

HR Excellence in Research

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

Queen Mary University of London

HR Excellence Group

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Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) received the HR Excellence in Research Award in January 2012 for our action plan to implement the Concordat. This award was retained two years later, following a self-assessment. The report that follows details our progress against the aims of those initial action plans, by Concordat principle, followed by our strategy moving forward, including any relevant success measures.

How Internal Assessment was Undertaken

In September 2014, a group composed of researcher developers, HR colleagues, senior academics and research staff at varying career stages (representing all three QMUL Faculties) was formed to review our action plans, collect the data and examples of good practice included in this report, and draft the strategy from 2016 onwards. The group met monthly in 2015, and were informed by the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS; 22% research staff responding), the Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS; 10% academic staff responding), and a series of focus groups with 27 researchers of all levels of experience, representing at least three Schools or Institutes in each of the three Faculties. Participants fed back on themes from CROS and PIRLS results as well as on our draft 2016 action plan and the CAPD's researcher development provision. Participants provided examples of compliance with the Concordat, as well as feedback on their experiences as QMUL researchers. This informed initiatives that would seek to build on good practice, or forge a path in a new direction guided by our researchers. The researchers' feedback and 2016 Action Plans were commented on by the (Schools') Directors of Research and SMD Institute Directors, the Researcher Development Team (RDT), Human Resources, the Vice Principal for Research and his Advisory Group (VPRAG) and the Doctoral College.

Key Achievements Against Previous Action Plans

- **QMUL is an active member of the Euraxess Services Network** and has hosted joint events (AP2012: 1.2)
- **31% increase in the number of researchers receiving annual performance appraisals** (AP2012: 2.3)
- There are **bridging funds and redeployment opportunities for research staff** (AP2012 & AP2014: 2.4)
- **Training and development programme including mentoring and internship opportunities** (AP2014: 3.3-3.5)
- A **researcher-led** initiative resulted in the simplification of **job titles** at QMUL (AP2012 & AP2014: 5.5)
- **QMUL holds 11 externally-accredited Equality and Diversity awards** (AP2012 & AP2014: 6.1, 6.4, 6.10)

Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection

Achievements and Progress: In both of our action plans (2012 and 2014), becoming an active member of the **Euraxess Services Network** featured prominently. Joining Euraxess, playing host and kick-off event to the Euraxess Researchers In Motion Roadshow in 2014, listing our available research posts on their jobs portal (as well as on jobs.ac.uk, [our own recruitment portal](#) and other providers, in order to maximise visibility), contributing to their information networks, and supporting any queries that originate from our involvement with Euraxess are amongst the ways that QMUL now contributes to this initiative, thus helping to attract world-class research talent to the University, while supporting the European Commission's researcher mobility efforts.

QMUL is compliant with the UK's **Fixed Term Employees Regulations (2002)**. The recruitment process at QMUL is identical for fixed-term and open-ended contracts. It has become standard practice to justify the creation of fixed-term research posts, while ensuring equal treatment of research staff, irrespective of contract type. By 2014, these policies had become embedded into all recruitment and selection training, which has become mandatory for all staff who sit on interview or selection panels. Research staff are now encouraged to participate in this training, which aids representative **diversity on recruitment and selection panels**, together with providing opportunities for research staff to engage with The University's decision-making processes.

Strategy for the next 4 years: Many of the tenets of this Principle are embedded in QMUL practice. Moving forward, we aim to focus on better communication with new research staff at induction (See **Aim 2**). In addition, we will continue to promote research staff engagement with our Fair Selection training (See **Aim 6**).

Principle 2: Recognition and Value

Achievements and Progress: As stated above, the **equal treatment of research staff is well embedded across all Schools and Institutes, irrespective of contract type**. This included rights to holiday leave, access to [employee benefits schemes](#), as well as to the training and development provision available from the CAPD.

