

Implementation Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

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For a more detailed report of progress against AP2022, and of AP2024 with impacts and success measures, see [Appendix 1 \(Backward Facing\) 2022-2024 Action Plan and Progress Report](#) and [Appendix 2 \(Forward Facing\) 2024-2027 Action Plan](#). [Appendix 3 contains lessons learned from the implementation of AP2022.](#)

Creating and Maintaining a Positive and Inclusive Research Culture

Queen Mary's Mission is to create a truly inclusive environment, building on our cherished cultural diversity, where students and staff flourish, reach their full potential, and are proud to be part of the University. It is home to 643 postdocs and fellows (the primary beneficiaries of the Concordat), 1,240 academics, and 2,090 PGRs across three Faculties: Medicine and Dentistry (FMD), Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), and Science and Engineering (S&E), sub-divided into 19 Schools/ Institutes, plus two interdisciplinary institutes. A supportive research culture is central to our strategy, which includes entrepreneurialism, inclusion, productivity, curiosity, and integrity at its five themes. Recognised for our distinctive, world-leading curiosity driven and applied research, we aim to attract the best researchers worldwide, and develop our staff and research students to become world leaders in disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and innovation. We regularly assess how we support, review, and undertake research to foster diversity and inclusion and ensure that our research practice is of the highest quality in terms of research ethics and integrity. Implementing the RD Concordat is key to delivering our strategy.

Teams supporting research culture at institutional level include Research Services (supporting research funding and collaboration, PGR student support, impact, and commercialisation, and the new Research Culture (RC) team), the Queen Mary Academy (QMA) (supporting development of researchers and educators), Careers and Enterprise (C&E), The Centre for Public Engagement (CPE), and HR's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team. Focused support for disciplines is provided at faculty and school levels.

Our investment in a new 3 FTE RC Team demonstrates our continued commitment to research culture. Queen Mary's new research culture strategy aims to foster and celebrate excellent research *cultures* across the university, recognising differences in approach across disciplines and in different areas, but linked through our five core principles (above). Early actions for the team include improving our management of data pertinent to research culture, to use it in conjunction with other relevant data sets (e.g. CEDARS, Staff survey) and input from our research community to determine areas of priority. We anticipate these may include fostering interdisciplinarity, supporting career development and progression (including leadership and management skills), and enhancing confidence in reporting mechanisms around bullying and harassment.

The QMA's Researcher Development Team (RD/QMA) oversees the RD Concordat Implementation Group (RDCIG) and runs and analyses CEDARS. RD/QMA delivers a programme to support [postdocs' professional development](#), runs [Postdoc Appreciation Week](#) activities, and co-creates the new [Queen Mary Postdoc Conference](#) with a multi-disciplinary team of postdocs. The CPE supports our commitment to being an institution connected to communities where our work has impact, with Queen Mary being the first Platinum Engage Watermark holder from the NCCPE. Investment in the EDI Team brings five new colleagues, leading on Gender, Race, LGBTQIA+ and Disabled Equality. They run [Staff Networks](#) providing peer support and social interaction supporting a positive and inclusive working environment. We renewed our Athena Swan Silver award in 2023 and will submit for Gold in 2027. We are working toward a Bronze Race Equality Charter submission in 2024, including actions supporting postdocs.

Faculty level research culture discussions led to 10 faculty-owned actions being contributed to AP2024. Researchers are supported locally by managers, mentors and colleagues. There are research meetings, journal clubs, workshops, and five Schools/ Institutes have postdoc-led groups (representing 70% of postdocs). Postdocs participate in local decision-making committees and recruitment panels, with actions 8 and 9 of AP2024 extending this.

Queen Mary's Institutional Approval Process

Meeting bimonthly, the RDCIG oversees implementation, reporting and action planning. It is chaired and managed by the RD/QMA and has wide stakeholder representation. Each faculty has two postdocs, one academic, and the Faculty Strategic Research Manager; reporting into their faculty leadership. Institutional representatives are the Executive Officer Research and Innovation, a Senior Strategic HR partner, and an EDI Manager. The new Research Culture Manager joined in October 2023, replacing the Executive Officer Research and Innovation. AP2022 Aim9 describes RDCIG improvements.

