

# HR Excellence in Research

*SIX-YEAR INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCHERS AT*

Queen Mary University of London

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## Institutional Context

Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) is organised into three Faculties: Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD), Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), and Science and Engineering (S&E), that are further subdivided down into 23 Schools and Institutes, located across three main research campuses in The City and East London. QMUL has approximately 727 research staff, further detailed by type in Appendix A.

QMUL's Researcher Development team's (RD) provision for researchers is varied and delivered collaboratively with various academic departments and other professional service units. It includes courses, workshops, events, online resources, and coaching and mentoring opportunities. In May 2017, the directorate containing RD, the Centre for Academic and Professional Development, along with two other directorates with a substantial stake in developing researchers, Student Services and Human Resources, were restructured. RD joined Academic Development in the new Student and Academic Services Directorate and the Leadership and Professional Development team moved to the HR Directorate. This restructure brought professional services units that co-deliver on specific institutional strategic priorities (operationally) closer and simplified their reporting structures. Coincident with this, RD had two vacancies for a period of five months which have now been filled. Though the combined effect of the restructure and vacancies was disruptive over 2016/17, our programme is now returning to its original capacity.

This report details our method of assessment, the progress made at QMUL in implementing the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (by principle), and our future strategy. The Action Plan for 2018-20 (AP2018) details examples of compliance and plans moving forward under each subsection of each principle and is included as Appendix C. Relevant metrics and success measures or deadlines are reported, as appropriate.

## How Internal Assessment was Undertaken

I undertook an internal review of the progress against AP2016 in consultation with HR colleagues, and members of the QMUL Research Staff Association (QRSAs). Data was collated from sources including Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2017, Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) 2017, the experience of researchers across QMUL collected by the QRSA, engagement data and participant feedback from various development providers at QMUL, and HR Systems (staff appraisal) data. Examples of good practice were collected through consultation with QRSA members, Athena SWAN self-assessment teams, and local research staff groups based in Schools and Institutes. I drafted AP2018 with the Head of RD, Dr Anna Price, and the HR Partner for S&E and HSS, Samantha Holborn. This informed initiatives to build on good practice and forge a path for 2018-20. The QRSA executive fed back on two drafts of AP2018 and the final draft was circulated for input and commentary amongst the whole of the QRSA mailing list (>100 researchers from across all Faculties), RD, the Director of HR, the Vice Principal for Research and his Advisory Group (VPRAG). This feedback informed the final action plan and report submitted to Vitae on 20 January, 2018.

## Highlighted Achievements on our Previous Action Plan (AP2016)

- **6% increase in number of CROS respondents (72%, 2017; 66%, 2015) receiving annual appraisals**, and 10% increase in those reporting of the usefulness of appraisal (61%, 2017; 51%, 2015; AP2016: Aim 1).
- **Induction events are reported more useful by researchers:** An increase in CROS respondent satisfaction with induction activities at institutional (15% increase), departmental (18%) and local (10%) levels (AP2016: Aim 2).
- **A QMUL-wide mentoring scheme for postdocs** was trialled in 2016/17 (AP2016: Aim 3) that provided a mentor for a cohort of 29 postdocs. Feedback collected part-way through the trial from mentees and mentors has been positive and this now forms part of the standard RD provision at QMUL.
- **The QPdA reformed as the QRSA** (AP2016: Aim 5). This researcher-led organisation has made Welcome Packs for new research staff (AP2016: Aim 2), runs events for all research staff types, has participated in this review, and is involved in cooperatively drafting policy on research staff development with key stakeholders at QMUL.
- QMUL introduced the **Springboard Women's Development Programme ran at QMUL in 2016/17**, which was attended by 31 researchers (AP2016: Aim 7) who continue to meet and support each other.
- **QMUL holds 11 externally-accredited Equality and Diversity awards** including an institutional Athena SWAN Silver award in 2016, eight departmental level awards, and is a Stonewall Diversity Champion (AP2016: Aim 6).

## Principle 1: Recruitment and selection

**Context:** This principle is well-embedded at QMUL: our recruitment process is identical for all contract types; the creation of fixed-term posts must be justified; research staff are actively involved in selection to help ensure **diversity on selection panels** and **participation in decision making**; we actively engage with Euraxess since 2014 and list our job vacancies on their portal to **help attract world-class talent** support **researcher mobility**.

**Recent Achievements and Progress:** AP2016 detailed a researcher-initiated plan to simplify and standardise research staff job titles. This is now standard HR practice unless otherwise justified.

**Strategy for the next 2 years:** To use researcher feedback via the QRSA and CROS (c.f. Principle 7), and our equality and inclusion efforts to regularly review QMUL's recruitment and selection practices.