Since our initial action plan in 2012, we have achieved **an increase of over 30%** in the number of researchers (reporting in CROS) that have **annual performance appraisals**. QMUL introduced the Performance and Development Appraisal Scheme (QMPDAS) in 2013, followed by the E-appraisal system in from 2014, providing

an online platform for researchers to document their training and development goals and track their progress towards fulfilling these plans with their managers. However, work remains, as over 45% of researchers who participated in appraisal in 2015 didn't find it useful to their development.

Progress against our 2012 actions on the **continuity of research staff employment** include our Life Sciences Initiative (LSI), which funds several schemes providing interim funding to maintain researcher employment between external funding arrangements. In addition, all staff qualify for [redeployment](#) after a year of employment, and redundancy pay after two years.

QMUL is making progress towards **encouraging research staff input into College's policy and practice**. Researchers now sit on School/Institute research committees and safety committees, Athena SWAN self-assessment teams (and other equality and diversity efforts), as well as on interview and selection panels. The latter example is increasingly common since Queen Mary Senior Executive (QMSE) approved their policy on **gender representation in the selection process** in 2015. Also, many academic units hold regular meetings with research staff to include their input on issues that affect them.

Strategy for the next 4 years: Aim 1 - Improve Researcher Engagement and satisfaction with the QMPDAS: data from CROS, PIRLS and the focus groups demonstrate willingness from researchers and their managers to engage with appraisal. We are currently reviewing the use of E-appraisal. Training on leadership and management in research which includes the importance of effective appraisals would help to address the issue and the CAPD will bid for resources to develop such training (See **Aim 4**). Engagement with QMPDAS could benefit from the new e-appraisal system, as it streamlines and simplifies the process as well as enabling better tracking of completion. **Success Measure:** a further increase of 10% in the completion rates of appraisal by 2018, along with an equivalent increase in satisfaction from researchers as to the usefulness to their development.

Principles 3&4: Support and Career Development

Context: Since the creation of the Doctoral College (outlined in our 2014 self-assessment), further restructuring has more sharply defined roles regarding researcher development at QMUL. Research staff now fall under the remit of the RDT in the CAPD, with a further full-time post dedicated to research staff development created in 2013, reaffirming QMUL's commitment to developing researchers. The Staff Development Advisory Group (SDAG) meets 3-times per year to review our provision. The needs of PGRs are cooperatively addressed by the RDT (CAPD), the Doctoral College and the Research Degrees Office. In addition, QMUL's research staff and students benefit from engagement with our research leaders, and a number of professional services units including Careers and Enterprise (careers support), the Joint Research Management Office (research finance support), the Business Development Service (impact and collaboration), Queen Mary Innovations (technology transfer) and Marketing and Communications (public/media engagement).

Achievements and progress: The new **QMUL Research Strategy (2014)** recognises the importance of **researcher development** in its sections on the Support for Researchers (SA6) and their Career Development (SA7). In addition, the new strategy affirms QMUL's commitment to the Concordat and the HR Excellence in Research Award as well as to national Equality and Diversity agendas such as Athena SWAN (and the Gender Equality Mark) and Stonewall Diversity Champions.

In 2014/15 the CAPD's RDT piloted a **new programme of 17 workshops** for research staff. 2015 also saw the launch of a **new seminar/webinar series, Academic Progressions**, promoting discussion on researcher development, career progression and postgraduate pedagogy. The RDT began offering **1-to-1 coaching** for research staff on matters of academic/research career progression and research funding in 2015 to supplement the careers advice already available. In addition, research staff can take **development courses** offered by the CAPD's Educational Development Team (learning and teaching, academic development), and Professional Development Team (personal effectiveness, coaching, mentoring and leadership). Nearly half (47%) of QMUL's research staff participated in at least one of these opportunities in 2015; an increase of 10% from 2013.

Since 2012, the CAPD has explored a number of **communication** routes to enhance engagement with the researchers: social media (including [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) and **monthly newsletters**. The latter is run using the MailChimp service, which permits reading analytics. Each month, the newsletter is emailed to over 530 researchers with a third of those actively engaging with the content. The CAPD website, which was redesigned in 2013/14, is an additional source of information for researchers, including a **blog**, which features information on upcoming events, seminars and other matters relevant to our researchers.

