

HR Excellence in Research 2018-2020 self-assessment, Loughborough University

During the past two years Loughborough University has made good progress towards many of the actions set out in our Concordat action plan. Centrally coordinated activities have been particularly effective, including much improved integration with general staff initiatives due to the People strategy led by the People and Organisational Development (formerly HROD). The School-level actions have been generally slower to progress, reasons for this include the intense preparations for the Research Excellence Framework and significant disruption due to the pandemic; we hope to make headway on these aspects in the coming year. In addition to our original plans from 2018-20, Loughborough has led on significant partnerships in researcher skills and employability. This includes the leading cross-cutting Skills element of the Energy Research Accelerator (www.era.ac.uk), a Midlands Innovation initiative which has supported doctoral training for Energy researchers since 2016 and recently expanded to include postdoctoral researchers. Loughborough also led a bid to Research England to secure a £4M investment to establish the Centre for Postdoctoral Development in Infrastructure Cities and Energy (C-DICE). This project brings together 18 UK HEIs and industry partners, and an additional £3.4M in matched contributions, in addition to other stakeholders such as Vitae, with the intention of creating a step change in postdoctoral development for Loughborough University and our wide network of partners in the UK and beyond.

Loughborough's HR Excellence plan and progress at Loughborough focusses primarily on the community of around 300 research-only staff, however there are around 1500 research students at the University and in the region of 800 Research, Teaching and Enterprise staff. Therefore, there are many wider opportunities available to research staff not fully captured here, through both Organisational Development and Doctoral College initiatives, providing additional support and aimed at developing a thriving research culture.

Internal evaluation of progress towards alignment with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers Evaluation

Evaluation of progress was undertaken by a team including the Research Staff Working Group (Membership inc. Head of Researcher Development, the Research Staff and Student Development Advisor, HR Advisor and Loughborough University Research Staff Association), the Careers Consultant (researcher lead), and other staff from across professional services, and members of the University's Research Committee. During the evaluation process, researchers' views were taken into account via survey responses (including the Careers in Research Online Survey) and specific consultation with LURSA. A draft of the plan was shared with LURSA and Associate Deans for Research, feedback from whom was used to inform the final version of the report, and forward plan. Final approval was given by Pro Vice Chancellor (Research), Director of Research and Enterprise and Director of Organisational Development. Where complementarity exists, linkages are made between the Researcher Concordat and other relevant initiatives to ensure that the agenda supporting Researcher Development is embedded, for example in work towards Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter.

Key achievements & progress against implementation plan

Research leadership continues to be a priority and is a core theme in our research strategy (CALIBRE) and since 2018 the University has made progress in the following key areas which were specifically identified in the previous plan, with further detail available in the full implementation plan:

Map to Implementation Plan (Principle-Action). Task and measures	Respons-ibility	Status/Progress
(P1-1, P1-2) Research Staff Code of Practice (CoP) updated following consultation, including amendments to process for open-	HROD	Complete

ended contracts being offered. CoP approved by Human Resources Committee. CROS 2019 indicated increased awareness (5%) and understanding (13%) of CoP overall compared to 2017.		
(P1-5, P1-6) Review of accommodation for new staff and visitors. Updated guidance for Accommodation Centre and new staff, 'rent-a-room' project initiated to establish better support for new staff, with international research staff and doctoral researchers expected to significantly benefit.	HROD	Complete plus new action ongoing
(P2-1) One-stop-shop for training and development with development opportunities consolidated, single website for accessing resources supporting research. Researcher development prioritised, increase in quantity and variety of development.	HROD & REO	Ongoing
(P2-4) Revised process for conversion from Fixed-Term to Open-Ended contracts implemented, with improved transparency.	HROD	Complete
(P3-1, P3-2, P6-5) All eligible research staff participate in PDR, research staff specific guidance, with further reviews taking place in consultation with research staff via LURSA to align expectations. Every staff member will have an EDI objective following PDR in 2021	CAP, HROD	Complete and ongoing as embedded activity
(P3-3) Considerable success in building Fellowship pipeline with 39 externally funded Fellowships awarded since 2016, and 19 Doctoral Prize Fellows who receive bespoke development programme and mentoring. Key success indicators are diversity of the population, funding awarded (£13.1M since 2016), and outputs.	REO	Complete and ongoing as embedded activity
(P3-4) To improve public engagement 16 Researchers participated in "Voice of Young Science" and keynote presentation from Sense About Science at annual research conference, Loughborough PR have launched a suite of media training resources for researchers.	HROD, MA	Complete
(P3-5) Significant regional and national engagement from LU staff supporting researcher development including leading initiatives such as C-DICE, and engaging in CPD.	REO, HROD	Complete
(P4-6, P7) The Loughborough Women's network has re-launched as the Maia network, including a mentoring scheme with good research staff uptake. An institutional Coaching, Mentoring and Buddying scheme is in development, plus a scheme for BAME staff.	HROD	Ongoing
(P4-4) Access to training for research staff via the Doctoral College portal has improved, with 18% of staff having an account. This is in addition to training provided for staff.	HROD	Complete
(P5-4) Improved promotion of Vitae resources to research staff	HROD	Complete
(P6-3) Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment team formed with bronze application in preparation	Planning	Complete
(P6-4) Six of nine Schools have been awarded Athena SWAN awards or have submitted applications, with the remainder on track to achieve this by October 2022 as planned.	Planning	Ongoing
(P7-3) CROS and PIRLS ran in 2019 with specific actions approved by Research Committee and incorporated into the action plan.	REO, HROD	Complete

