starting researchers completing the compliance training series and PGRs completing research ethics action plans. The introduction of a new ethics app further supports this and has reduced the ethics submission turnaround time.*
- *Improve accessibility to supervisor support resources with increase access to training for ECRs, PGRs and research Staff. 80% of supervisors accessed support by July 2020 and attendance increased by 20% during this period. In addition to this at least 30% of supervisors accessed the online resource of wellbeing support.*
- As part of our institutional commitment to the responsible use of research metrics, in 2019 the University of Salford became a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) [<https://sfdora.org/read/>]. However, signing DORA is just the first step. By early 2020, our academic-led task Responsible Research Assessment task group will have produced a set of complementary institutional principles and guidance, as well as a roadmap to drive the changes needed to make sure we live by these principles.
- We value an approach to research assessment founded on integrity and transparency and have designed our REF processes accordingly. Getting it right means we recognise, celebrate and foster research excellence; and we evaluate our researchers in fair, accurate and transparent ways, including through the responsible use of research metrics in decision-making.

### **E. Diversity and Equality**

- *Improve accessibility off campus to training and development resources and support through a new online offer. The offer delivered over 176 instances of online training between March and October 2020 (an increase of over 100% compared to 2018-19).*
- Our approach to REF is aligned fully with our institutional strategy and policy for inclusion and diversity, the purpose of which is: 'to create an inspirational, inclusive learning and working environment, celebrating the diversity of our University community in our everyday conversations'. The development of our Code of Practice



has been a joint effort by our REF Team, Inclusion & Diversity Team, HR and our academic community and we are committed to addressing inequalities in our research environment particularly within research leadership roles.

- Women in Research task and finish group, which reviewed research policies and practices from the gender equality perspective. Outcomes included the provision of a package to support women returning to research after a career break (seed funding, mentoring, contact while away from the workplace). Also improved systems and processes to encourage/facilitate PGRs to take parental leave.

#### F. Implementation and Review

- *An embedded wellness and wellbeing approach across the research community with ‘wellness’ as a regular item on the Researcher Development Working Group and PGR Forum.*
- *Improvement to access, resources and support on internal and external webpages, is resulting in an increase in web traffic.*
- *Mid-point review of Action Plan: The review has taken place and includes an audit of participation and outcomes of training. The review also examines the impact of Covid and remote working on researcher development engagement.*

#### 4. NEXT STEPS – 2020-2022 Actions Summary (Please refer to the [detailed action plan](#) for full details)

<p><b>A: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3-5-year Researcher Career Development Plans: Impact Action Plans to be put in place post-REF 2021 with 70% of the ECR community.</li> <li>● Create improved accessible PhD formats that are inclusive and increases PGR numbers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase PhD student numbers through the development of a flexible and accessible PhD format: This is to be measured by a 10% increase in student recruitment by 2022.</li> <li>○ Embed creative and digital and co-creation (ICZs) to enhance impact and provide additional: A 20% increase in PGR publications from 2018-2022 and 30% of the PGR population</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Enhanced support for returning researchers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A package of support for researchers returning from a career break: Measured through personal development feedback and a 10% increase in research outputs by Sept 2022.</li> <li>○ Development of a specific recruitment programme to target potential returners: At least 5 researchers to be recruited through this route by 2022.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>B: RECOGNITION AND VALUE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enhanced routes for progression and development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creation of clear pathways to promotion by January 2022.</li> <li>○ Development tools to be evaluated by Sept 2021.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Enhanced research methods support and increase in participation. Encourage the dissemination and sharing of best practice so that at least 40% of Researchers have accessed this specific development support.</li> <li>● External networks and industrial collaboration partnerships - support for conferences, travel, communities of practice and increase access to external funding.</li> </ul>
<p><b>C: SUPPORT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development of a wellbeing concordat for ECRs with at least 20% ECRs from each School attendance.</li> <li>● Creations of ECR and PGR networks and mentorship, 20% of the eligible Research community to have engaged by Sept 2022. Enhance existing mentoring and networks with 50% of the community accessing the support by July 2022.</li> </ul>
<p><b>E: DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improved access to networks and support: BME and LGBT research communities increase access by 20%, 50% increase in researcher driven activities through peer-to-peer support measured by increased online traffic by 40%.</li> </ul>