Offline **mentoring support** for research staff exists in many forms across QMUL. Most Schools/Institutes have a strong tradition mentoring new academic staff. Progressing our previous action plans, Athena SWAN mentoring for female ECRs, as well as QMUL's participation in the Black, Minority and Ethnic Mentoring ([B-MEntor](#)) programme continue. In addition, new schemes for all ECRs were piloted in some Schools and Institutes, with training and administrative support from the CAPD.

The **Careers and Enterprise** and **Business Development** groups advertised 11 new **internship opportunities** for PGRs and ECRs in 2014/15, with QMUL SME spin-outs and 10 companies (Action Plan Section 3.4). These posts offer opportunities to develop skills and commercial awareness of a particular sector. Employability is a strategic priority and the Careers and Enterprise group have a full-time internship and consultancy coordinator.

Strategy for the next 4 years: Aim 2 – Improve Induction Resources for Researchers: At present, only about 30-40% of QMUL research staff attend an induction event. To support new researchers at QMUL, we are developing online induction resources on **QMplus Hub**, the networking site within our **online learning area (QMplus)** by 30 March, 2016. New researchers will also be able to network on the Hub and ask questions of existing staff, thus supporting peer communication. New researchers will also receive welcome emails from the CAPD sign-posting them to these resources, and inviting them to quarterly drop-in sessions, to ensure they are aware of the resources and support available for them at QMUL. Success Measure: increased overall engagement of research staff beginning at induction, measured using analytics from QMplus Hub combined with attendance numbers from staff or drop-in induction events, with a target of >50% engagement by December 2017.

Aim 3 – Further Growth of the Postdoctoral Mentoring Opportunities: S&E has led the way with more than half of its schools already offering pilot mentoring schemes for their postdocs. In the short-term (by 30 June 2016), we plan to unify those efforts across the Faculty, aided by the Vice Principal for S&E, and also enable offline mentoring relationships between departments. After its first year (June 2017), we will review the scheme and roll it out to other Faculties. Success Measure: growth of the number of postdocs with a mentor from 20% (currently) towards 44% (CROS respondents who indicated interest in mentoring) by December 2017.

Aim 4 – Continued Growth of the Development Programme for Researchers: Building on the success of the new development provision, we aim to grow the development programme to address training and development needs identified by the researchers. Priority areas for growth include **support for women researchers** (also supporting Athena SWAN, Gender Equality Mark and Juno), **support for leadership and management in research, support for academic writing and publication** and further **support for applying for research funding**. Resources for this will be sought through QMUL's annual Planning and Accountability Round (PAR). Expansion of content, resources and information for ECRs on to QMplus remains an on-going process. Following an upgrade in 2015 to better accommodate staff enrolment, 2015/16 will include expansion on to QMplus Hub, enabling research staff to network with peers at other campuses and externally. Success Measure: Growth of the programme can be measured in three ways: firstly by attendance numbers (10% incremental increase in attendance per academic year); secondly by the diversity of (Vitae RDF) descriptors covered; and finally, by consistent positive feedback from researchers (measured by feedback survey for each workshop and overall, biannually through CROS and focus groups, and from the QPdA – see **Aim 5**)

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibility

Achievements and progress: The **skills that research staff need to move on from a position may not be same as those demonstrated to reach that position** is a well-embedded theme in some of the workshops piloted for research staff in 2014/15 by the CAPD, including Career Management for Academic Research Staff, Career Management for Non-Academic Career Paths, Preparation for Leadership and Research Independence. Each of these workshops ran at least twice in 2013/14, and were well attended attracting over 60 research staff, early-career researchers and PGR students.

