University of Greenwich

UNIVERSITY *of* **GREENWICH**

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Implementation Review – Summary Report (May 2017)

1.   Context

Organisations that hold the *HR Excellence in Research* award are required to undertake two- and four-year self-assessment review of progress set against an "implementation" plan. This summary report provides an outline of the key achievements, presented in a *Gap Analysis and Action Plan* dated April 2017, and sets the context for a new set of forward looking objectives.

The *University Strategic Plan (2012-2017)* embodied within it a number of ambitious expectations around the research and enterprise agenda, specifically increasing the proportion of academic staff defined as "research active"; the quality of that research and associated income targets. The arrival of a new Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) (DVC(R&E)) energised this agenda, expressed in a *Research and Enterprise Strategic plan (2016-2021)* was approved through Court in 2016. That strategy is now being implemented, and will have very significant and positive implications for the wider researcher community, but especially Early Career Researcher (ECR) colleagues. There are a number of ongoing initiatives which will dovetail to our support for researchers, and these are outlined briefly in the section below.

2.   Internal Evaluation

Overall responsibility for the University's engagement, implementation and compliance of the Concordat rests with the Early Career Researcher Steering Group (ECRSG), a body that enjoys full support from the Vice-Chancellor's (Management) Group (VCG). The composition of ECRSG is drawn from lead researchers within the academic Departments, research managers within the University and key researchers, assisted by ECR Ambassadors within each of the four Faculties. The ECRSG has been responsible for producing this review - a process that has involved consultation with:
    1. University's Research and Enterprise Committee (R&EC) - a strategic group reporting to Academic Council, that includes the Directors of Research of each of the University's four academic Faculties, along with Early Career Researcher representation.
    2. The University Athena SWAN Working Group (ASWG) – a group comprising nearly 20 staff from across the University, involving both early career and senior academics.
    3. Academic and Research staff - involving all-staff and individual consultation with Pro Vice-Chancellors and Faculty staff through surveys, segmented stakeholder groups, facilitated sessions and face-to-face meetings to identify issues, areas of good practice and inform on-going researcher development.

4. Key Achievements and Progress

The University has completed several major projects in the area of HR and staff development, many of which impact on the researcher community, both directly and indirectly. There are still on-going developments that will seek to engender a positive, supportive and creative working environment. Of most note to this review are; (1) the Balanced Academic Workload (BAW2) and the Academic Career Pathways (ACP) projects. Flowing from these, are activities around "values" and "behaviours", that help shape colleagues view on contributing to the University's wider agenda. All of these projects reinforce the University's strategic thinking.

The BAW2 project seeks to ensure that there is an equitable balance of workload across a disparate workforce. Each member of staff is allocated a certain number of points to reflect the many and diverse activities they may be engaged in. The allocation of points is discussed *via* appraisal, and feeds into deliverables and the training needs analyses. This is a valuable tool for both managers to balance workload, and for staff to more fully understand their contribution to the University. Points are awarded for teaching, research, and their contribution to the wider mission of the University. Colleagues now have a much better understanding of their role within the University, and how the University perceives that contribution. This approach also empowers the academic member of staff to make better use of their time, a particularly important discussion for ECRs who are often "pulled" in many directions. To this end, ECRs given a significant points reduction to enable them to start their academic careers, in particular, their research aspirations.

BAW2 dovetails seamlessly to the Academic Career Pathways (ACP) project, in which staff self-select which one of a small number of career pathways to follow, and thereby, clearly map out expectations using descriptors geared towards promotion and other career progression targets. There is now a much clearer understanding of what a given grade of staff member should be engaged in, with research being a key aspect.

Both of these projects have been set into a contextualised online environment, so staff can very easily locate information to help guide, and draw down, training and support activities.

The training agenda is being taken forward, aggressively, under three headings; research, in which a research training institute (RETI) is being created, teaching, where educational specialists are connected to each degree programme evolution to ensure the latest pedagogical thinking is incorporated into our teaching portfolio, and leadership, where HR make strategic interventions to upskill key staff cohorts, e.g. Heads of Department. How these activities impact on researcher development in elaborated below, set against specific Concordat principles.

