

Two year Review of Queen Mary's Concordat Implementation Plan: 'HR Excellence in Research' Report

Queen Mary University of London (QML) gained the 'HR Excellence in Research' Award from the European Commission in January 2012. As a holder of this award we are required to undertake a two-year internal review of our progress in achieving the actions set out in our Concordat Implementation Plan from 2012. This report contains the findings of the University's internal review and revised implementation strategy for 2014-16.

How was the internal review undertaken?

The internal review comprised of a three-stage process conducted by the Centre of Academic Development (CAPD) and overseen by the newly established Doctoral College:

1. In September 2013 the Centre of Academic Development (CAPD) conducted a two year review of progress against the original action plan. This involved consultation with key stakeholders from across the University, including both academics and research staff, CAPD, Director of HR, Diversity Manager and the QM Careers Service. The University had taken part in both the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators & Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) in 2011 and 2013 and this data informed this review. We utilized our newly established Faculty Postdoc Networks to further engage research staff with this review and solicited their valuable feedback through a series of Focus Groups.
2. The updated action plan was submitted to, and discussed by, the Vice Principal's Research Advisory Group (VPRAG) at its October 2013 meeting. This committee is chaired by the Vice Principal of Research and its membership includes: Director of Research Services, Director of the Centre for Academic & Professional Development, Head of Researcher Development and Faculty Deans of Research and Deputy Deans of Research who run the newly established Doctoral College (*which provides academic leadership and oversight of all College support for both research staff / postdocs and postgraduate research students*).
3. This action plan was subsequently discussed and reviewed by research leaders from each faculty and the Deputy Deans of Research at the Nov 2013 meeting of the Doctoral College Management Group. Following these University-wide discussions, the CAPD worked closely with colleagues across the College in pulling together the summary of progress to date and the updated action plan. These were signed off at the Jan 2014 meeting of the Doctoral College Management Group.

Key achievements and progress against indicators and actions identified in the original Queen Mary University of London Concordat action plan

QML's new [Research Strategy \(2012-15\)](#) has a complete section devoted to the "Development of Researchers and Research" so the QML strategy is aligned with RCUK Expectations regarding researcher development being a key component of delivering research excellence. The Research Strategy outlines the College's commitment to the following important national agendas: Athena SWAN, Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the European Commission's 'HR Excellence in Research Award'.

A key achievement has been the establishment of the Doctoral College (Sep 2012) to provide academic leadership and oversight of all QML's support for both research staff / postdocs and postgraduate research students. One of their key objectives is to enhance QML's research environment by increasing the engagement of research leaders across the College with this agenda. This strategically aligned partnership approach has been adopted in order to address the challenges and actions needed to achieve a step change in implementing the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. QML has restated its full commitment to the principles enunciated in this Concordat, despite the challenging financial climate, by investing in three additional researcher development posts: Head of Researcher Development, Doctoral College Manager and Researcher Development Support Administrator. These new appointments resulted from an institutional review in 2012 and subsequent reorganisation of both HR and the Learning Institute, which has now been transformed into the Centre for Academic and Professional Development.

Despite significant operational challenges during this transitional period, QML has made considerable progress against indicators and actions identified in the original Queen Mary University of London Concordat Action Plan.

Furthermore, the Head of Researcher Development worked closely with research leaders across the College to assist in the preparation of Research Environment Templates for QML's REF2014 submission. A summary of highlights is provided below and full details are provided in the updated document available to view online and linked to at the end of this report.

Headline Achievements

Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection

- **Euraxess Contact Point:** In December 2013 QML became a member of the EURAXESS-UK Services network, which aims to help institutions attract world class research talent. Designated HR Contacts will provide assistance to international researchers coming or leaving the institution. *QML will host the UK's only Euraxess Tour on 5th March 2014 and will be open to researchers from across the country.*
- **Job Evaluation Project:** QML has recently completed a job evaluation project that was initiated as a result of the National Pay Framework Agreement. This provided the opportunity to review the way research jobs at QM are evaluated. A new process has been developed which is underpinned by a set of Grade Profiles for each job family at every grade and Job Profiles which contains the duties required for each research job (<http://www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/workqm/paygradesrewards/grading/index.html>).