Since 2014 existing **Postdoc Networks** have representation in each Faculty. A **researcher-led** initiative by a postdoc representative from S&E resulted in the simplification of postdoctoral **job titles** at QMUL, and will be implemented by HR from January 2016. In addition and some Schools and Institutes include research staff in decision-making committees (e.g. research committees, Athena SWAN, health and safety groups) and have started new networks to promote postdoc peer mentoring and interaction between research groups. The QMUL Postdoc Association (QPdA) is a small group that grew out of the Concordat implementation work and ran its **first event** in this academic year.

Strategy for the next 4 years: Aim 5 – Growth of the QPdA: Academic units will be further encouraged to involve research staff on decision-making committees. In addition, the burgeoning postdoc networks require some structure to ensure their continuity of representation. To this end, each academic unit will be asked to nominate two representatives (who contribute to committees) to attend quarterly meetings of the QPdA. Meetings will serve as networking opportunities for postdocs across Faculties to share practice and information. They will also serve to provide feedback on current initiatives, to inform future researcher development efforts, and to feed forward concerns to the requisite University structures. Success Measures: (1) short-term targets include stable representation from at least half the Schools/Institutes by the end of May 2017, and monitoring the degree of engagement of these networks through their representatives and technologies such as QMplus Hub; (2) longer term goals will be determined by the QPdA membership themselves, and may include **researcher-led** (CAPD-supported) events to promote and encourage peer support amongst ECRs at QMUL and engagement with research leaders. This will promote research staff involvement in decision-making, self-organisation, fundraising, and direct engagement with networks of research stakeholders and leaders outside QMUL; all elements to help emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for their own development.

Principle 6: Equality and Diversity

Achievements and progress: Since 2014, five QMUL Schools/Institutes have gained or have been reconfirmed for **Athena SWAN or Juno** awards, bringing our total to 11. Four additional applications will have been submitted in by April 2016: three at the department level, and one for an institutional Silver award, in line with our strategic aims of holding an institutional Silver by the end of 2016. QMUL was also named as a **Stonewall Diversity Champion**. These initiatives have stimulated discussion and scrutiny of equality and diversity policies and practice across all Faculties, with researchers from all levels participating in the process. The QMSE approved their policy on gender representation in the selection process in 2015. Other examples of progress include unconscious bias training for ECRs and academic staff in S&E and increased engagement with Fair Selection and Interview Skills training (yearly numbers doubling every year since 2013).

The **Women in Science and Engineering** group at QMUL continues its strong tradition of researcher-led events promoting the **career development of female researchers**, at all career stages, across S&E and the SMD.

Mentoring schemes for early-career female academics linked to Athena SWAN awards are currently offered by many Schools and Institutes. QMUL has participated in two cohorts of the **B-MEntor** programme, providing mentor support for BME ECRs.

QMUL is generally perceived by our researchers as **committed to equality and diversity**, however there is still further progress to be made. A small percentage (8%, compared to 10% in the Russell Group) feel they have been discriminated against, with the top types of discrimination being age, gender and pregnancy and maternity. When the results are split by gender, women perceive more discrimination in these categories than men.

Strategy for the next 4 years: Aim 6- Continued Efforts to Support Equality and Diversity Initiatives: The CAPD will continue to support the departmental- and institutional-level of ECU charter initiatives. We aim to continue the upward trend of research staff engagement with our Fair Selection training, providing broader diversity and breadth of experience. Success Measure: an increase in Athena SWAN awards by the end of 2016

Aim 7 – Provide more targeted support for women researchers, such as the **Springboard Development Programme**, which is run successfully at other Russell Group Universities. This will address needs identified by the research staff and support other agendas, such as Athena SWAN and Juno. Funding will be sought through the PAR (March 2016), and if successful, will be implemented from the 2016/17 academic year.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

Achievements and progress: QMUL ran both **CROS and PIRLS in 2015**, with PIRLS receiving 3-times as many responses as in previous years. These surveys have informed this group's action plan, together with the CAPD and HR plans moving forward. A report of researcher feedback was also considered by the VPRAG.