Data informing action planning included CEDARS 2021, CEDARS 2023, Staff Survey 2023, QM systems data (e.g., HR, training booking), and input from the Postdoc Conference. The Conference (Additional Action A) was an important conduit for postdoc voice, bringing postdocs together to discuss their experiences, summarised as six recommendations in a postdoc-authored paper to the Vice Principal for Research and Innovation's (VP-R&I) Research and Innovation Board (RIB) informing AP2024.

The RDCIG Manager compiled progress reports and actions from across Queen Mary in this Report and Action Plan, which was approved by RIB (which includes the faculty Deans for Research and is chaired by the VP-R&I), then the Senior Executive Team (comprising the Principal, Senior Vice-Principal and Vice-Principals), and finally by Council.

Progress Against Our Previous Action Plan (2022-2024)

Environment and Culture: Institution

Aim 1 - **Complete**. Our Concordat Action Plan launch event in 2022 ran successfully online in March 2022 with over 70 participants.

Aim 7- **Complete**. HR's EDI Team recruited five new posts to support Gender, Race, and LGBTQIA+ and Disabled equity work. The new structures, resourcing, and strategies, along with the Gender Impact Plan (2022-27) are published in the [2021/22 Annual Report](#).

Environment and Culture: Institution & Researchers

Aim 6- **Complete**. The RDCIG's work with research staff associations (RSAs) was successful, with the two pre-existing RSAs (combined representing 26% of the postdoc population) presenting at two major postdoc events in 2022 and 2023, increasing postdoc/ECR- led cultural activity, with five Schools/ Institutes currently involved (representing approximately 70% of our postdoc population). Supporting locally-led postdoc organisations will remain a priority for AP2024.

Environment and Culture: Institution, Academic Managers of Researchers & Researchers

Aim 9- **Complete**. RDCIG was revised to better represent postdocs, and to de-centralise action planning. RDCIG expanded to include two postdoc/ ECR representatives and one academic staff (manager) representative from each faculty (updated [Terms of Reference](#)), and representation from the new RC team. This new structure allowed better communication with stakeholders, leading to new de-centralised Concordat Action Planning mechanisms which contributed 10 faculty-level Actions to AP2024. (See lessons learned in the following section).

Employment: Institution & Researchers

Aim 2- **Partially Complete**. Welcome (induction) [resources and information](#) for postdocs were launched in December 2023 and new Researcher Induction events were piloted during Postdoc Appreciation Week 2023. The Welcome events will run 2-3 times per year, led by the QMA/RD and RC teams. RDCIG will review the Welcome Pack resources annually.

Employment: Institution & Academic Managers of Researchers & Researchers

Aim 8 - **Complete**. We evaluated the training needs for managers of researchers through analysing training needs recorded in managers' appraisals and through CEDARS (including input from the

managers, and from the researchers being managed). We identified leadership and management as areas of importance, and the need to specifically support academic leaders and managers. The QMA recruited a new [Academic Leadership Development](#) team (3 FTE) who launched their new programme in 2023 and will continue to build in 2023/24, with programmes for research leaders.

Professional and Career Development: Institution

Aim 3 – **Carried forward**. Aligning with postdoc needs and institutional strategic aims, we are re-imagining our postdoctoral Researcher Development Programme to reflect researcher feedback and institutional priorities. Detail on this is provided in the ‘lessons learnt’ section and this work is being built upon in AP2024 as Action 11.

Aim 4 - **Partially Complete/Carried forward**. We introduced a new Learning Management System (LMS), Totara, in October 2023. This LMS has functionality to enable users to better document, track, and plan their CPD activity to be implemented in a later stage of the project. This action is carried forward in AP2024 as Action 17, along with a programme of support to help postdocs plan their CPD time. This also links to work the RC team will be doing on promoting and normalising taking of CPD days for researchers across the university.

