

EU HR Excellence Award

Six-year review report

November 2019

1. Introduction and context

Manchester Metropolitan University is now into the sixth year of holding the EU HR Excellence Award. The development of our action plan in support of the Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers continues to be managed and monitored by a cross-institutional oversight group of staff from the Research and Knowledge Exchange Directorate, Human Resources and a group of staff and student representatives including Early Career Researchers and Postgraduate Students. This group reports into the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee that includes strategic oversight of compliance with the Concordat as part of its terms of reference.

In September 2019, as we preparing for this six-year submission, the revised Concordat was released to the Higher Education sector. Whilst this report is concerned with a review of our actions against the previous Concordat, our steering group has already had an opportunity to start to plan our forward actions against the new Concordat and we welcome the clarity of its message and are excited about the opportunity to map our work against the three defining Principles.

2. Process for conducting the six-year internal evaluation

The review of the six-year action plan was led by the RKE Researcher Development and Training Manager and the Head of Research Environment and Impact.

The process was as follows:

- i. Meetings took place between members of the oversight group in June, July and August 2019 to review progress against the action plan.
- ii. In September 2019, the Oversight Group met for a substantive workshop to review progress and to “workshop” the Principles of the revised Concordat to inform our new action plan.
- iii. Progress was reported into the September RKE Committee and there is a follow-up agenda item in the December 2019 meeting.

Views of the University's researchers have been considered in the following ways:

- i. In 2018, following submission and subsequent approval of the revised four-year action plan, a workshop to inform our ongoing progress against the Concordat was hosted with 20 academic staff who are members of the University's RKE Future Leaders initiative.
- ii. The Concordat and our action plan has been discussed at regular updates and engagement meetings throughout the last year with the University's Early Career

Researcher forum which is a representative forum of ECRs from across the university .

- iii. Researchers and PGR students fed their views on our action plan into a workshop hosted by the Concordat Oversight Group in September 2019.
- iv. Regular communications and updates on the Concordat have been provided to meetings of the University's RKE Committee that reports into the University's Academic Board.

In addition to these activities, the development of the revised Concordat and the consultation around it was communicated widely to all staff – through the RKE blog and other channels.

In total, we believe that we have directly engaged with approximately 50 research staff and students in face-to-face sessions and indirectly engaged with most of the University's 1665 academic staff.

3. Key achievements and progress against the strategy and indicators of success

A major element of the successful delivery of our action plan is the establishment of thirteen **University Centres for Research and Knowledge Exchange (UCRKEs)** (action B2). UCRKEs are a key component of the University's RKE Strategy that was approved in 2017. They act as the intellectual home of our researchers and provide a focus for the creation of an outstanding research environment. As of October 2019, **we have 2020 staff and students categorised as a member of one of our UCRKEs** (action A1). This includes 641 "core" members who have a research focus and represents **almost a 100% increase** on the 339 staff that were research-active in 2013. All of the University's PGR students are aligned to an appropriate UCRKE (actions A4, C10) providing positive benefits to the research culture and environment.

Research leadership continues to grow with **the appointment of 80.95 FTE Professors and Readers** (action A2) since 2014 including appointments from Manchester, Sheffield, Birmingham, Lancaster and Glasgow.

New RKE Systems for the management of external funding, the PGR journey and for research ethics (action B3) have been introduced and we are now able to evidence a research infrastructure that is fit for the demands of the twenty-first century researcher and provides much more accurate management information and reporting.

The University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Directorate continues to **perform above benchmark institutions** in the internal Professional Services survey (actions B1 and C1). The appointment of a new **RKE Researcher Development and Training Manager** (action C2) in 2018 has enabled the University to further grow its portfolio of support for researchers at all stages of their career including enhancing the **RKE Future Leaders** programme that we have featured previously and launching the new **Good to Great** initiative (actions C3, C9, C11 and D1). **Good to Great** provides generous time, mentoring and coaching opportunities,

and direct resources to support a selection of our high-quality researchers to move into the next phase of their careers.

Our work to embed the principles of equality and diversity has continued; our **gender pay gap is at 7.2% against a Higher Education sector average of 15.5%** (action B8) and we are one of the **top employers in the UK for inclusivity** (ranked 22nd in the Stonewall Index). We are currently the only UK Higher Education provider to hold a **Gold award from the Business Disability Forum** that measures how disability smart an organisation is. We are **Athena Swan institutional bronze award holders** (actions E1, E3 and E4).

4. Next steps and focus over the period 2019 – 2021

Our priority over the next two years will be to raise the profile of the revised Concordat and to pursue a refreshed action plan that meets the new requirements.

The University has mapped its existing action plan against the revised September 2019 Concordat and developed new actions that are more closely aligned to its three Principles.

1. Excellent research requires a supportive and inclusive research culture

New actions here will include:

- The University will formally become a signatory to the revised Concordat.
- The launch of a new communications campaign around the Concordat to ensure that all staff and research students have an awareness of it.
- The development of an Equality and Diversity Strategy for Research and Knowledge Exchange.

2. Researchers are recruited, employed and managed under conditions that recognise and value their contributions

New actions here will include:

- Development of an RKE induction for academic staff aligned to the Principles of the Concordat.

3. Professional and career development are integral to enabling researchers to develop their full potential

New actions here will include:

- The rollout of a new University-wide careers pathway project which includes more transparent routes for career progression.