Strategy for the next 4 years: Aim 8 – Continued Implementation and Review: QMUL intends to continue to use CROS, PIRLS and focus groups to capture researcher feedback. Thus the HR Excellence group will use this biennial timeframe to review and monitor the University's work to champion the Concordat. Success Measure: increased response to both surveys (aiming for an increase of 50% in response rates for both surveys by 2017) will provide a clearer picture of researcher experience at QMUL.

Appendices

1.0 Glossary of Terms and Acronyms used in this report or the 2016 Action Plan

Our Original Action Plan, 2012: AP2012

Our 2-year internal review Action Plan, 2014: AP2014

Early Career Researchers: ECRs

Careers in Research Online Survey: CROS

Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey: PIRLS

Queen Mary University of London: QMUL

Centre for Academic and Professional Development: CAPD

Queen Mary Personal Development Appraisal Scheme: QMPDAS

Planning and Accountability Round: PAR

Doctoral College Management Group: DCMG

Staff Development Advisory Group: SDAG

Athena SWAN Self-assessment Team: SAT

QMUL Faculties

School of Medicine and Dentistry: SMD

Humanities and Social Sciences: HSS

Science and Engineering: S&E

QMUL Schools and Institutes (S&E and HSS)

School of Engineering and Materials Science: SEMS

School of Physics and Astronomy: SPA

School of Biological and Chemical Sciences: SBCS

School of Mathematical Sciences: SMS

School of Politics and International Relations: SPIR

School of Business and Management: SBM

School of Law: SoL

School of Geography: SoG

Institute of Bioengineering: IoB

SMD Institutes

William Harvey Research Institute: WHRI

Barts Cancer Institute: BCI

Institute of Dentistry: IoD

2.0 Estimated Timeline for Implementation of New Concordat-related Initiatives, moving forward from 2016

year month	2016												2017												2018												2019																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12							
Aim 1: Improve engagement with QMPDAS																																																							
HR review of E-appraisal/QMPDAS	█																																																						
PAR-independent changes to training	█																																																						
PAR-dependent changes to training					? ? ?																																																		
new training for managers available	█												█												█												█																		
measure engagement post-training changes	█												█												█												█																		
re-evaluate													█												█												█																		
Aim 2: Induction resources																																																							
New induction resources live on QM+ Hub	█												█												█												█																		
Review of resources and updating	█												█												█												█																		
New quarterly drop-in induction sessions	█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█												
Aim 3: Postdoctoral Mentoring																																																							
S&E-faculty wide mentor pilot planning & recruitment	█																																																						
S&E-faculty wide mentor pilot launch	█																																																						
1st-year feedback and assessment					█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█																				
2nd-year recruitment call (possible launch to other faculties)													█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█																		
2nd year launch													█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█																		
2nd year feedback and assessment													█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█																		
Roll-out scheme to other faculties													█												█												█																		
Aim 4: Growth of Development Programme																																																							
Assessment of previous existing programme (SDAG reporting)	█																█												█												█														
PAR submission for new resources for programme expansion	█																█												█												█														
Aim 5: The QMUL Postdoc Association																																																							
Each academic unit to select/review representation	█												█												█												█																		
QPdA meetings	█												█												█												█																		
Aim 6: Equality and Diversity Initiatives																																																							
Attendance at and participation with SATS (ongoing)	█												█												█												█																		
Silver submissions (QMUL institutional, Maths)	█																																																						
Bronze submissions (Geography, EECS renewal)	█																																																						
Aim 7: Targetted Support for Women Researchers																																																							
Await result from PAR-bid					? ? ?																																																		
Aim 8: Implementation and Review																																																							
CROS and PIRLS run biennially													█			█			█			█			█			█			█			█																					
CROS and PIRLS analysis													█			█			█			█			█			█			█																								
Research Staff Focus Groups													█			█			█			█			█			█			█																								
Revise & Publish Action Plan for next two years													█			█			█			█			█			█			█																								