Aim 5 – **Partially Complete with follow-on actions**. The RD/QMA-run mentoring programme was reviewed in 2021/22. A new approach [to mentoring was trialled in 2022/23](#) with four Queen Mary Schools/ Institutes, with improved mentor matching and facilitated by the academic mentoring platform sfG MentorNet. The pilot comprised 14 mentor-mentee pairs and will be completing next month with feedback surveys. The pilot will inform the mentoring scheme that will be launched in 2023/24 as part of the Postdoctoral Researcher Development provision (AP2024 – Action 19).

Aim 10 – **Partially Complete/Carried forward**. Postdocs were invited to join the Entrepreneurs Club seminar series from July 2022 to network and explore options to commercialise their research. Initial proposals for training for postdocs started between RD/QMA and QMI in 2022, but this work was put on hold following the restructure of RD/QMA. This part of the action is carried forward in AP2024 as Action 14.

For details of lessons learned from the implementation of AP2022, see [Appendix 3](#).

Additional Actions

These actions were completed during the 2022-2024 reporting window and were additional to the actions listed as part of AP2022.

Environment and Culture: Institution and Researchers

Additional Action A: Building on the Concordat Launch event (Aim 1), the RD/QMA and a team of 17 postdocs co-created the inaugural [Queen Mary Postdoc Conference](#) in March 2023. The Conference gathered nearly 100 postdocs to develop skills, present research, hear about careers, learn about institutional strategy and support, network. and build community across discipline and faculty boundaries, and discuss research culture as they experience it. The conference chairs authored a paper with six recommendations presented to RIB in August 2023 which informed this action plan. The Conference highlighted data issues in identifying postdocs from our HR systems, leading to a more accurate way that we are using in the interim whilst we explore this further in Action (4) in AP2024. Following the success of the Conference, we will run it annually going forward (Action 1).

Additional Action B: The new RC Team have developed the Queen Mary Research Culture Strategy, building on feedback from community consultation to outline plans to develop a positive and inclusive research culture at Queen Mary. The Strategy has been approved by RIB and will go to SET for approval in February followed by a programme of wider dissemination and

sharing of good practice, including with postdocs. The actions that overlap with the Concordat principles have been included in the 2024-2027 action plan (Actions 3-6).

Additional Action C: The RD/QMA team ran an appreciation campaign for postdocs during Postdoc Appreciation Week, inviting colleagues to send a message of appreciation to a postdoc. Each message was shared on social media and the postdoc was sent a lunch voucher. This provided recognition of individual postdocs and raised the profile of their work and the range of ways that postdocs contribute to their communities and research cultures.

Employment: Institution

Additional Action D: Queen Mary has increased the entry-level postdoc salary to bring it in-line with other London institutions. Prompted by an analysis of London postdoc starting salaries led by our VPR&I, as of May 2023, starting postdoc salaries at Grade 4 have been aligned with other London institutions, with the goal of making Queen Mary more attractive to postdoc candidates.

Additional Action E: Two Daphne Jackson Fellowships were funded to support flexibility and support for researchers returning from career breaks. These were recruited in October 2023. FMD will apply to host these positions annually.

Additional Action F: A new Senior Staff Scientist job profile was added in FMD, approved by HR in June 2023, introducing a new non-academic senior scientist position, equivalent to a new lecturer.

Strategic alignment for 2024-2027

Our future actions (listed as superscript) to implement the Concordat build upon our past successes and apply a postdoc lens to the Research and Innovation Enabling plan, part of the University Strategy 2030, and our institutional values:

- Attract the best researchers from all over the world^{1,2,7,11-13, 15, 19, 20, 23} and support our researchers to develop^{1,2,5-7,8,9,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18} and to work collaboratively^{1,5,7,8,14,17,19} and across boundaries^{1,2,5,7,10-15,19}.
- Significantly increase external research funding, including our number of externally-funded Research Fellows and postdocs^{15,19}, and provide them with a core training of essential skills and competencies^{5,6,15-21}, including in knowledge exchange¹⁹ and leadership^{1,2,15}, and allowing space for researchers to boost their skills in line with their aspirations for the next stages of their careers, either within or outside of academia^{1,2,8,10,12,13,15-22}.
- Produce world-leading research outputs, with a focus on global and local economic and societal impact. We will ensure that our research is accessible^{1,10,11,18-20}.
- Nurture a world-class research culture^{all}, including capturing the researcher voice more efficiently^{1,7,12,13} recognising and celebrating successes^{1,11}, researching ethically and with integrity^{6,10}, and fostering diversity and inclusion^{1,3,7,9,16}.
- The five themes of our RC Strategy are reflected in the action plan: entrepreneurialism¹⁹, inclusion^{1,3,7,9,12,13,16}, productivity^{1,2,4,5,7,16,17,19,20,21}, curiosity^{1,7,16,18}, and integrity^{6,10}.

2024-2027 Action Plan to implement the Concordat (AP2024)

Environment and culture

Action 1: RD/QMA will deliver an annual Postdoc Conference, co-created with postdocs, to build a cross- and inter-disciplinary community, develop leadership skills, present, contribute to creating a positive and inclusive culture, and be a conduit for postdoc voice engaging with senior leaders.

Action 2: RD/QMA will launch the Postdoc Peer Support Programme (PPSP), creating cross-disciplinary groups of postdocs following the 2022/23 pilot where participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and they reported improvements in wellbeing.

Action 3: The RC Team will Create a RC Steering Group (RCSG) to embed research culture and its leadership firmly within Queen Mary. The RCSG will work with the RC Team to identify initial priorities and develop representation at local level.

Action 4: Improved capturing and assessing of data to inform decision making. We have identified the need for more robust data regarding our research community and ecosystem, including better identification of sectors of our research community (such as postdocs).

Action 5: Use the Enhancing Research Culture Funding from Research England to directly benefit researchers and support delivery of the Research Culture strategic priorities. Examples include rolling out an 'Enhancing Research Cultures Fund' award and the 'Carers Career Development Fund', both of which are open to researchers, technicians as well as research support colleagues.

Action 6: Better embed RI Training across The University, available to researchers of all levels.

Action 7: S&E will support their postdocs to organise networking and socialising events (first event summer 2024) to promote inclusivity and discussion, leading to understanding and community.

Action 8: HSS will improve communication and awareness around HR processes with their postdoctoral researchers (e.g. promotion and redundancy) rolled out by start of 2024/25.

Action 9: FMD will Develop a new approach to monitoring and handling incidents of bullying, harassment and discrimination and Action 10: Develop of a new research integrity (RI) policy, including data integrity and a new approach to handling misconduct. Together, these will increase clarity, confidence, and transparency with these processes and promote greater engagement.

Employment

Action 11: The VP R&I's office will Re-evaluate the criteria and communications around the Research & Innovation Awards to ensure that awards criteria are open and accessible to post docs, and to promote post doc participation in all categories.

Action 12: HSS and Action 13 S&E will improve postdoc and ECR involvement in School and Faculty decision-making amplifying postdoc and ECR voices by increasing representation on committees.

Action 14: HSS will design and deliver a Research Induction event for new ECRs to communicate HSS- specific research processes, policies, and support services.

Professional Development of Researchers

Action 15: RD/QMA will build the new postdoc RD programme, introducing a new cohort approach to foster community amongst postdocs, and providing more in-depth and tailored learning. Within this programme the RD/QMA will:

- Action 16: Create a programme supporting BAME postdocs at this critical career stage.
- Action 17: Support postdocs to proactively engage with their 10 days CPD Activity.
- Action 18: Develop a new programme to support postdocs with knowledge exchange, research commercialisation and entrepreneurship.
- Action 19: Launch a postdoc mentoring solution informed by lessons from the 2022/23 pilot.

Action 20: HSS will develop and deliver a specific programme of careers workshops in collaboration with our Careers and Enterprise team to better support HSS postdocs and fellows.

Action 21: HSS and Action 22 S&E will better promote engagement with career progression planning for their postdocs and fellows

Action 23: FMD will put all postdocs on indefinite contracts (with a funding clause) to improve stability of postdoc employment.