



Research and Knowledge Exchange

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

EU HR Excellence Award 4-year review
Summary of Achievements and 4-year report



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

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HR Excellence in Research “Summary of Achievements and Four Year Report – November 2017”

“We want Manchester Metropolitan University to be recognised as a great place to develop your research career”

Introduction

Our University’s Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy is designed to ensure that high-quality research has a sustainable long-term future at the University and plays an increasing role in defining our identity.

The Strategy includes a set of principal features that the University is following to create an outstanding ecosystem for the support of researchers and their activities.

As part of the ecosystem, we have a series of imaginative support, stimulation and mentoring schemes to provide talented individuals with the opportunity to engage in high-quality research regardless of which stage they are at in their research careers, or their working patterns.

A key characteristic of our approach is that we want our University to be recognised as a great place to develop a research career. Our Strategy includes targets for the training of researchers and the roll out of a suite of targeted interventions to facilitate engagement in high-quality research.

Over the last year or so, we have continued to focus on the aims of the Concordat embedding its implementation into the University’s governance structures and providing more focused support for its principles.

I hope that the work that we have done to create a vibrant and supportive environment for all researchers comes through in our submission and that we can continue to make improvements in line with the principles of the Concordat.

This 4-year report includes details of the steps our Steering Group took to evaluate progress against the principles of the Concordat, it also includes a summary of our achievements over the last 4 years and a section of our exciting plans in the years ahead.

Professor Richard Greene
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Knowledge Exchange

1. Introduction

Manchester Metropolitan University achieved the HR Excellence in Research award in 2013. This document provides a summary of the University's approach to a 4-year review carried out in 2017 and reported to Vitae in 2018. It provides details of our internal review processes followed by a summary of our achievements against the principles of the Concordat and an overview of our plans for the future.

2. Internal Evaluation of the Action Plan

The University's Research Concordat Steering Group is chaired by Josie Elson – Deputy Director of Human Resources. The Steering Group meets regularly to oversee the implementation of actions related to furthering the Principles of the Concordat. In the Summer of 2017, the Steering Group conducted a 4-year review of progress in line with the timescales for renewal of the HR Excellence standard as set out by Vitae.

This review included:

- Focus groups with the University's RKE Future Leaders. The RKE Future Leaders are a cohort of around 40 early-mid career academics who are undertaking a specialist research and knowledge exchange leadership programme.
- Interviews with members of the University's Professional Services Directorate including Research and Knowledge Exchange, Human Resources and the Graduate School
- Sessions at academic meetings including Faculty Heads RKE and the University's Research Committee
- Data gathered from the University's institution-wide survey of all staff including circa 1,600 academics

3. Key Achievements against implementation of the principles

Full details of progress against our implementation of the Concordat are included in our updated evidence for compliance and action planning documents. A summary of highlights over the last four-year cycle is provided here.

Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research

Over the last 18 months, the University has focused on establishing real momentum behind its research aspirations. We have **appointed the University first thematic Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange** and produced a **new strategic plan** which places an emphasis on the recruitment and development of researchers.

Our Strategy places a firm emphasis on **quality, culture and research leadership**. We have been **active in the appointment of new Professors** increasing the size and scope of our research leaders by 43% in the last two years.

The **approach to making new academic appointments has been transformed**. The Vice-Chancellor chairs all Professoriate appointments and Faculty PVCs are required to **ensure that all new staff have a research track record and doctoral level qualifications**.

We have **reduced the volume of fixed-term posts** which are now only issued under careful consideration through our strategic planning process.

Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research

We continue to value all of our staff on an equal basis whether they are full-time, part-time or fixed-term, **everyone has access to the same opportunities including an annual mandatory PDR** which includes a career development discussion with a focus on research objectives. In addition we have introduced a robust academic probation scheme to ensure new staff have clear and meaningful research objectives and that they are properly supported when they join the University.

We have also embedded a professorial banding structure to ensure that we can retain our highest quality researchers.

The University has been awarded the **Disability Two Ticks** standard, the **Disability Standards Silver Award**, **Athena Swan Bronze** and we were **the only University to achieve Investors in People Gold Champion Status**.

Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment

We offer a range of funding opportunities for researchers to develop their skills including a **Research Accelerator Grant and a Future RKE Leaders** programme as well as **ILM-accredited coaching and mentoring schemes**.

As part of the new RKE Strategy we are rolling out **funding mechanisms targeted at developing the careers of researchers** including an ECR recruitment scheme, international and cross-sectoral fellowships and funding for knowledge exchange, impact and engagement with policy makers and the media.

We offer **regular training and support for career development** from the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Directorate and the Learning and Development team. Both of these units have been rated as above the national standards in our annual survey of Professional Services.

Principle 4: The importance of researchers' personal and career development and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.

This is achieved through the mandatory PDR discussion, which incorporates consideration of their Research plan. The University has a comprehensive staff development programme which addresses the wide-range of skills, not just research specific skills that will support career development and lifelong learning.

Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development and lifelong learning.

We have launched a voluntary **work shadowing scheme** to give our ECRs the opportunity to learn from experienced colleagues. We have also **broadened representation across our University research committees**, giving ECRs and postgraduate members a platform to represent their views and needs. To help our ECRs develop the skills they need to progress in an academic career, we have also **reviewed and improved our framework to support academic practice and excellence**.

Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

We are committed to promoting diversity and equality in all aspects of the life of the University and this is recognised by external agencies: we achieved #4 ranking in the sector in the 2017 Stonewall Workplace Index and becoming the only University to achieve a Gold score in the Business Disability Forum's Disability Standard index. Through regular consultation, we are continuously responding to the needs of our staff including researchers. A review of our HR policies has been completed and new policies introduced to better support those with caring responsibilities and to offer more flexible working opportunities. We have also conducted a review of the **support for individuals returning from maternity leave**, which has identified areas where we can further strengthen our approach and this is reflected in the enclosed action plan.

Principle 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

We have embedded oversight of **the implementation of the Concordat into relevant RKE Committees** including the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) chaired by the PVC RKE Professor Richard Greene and reports into the University's Academic Board. The Committee includes senior academic representatives from every faculty and includes an ECR representative, a PGR student representative and the Director of RKE. The Concordat is included as standing item in the terms of reference.

4. Summary of Forward Plans

The full details of our ambitious forward plans can be found in our 2017 – 2021 Action Plan available on the University's Research web pages. Our key priorities are to continue to embed the Concordat's principles in ways that align with the ambitions of our Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy that was approved by our Governing Body in early 2017.

Over the past 2 years our focus has been on ensuring that our research leadership (as embodied through our Professoriate) is in place. Going forward towards 2021, more emphasis will be placed on **early career researchers** through talent development including a specific ECR recruitment scheme and recognition through an ECR Prize.

We want to ensure that the investment we put in place to progress the principles of the Concordat align with our newly established **University Centres for Research and Knowledge Exchange (UCRKEs)** so that we can offer a joined up and successful research environment and therefore many of our forward plans are connected to ensuring that UCRKEs have appropriate strategies to nurture the development of researchers in place.

In the broadest terms, we will measure success against whether we have delivered on our aim to ensure that the University is recognised as a great place to develop research careers. We will do this by carefully analysing the results of staff surveys and by creating more ways for our early career researchers to engage with our efforts to progress actions against the principles of the Concordat.