### Principle 2: Recognition and Value

**Context:** From AP2016 (Aim1): increase research staff engagement and satisfaction with the appraisal scheme.

**Recent Achievements and Progress:** CROS2017 showed an **increase in engagement (6%; CROS2017) with appraisal since AP2016 and a 10% increase in respondents who report the process as useful. Redeveloped training sessions were piloted** in 2016/17 by HR for both for **appraisers** and **appraisees** to ensure there are opportunities for both immediate (work-related) and long-term (career) developmental planning.

**Strategy for the next 2 years: Aim 1: Continued encouragement of research staff to engage with appraisal**, by promoting the '**Making the Most of Your Appraisal**' sessions. Review reporting mechanisms by HR-systems to better report on research staff engagement with appraisal. **Engagement with appraisal will be reviewed annually in March.** **Success Measure:** 10% increase in engagement (using E-appraisal data) and usefulness (CROS2019) by January 2020.

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

**Context:** Our aims from AP2016 included improving induction resources for researchers (Aim2), introduction of more mentoring opportunities for research staff (Aim 3), and further growth of the RD programme (Aim 4).

**Recent Achievements and Progress:** Engagement with QMUL induction events was comparable to that of our last report, though **CROS2017 respondents report increased usefulness of induction activities** at institutional (43% in 2017 from 27% in 2015), departmental (63% from 45%) and local (73% from 63%) levels. In addition, the **QRSA developed a set of Welcome Packs for new researchers** which are distributed by HR. The QRSA plans monthly social events at community establishments and communicates via a monthly newsletter.

Beginning in 2016/17, **RD piloted a trial of three separate approaches to postdoc mentoring. 29 mentees and 15 academic staff mentors enrolled.** Two mentors from outside QMUL (one in science policy) also participated. The trial period ends in March 2018 but feedback collected August 2017 was positive: e.g.: "having someone away from [my] field to speak to is helping a lot. I am more interested at this stage to apply for a fellowship". CROS data suggest an increase in desire to engage with mentoring (from 40% in 2015 to 50% in 2017). This scheme will form part of the standard RD provision from September 2017. QMUL continues to participate in the **B-Mentor** programme.

**New additions were made to the RD programme** at QMUL since 2016, offering training in at least five RDF sub-domains that were not previously represented (enrolment indicated in parenthesis):

- **Springboard:** enables women to give and receive more out of their lives and careers (E<sub>2017</sub>=32; RDF domain B);
- **Networking and Promoting Yourself:** how to grow your research network and profile (E<sub>2016</sub>=16, E<sub>2017</sub>=19; RDF B3);
- **The Aspiring Leader:** two introductory leadership workshops for postdocs (E<sub>2016</sub>=13, E<sub>2017</sub>=16, E<sub>2018</sub>=12; RDF D1);
- **Nature Masterclasses:** E-learning content focused on writing for publication in the sciences (E<sub>2017</sub>=178; RDF D2) – providing access for researchers at different campuses, in response to feedback;
- **Fellowship May:** 18 workshops in May 2017 with funders, current fellows, and funding panellists (E=73; RDF C3);
- **Intro to Statistics:** 5 sessions covering fundamentals and a hands-on and **SPSS** session (E<sub>2017</sub>=43; RDF A1, A2);
- Four new careers events: **Getting a STEM Industry Career** (E<sub>2017</sub>=22, E<sub>2018</sub>=18), **Non-academic CV workshops** (E<sub>2016</sub>=48, E<sub>2017</sub>=30), **LinkedIn workshop** (E<sub>2016</sub>=27, E<sub>2017</sub>=10), and **Networking with non-academic professionals** (E<sub>2016</sub>=31; RDF B3).

**Strategy for the next 2 years: Aim 2: The QRSA will review and update Welcome Packs for researchers yearly** (in August) with input from local RSAs (see Aim 5a), and biennial input from CROS by introduction of a specific question from 2019 onwards. **Aim 2a: To develop a printed pamphlet version of the Welcome Pack** for HR, Schools, and Institutes to distribute to newly hired researchers. **Success Measure:** produce and distribute pamphlet before July 2018. **Aim 3: Establishment of the Researcher Training Board:** this new structure that is being organised at QMUL. This body would improve communication and disseminate good practice between stakeholders that provide training for researchers and the Head of RD. **Success Measure:** Board to form and declare their aims and terms of service before July 2018. **Aim 3a: Renew efforts to encourage engagement with the RD training programme, using the Researcher Training Board.** **Success Measure:** 60% of research staff (re-)engaging with RD programme by July 2019.

### Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibility

**Context:** At QMUL, we attempt to foster a culture that empowers our researchers to take responsibility for their own career development. Our research staff are encouraged to discuss their career development plans in their annual appraisals (c.f. Principle 2). QMUL **encourages research staff input into policy and decision-making**, with arrangements differing locally, but examples include attendance at monthly staff meetings, contributions to research

committees, selection panels, safety boards, inclusion and diversity efforts (e.g. Athena Swan), and on selection panels. Some local research staff groups (e.g. [WHRI Postdoctoral Network](#)) are established, offering researchers opportunities to network. Our aims in AP2016 focussed on developing a centralised group (Aim5).