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

The rigour within the process of appointing (research) staff has been significantly enhanced after the implementation of the e-Recruitment system in May 2014. Shortlisting is carried out by several people, with interview panels comprising a diverse membership to ensure no unintended bias. Reporting is also much more formal.

The Learning and Talent Development team have been expanded to drive the staff enhancement agenda, and offer a wide ranging series of activity ranging from annual University wide events, through to more focused Department-level interventions. The strategic HR agenda going forward is focused on a "people strategy", concentrating on upskilling our staff base.

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.

The appraisal system and the related careers pathway project has changed the landscape of within the University so that the contribution that all colleagues make to the University is openly and transparently recognised. Significant training and career development will be part of the ensuing activity.

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

The University is creating a Research and Enterprise Training Institute (RETI) and is developing a "People Strategy" which together will significantly upskill its staff base in the area of research. To support these developments, several new posts have or are being recruited to, and these will utilise the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and associated initiatives as a basis. For example, familiarisation with the RDF is now a mandatory part of local induction for academic staff and appears on the line managers' checklist, and new RDF web pages explaining the self-assessment process and outlining training offered have been developed on the Greenwich Research and Enterprise (GRE) section of the University web pages (i.e. a new Moodle page hosting the Epigeum suite of e-learning courses mapped against the RDF domains). Further, the analyses of training needs are being incorporated into the appraisal process. Finally, introduction of researcher-specific information has been incorporated into the corporate New Employee Welcome and Introduction Programme (NEWI).

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

and

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

The Careers Pathway Project and RETI are major initiatives aimed at helping researchers take ownership of- and evolve- their career aspirations. These will be supported by a regular programme of events from the Educational Development Unit, including through to a PGCert in HE for new staff.

Researcher-specific training courses continue to be themed under the RDF Domains and workshops arranged to reflect the sub-domains of the RDF, such as specialised statistical analysis, social media (e.g. podcasts) and managing research teams.

The University runs a number awards for ECRs in recognition for their achievements including ECR Communicator Awards, ECR Excellence Awards and travel bursaries. These are being expanded as budgets permit.

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

Equality and diversity is included in all job descriptions as a core responsibility of every member of staff. The University supports staff to fulfil this responsibility by having equality and diversity training as one element of a suite of essential training, completion of which is monitored through appraisal. Unconscious bias training is included in recruitment and selection training for key recruiters.

The University is revising its promotion scheme based on its career pathways and this includes – all promotion panel members must be trained in equality and diversity, applications from part-time members of staff are welcomed and how they will be assessed and an opportunity for applicants to provide information on circumstances which may have impacted on the volume of work for the panel's consideration in making an assessment.

This work continues the University's commitment to equality and diversity which is evidenced by our Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze status, policies which promote equality for example the University's Transitioning at Work Policy, Sexual Violence Policy and revised Bullying and Harassment Policy, The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans +(LGBT+) Staff Network recently won the Network Group of the Year 2017 from Stonewall and the University is ranked in their Top 100 list of the nation's best-performing employers for the second year running.

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

The University engages in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) which are conducted every two years. Results from these surveys help inform the support and training offered by GRE.

5.   Future Strategy

The University has a "people strategy" comprising; (1) to invest significantly in existing top talent, to renew and strengthen the academic leadership within the University, from Heads of Department through to more strategic roles and (2) to grow the internal young talent, represented by the ECR community.

There are three combined elements for this; (i) the Research and Enterprise Training Institute (RETI), Educational Development Unit (EDU) in the area of teaching and HR initiatives in around developing leadership skills. In each of these, the ECR community is crucial to achieving these goals. A longer term aspiration is to be recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Developing Staff, both to retain and thereby improve our own university, but through staff moving on, peer group universities.