Key achievements against new actions added since 2018

In addition to progress against objectives in our plan, new objectives and opportunities were identified and progressed since the last report. These have included participating in the National Postdoc Appreciation Week in 2020, providing live events and on-demand resources, with

signposting to additional opportunities. These events alone resulted in participation from around 15% of Loughborough Research Staff and provided an important touch point for the researcher community during the pandemic. Loughborough is part of the Energy Research Accelerator (ERA) partnership that covers 8 Midlands Innovation Universities. In 2016 Loughborough initiated, and has since led, the [ERA Skills programme](#). This initiative initially concentrated on creating a cohort of doctoral researchers based across the ERA partners, building on £2.5m in co-investment in doctoral scholarships from ERA partners, and provides bespoke doctoral skills training over and above that which is available at individual institutions, with a focus on Energy. ERA Skills now extends to postdoctoral researchers and frequently provides development opportunities and profiles their work, such as at the ERA conference and in postdoc appreciation week. A new and exciting development, building on ERA Skills is the successful £4M joint initiative with the UK Collaboratorium for Research in Infrastructure, and Cities (UKCRIC) to create from January 2021 the Centre for postdoctoral development in Infrastructure, Cities and Energy ([C-DICE](#)). This new programme funded by Research England with £3.4M co-investment is led by Loughborough, with the Universities of Birmingham and Cranfield as Co-leads. The partnership spans 18 HEIs, industry and other partners, including Vitae. The programme will provide opportunities to postdoctoral skills and careers through training, secondments, sandpits and Fellowships, with the vision to create a step change in postdoctoral development in the UK. C-DICE supports 10FTE staff across the partner Universities to deliver this ambitious programme.

The University's Health and Safety response to the Covid pandemic allowed research staff to return to work in as rapid and safe a manner as possible. Research that benefitted the UK's Covid response was continued during the first lockdown period in Spring 2020; following this further research laboratories and workshops were reopened from July, with stringent social distancing and personal protection measures in place. The University created its own track and trace system, plus testing centres for both symptomatic and asymptomatic students and staff, to ensure quick response to any Covid cases on campus. The testing centres also enabled researchers to obtain Covid flight certificates, enabling easier movement across research facilities. The University was sector-leading in its safe-re-opening of labs and research facilities to minimise disruption to research.

Future Strategy

The vision and future strategy for HR excellence at Loughborough is to create a culture and environment where researchers are recognised for their skills and capabilities in their roles and can further develop their expertise to take their careers forward. We will create a step change in postdoctoral researcher development both through the opportunities afforded by C-DICE, based at Loughborough, and through engagement with the new Concordat. Our next steps will be to become a signatory to the 2019 Concordat, as approved by our Research Committee, and undertake a gap analysis to create new actions for the plan. Key issues we anticipate will be developing the research culture including through leadership, management and supervision training and a culture of mentorship and coaching; work in these areas is already underway. We plan to be working more closely at the level of individual Schools to ensure localised engagement with researchers and senior leadership in the Schools. Equality Diversity and Inclusion is now an institutional priority and is being embedded across activities. The effect of the pandemic on Research Staff employment will be examined through an analysis of HR data and the experiences of RS gathered via CEDARS 2021, to be reported to the Research Staff Working Group and appropriate University committees.

Loughborough University will see significant change throughout 2021 which will doubtless affect ongoing developments for Research Staff and which will be integrated into our future gap analysis, new University Strategy and new Research Strategy.