**Recent Achievements and Progress:** The QPda was re-formed to be more inclusive for all research staff, the QRSA, and has met monthly since December 2016. They are advised by a member of RD staff and an academic, and meet three times per year with the VP-Research. Their targets in AP2016 were to have stable representation from at least half the Schools/Institutes by the end of 2016/17. Thus far, representation is concentrated across two of the larger SMD Institutes, together with one of the HSS Schools. The remaining departments are being targeted throughout 2017/18. The QRSA are defining their terms of reference and strategy, informed by a survey they sent out to researchers in 2017. They have organised two networking events and a writing retreat for research staff, reaching over 120 research staff, and helped produce induction resources for researchers (c.f. Principles 3&4). The QRSA engages with researchers through social media and [monthly research staff newsletters](#).

**Strategy for the next 2 years:** **Aim 4: Continued Growth of the QRSA to ensure long-term stability.** Success Measure: representation from 50% of Schools/Institutes before July 2020 (see Appendix B-3.13); **Aim 4a: set out its terms of reference and 5-year strategy** in 2017/18 which will detail how it will work with local research staff networks. **Aim 4b: Implementation of a communications strategy to better network QMUL research staff.** The QRSA is evaluating tools to enable better electronic networking of QMUL researchers. Success Measures: develop and publish a communications strategy and terms of reference on their webpage by the end of July 2018. Implementation of a communications strategy, including a new tool to better network our researchers by December 2018. **Aim 5: QRSA to review researcher engagement with decision-making structures.** Success Measure: ensure that all QMUL departments offer their researchers a voice in relevant decision making by July 2020.

### Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

**Context:** QMUL is **perceived by CROS respondents as committed to equality and diversity**, however there is still room for progress. A small percentage (8%, compared to 11% in the Russell Group; CROS2017) have been discriminated against, with the top five types of perceived discrimination being: gender, age, caring-responsibility, pregnancy and maternity, or nationality. Female respondents report higher levels of discrimination than males, mirroring the national dataset. Our **Inclusion and Diversity champions' network has grown**, with regular meetings enabling the sharing of good practice across the university. [Unconscious Bias](#) and [Recruitment and Interview Selection](#) training are attended by research and academic staff; with it forming a requirement for new-hire academic staff. The [Women in Science and Engineering](#) group at QMUL continues its strong tradition of events promoting the **professional development of female researchers** at all career stages, across STEM. QMUL participates in the [B-Mentor](#) programme that provided support for BME ECRs. Our aims from AP2016 included continued support for Equality and Diversity Initiatives (Aim 6) and more targeted support for women researchers (Aim 7).

**Achievements and progress:** QMUL holds 11 inclusion and diversity awards including nine **Athena SWAN awards** (Institutional Silver, 2016; three departmental Silver awards; five departmental Bronze awards, including one in AHSSBL), one **Juno Champion** award, and a **Stonewall Diversity Champion** award. As part of our Silver action plan, QMUL will implement an exit questionnaire to better the career trajectories of our staff by September 2017.

**The Springboard Women's Development Programme** ran in 2016/17 for 31 researchers. This programme "increased assertiveness" and provided these women with networking opportunities to enable them to better plan their careers, and "to grow on both personal and professional level". Springboard will be offered again later this year.

**Strategy for the next 2 years:** Eight of our Schools are planning to submit action plans for Athena SWAN awards throughout 2017-19, and ECU Race Equality Mark award in 2020. **Aim 6 – Reward Manager (HR) to publish Gender Pay Report and carry out Equal Pay Audit at QMUL.** Deadlines: Gender Pay: March 2018. Equal Pay: December 2018.

### Principle 7: Implementation and Review

**Context:** QMUL has participated in **CROS since 2009 and PIRLS since 2013**.

**Recent achievements and progress:** Review of QMUL's implementation of the Concordat now has more input from our research staff via the QRSA. In addition to those researchers who fed-back through CROS, the mailing lists of the QRSA were used to collect information and feedback on this review and our AP2018 (Appendix 3). Engagement with CROS was lower in 2017 (15%) than in 2015 (22%). The response for PIRLS also fell from 10% in 2015 to 7% in 2017.

**Strategy for the next 2 years:** **Aim 7 – Increase engagement with CROS and PIRLS.** QMUL will continue to use CROS and PIRLS, alongside input from research staff groups to capture our researchers' experiences. We will review the approaches used in 2015 and 2017, and consult with HEIs with higher response rates to inform future approaches. Success Measure: double our response from 2017 in both surveys (approx. 150 for CROS and 200 for PIRLS).