Principle 2: Recognition and Value

- **New Appraisal Scheme:** A review of the Queen Mary Performance Appraisal Scheme (QMPAS) was conducted in 2012. This resulted in a new [Queen Mary Performance and Development Appraisal Scheme \(QMPDAS\)](#), which integrates career ambitions and a development plan, being implemented across QML in 2013. *This review was informed by feedback from CROS 2009 & 2011, which indicated that 30% of research staff who responded felt that the previous appraisal scheme was not useful.*
- **Academic Promotion Workshops:** A new series of Academic Promotion workshops led by our three Faculty Vice-Principals have been established. *These sessions provide an important opportunity for academic and research staff to learn more about QML's annual promotion round.*

Principles 3 & 4: Support and Career Development

- **Faculty Postdoc Networks & Masterclasses:** Based upon feedback obtained from CROS in 2011, QML has adopted a Faculty specific approach to supporting the researcher development needs of our postdocs. This resulted in two new Postdoc Networks (Whitechapel and Charterhouse Square) being established in partnership with the School of Medicine & Dentistry and a new series of bespoke Masterclasses informed by the specific needs of postdocs which are led by Faculty research leaders.
- **Fellowship and Grant Funding Events:** QM provides a comprehensive programme of Winning Grant Funding events including Faculty Masterclasses (led by research leaders) and the annual QM Fellowship Day that attracts representatives from major funding bodies as well as 100 researchers from across QML.
- **Careers Support and Guidance:** QM's dedicated Careers Adviser for Researchers provides one-to-one consultancy and careers workshops for both postdocs and research students. The recently established 'Doctoral Transitions: Careers Beyond Academia' allows QML researchers to learn from former PhD and postdoc alumni about their new careers outside academia and transition into their new roles.
- **Consistent Level of Postdoc Engagement:** More than one third (37%) of all QML research staff / postdocs participated in our researcher development programmes in 2012/13. *The CAPD reports annually on the following College Strategic Aim: KPI: EA1.4b - Participation in staff career development programmes - Year-by-year increase in engagement by early career researchers and postgraduate research students in researcher development programmes.*

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

- **Women in Science & Engineering (WISE@QMUL)**: This researcher led group (research staff and postgraduate research students) organizes monthly events and plays a key role in promoting the career and professional development of female researchers, at all career stages, across the Faculty of Science & Engineering and the School of Medicine & Dentistry. *Nela Brown (WISE Chair 2012) received a 'Highly Commended WISE Leader Award' at the national WISE2013 Award Ceremony.*

Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

- **Athena Swan Awards**: Since 2011 QML has gained five additional Athena Swan Awards (one Silver & four Bronze) and one Juno Practitioner Award. *QML now holds seven Equality and Diversity Awards.*

Principle 7: Implementation & Review

- **Researcher Feedback**: QML ran the following biennial national researcher surveys (PRES, CROS, PIRLS) in both 2011 and 2013. The outcomes of these surveys were considered at both the Doctoral College Management Committee and the Vice Principal's Research Advisory Group.

Updated actions and next steps to Jan 2016

- **Expanding Faculty Postdoc Networks**: Consolidate existing (Whitechapel and Charterhouse Square) and establish new Postdoc Networks in the other two Faculties (Science & Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences). *These networks are a key component of QML's researcher development strategy to deliver bespoke Masterclasses informed by the specific needs of postdocs from each Faculty.*
- **Increasing Academic Engagement**: The CAPD will work in partnership with the Doctoral College to leverage greater academic engagement with this agenda, including increasing the number of academic staff and research leaders contributing to Postdoc Masterclasses. *Key component of QML's strategy to address the challenges and actions needed to achieve a step change in Concordat implementation.*
- **Improving Communication**: Enhance the newly developed Doctoral College Website so that it acts as the portal for all researcher development activities across QML. Use Mahara (function associated QML's Online Learning Environment Moodle) to create a Virtual Networking Environment for Postdocs to facilitate knowledge exchange across our three campuses. *QML's [Support for Research Staff](#) has high level visibility on QML's main Research webpage (currently being reviewed to ensure that the necessary links are made to the new Doctoral College website and QML's updated Concordat webpage).*
- **Embedding Equality & Diversity / Research Integrity**: The CAPD is currently undertaking a mapping exercise and gap analysis to ensure that both Equality & Diversity and Research Integrity is fully embedded across our researcher development programmes for researchers at each career stage.
- **Increasing Employer Engagement**: A new pilot internship scheme, supported by QML's HEIF-5 funding, will run from Feb - Jun 2014. *It will provide placements for both research staff / postdocs and postgraduate research students so they have the opportunity to develop their commercial awareness and knowledge of how to bring technology to market within a QML spin-out (Biomoti).*
- **Increasing the Visibility of Research Jobs**: Promotion of the Euraxess Jobs Portal amongst QM researchers to facilitate identification of new job opportunities. *Will use our 'HR Excellence in Research' badging and Euraxess Jobs Portal to promote and advertise QM research positions across Europe.*

Success Measures

Our success will be measured in terms of timely achievement of the actions set out in the Action Plan – many of which include specific deliverables. In addition, our success measures include the following:

- Evidence of progress/improvement in CROS and PIRLS data when compared with previous years
- Increased take-up and satisfaction of Queen Mary Performance and Development Appraisal Scheme
- Evidence of increased engagement of research staff / postdocs in researcher development activities
- The achievement of additional Athena Swan Awards