10 Years of Implementing the Researcher Development Concordat at Queen Mary University of London

Institutional Context | Queen Mary University of London is organised into three Faculties: the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD), Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), and Science and Engineering (S&E), that are further sub-divided into 22 Schools and Institutes located across five main research campuses. As a multidisciplinary research-intensive institution with approximately 519 postdocs and research fellows (See Appendix 2), providing our researchers with world-class support, and a research environment that enables them to flourish are two of the three pillars of Queen Mary's Strategy 2030. Queen Mary has held the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) since 2012, marking 10 years in championing, and implementing The Researcher Development (RD) Concordat's principles. Queen Mary became a Concordat Signatory in 2021, reaffirming our commitment to our researchers. In 2020, we launched a new RD Concordat Implementation Group (RDCIG)[1] with representation of relevant stakeholders, including research staff and academic staff (managers) from all Faculties, and with our Vice Principal of People, Culture, and Inclusion (VP-PCI), Sheila Gupta, as our Concordat Champion. The group is chaired, managed, and supported by the RD Team in the Queen Mary Academy.

Review Process | The RDCIG oversaw the Concordat (2019) Gap-analysis, then drafted the Report and Action Plan. Inputs to our review included: focus groups with research staff; semi-structured interviews with School/Institute leaders conducted from Dec 2020-March 2021; the Culture, Employment, and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) that ran in May-June 2021 with 183 postdocs and 422 academic staff responding; data from HR-systems and our E-appraisal systems; engagement data from our Continued Professional Development (CPD) booking system; and feedback data collected from our Researcher Development Programme. The Report and Action Plan were sent to the Research and Innovation Board (chaired by the Vice Principal for Research and Innovation and includes the Faculty Deans and Deputy Deans for Research, the Executive Officer for Research, and the head of Research Services), on to the Senior Executive Team (which includes all of the Vice Principals) and then approved by Council.

This report contains two parts; Part 1 is an update of our progress against our 2020 HREiR Action Plan (AP2020), with a detailed progress report presented as Appendix 1. Aims are colour-coded by status: **Blue** – complete/good progress; **Amber** – part complete/carried forward; **Umber** – success measure updated and carried forward; **Purple** – progress stalled. In Part 2, we summarise our forward-looking Action Plan (AP2022), and in detailed form in Appendix 2.

Part 1: Progress against AP2020

Aim 1 & 1a – Complete | **Staff appraisal systems reviewed** including a revision the forms and guidance for academic staff appraisers, examining engagement and usefulness of the process across faculties.
Update: New e-appraisal forms that enable more appraise reflection and separate out work-based, CPD/ training, and career objectives, were released in May 2021. Along with this, new guidance for academic staff appraisers (i.e., managers of researcher) that supports reviewers in planning the appraisal discussion and encourages regular career development discussions between researchers and their line managers, was also released. With 3-months left of our 2021 appraisal period we are unable to draw conclusions about engagement with just under half of our researchers having engaged with appraisal mechanisms so far, with over 90% of our researchers finding appraisal useful (a 35% increase; CEDARS; see Appendix 1). **The aims to review appraisal mechanisms and provide new guidance are fulfilled.** The RDCIG will continue to monitor appraisal engagement and usefulness.

Aim 2 – Part complete, part carried forward | **Events and resources to support new researchers.**
Update: The RDCIG developed a new Research Staff Code of Practice (CoP) along with updated Researcher Welcome Packs. Both of these will be distributed with new staff contracts, and contain information and signpost resources to help researchers better integrate into the Queen Mary community. We will host a Launch

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Event in February 2022 to announce the new Action Plan (AP2022), the new CoP, and the welcome pack resources. **The remainder of this action is carried forward to AP2022 – Aims 1 and 2.**

Aim 3 – Part complete and carried forward | Explore barriers to researchers' engagement with CPD and to trial a new CPD tracking and planning tool.
Update: In CEDARS, almost all postdocs responding said the RD programme run by the Queen Mary Academy was helpful and of high quality. Postdocs said their workload and scheduling conflicts (with other work) kept them from engaging with RD courses. Encouragingly however, the number of postdocs engaging with the RD programme has doubled since we went online in March 2020; suggesting that needing to travel to a different campus to attend training was a barrier, something which had only been anecdotally suggested in the past. We rolled out access to LinkedIn Learning for staff and students over the last quarter of 2021, which will provide researchers with increased remote training options. In focus groups, postdocs reported being unsure of how to direct their CDP activity and proposed that a more career-stage structured programme focused on research funding, career planning options, and recognised teaching opportunities would be helpful. School/Institute leaders communicated that postdoc developmental activity should allow for exploration and fostering of an independent research identity and profile, as well as cultivation of transferrable skills and planning for career 'next steps', regardless of career path. **We will carry forward the suggestion to reorganise the RD programme and related webpages as AP2022 – Aim 3.**

In March 2020, Queen Mary was in the process of procuring a new Learning Management System (LMS) that would have assisted researchers in tracking their CPD activity, and providing them with a tool to help plan and encourage CPD activity. This was put on hold with the first COVID lockdown, but the process has restarted, and we hope to introduce a new LMS by September 2022. Continuing on from this work, **In AP2022, we will carry forward the work around the LMS as Aim 4.**

Aim 4 – Part complete and carried forward | Increase mentoring opportunities for Researchers.
Update: We explored barriers to mentoring in the leadership interviews and CEDARS. The most common form of mentoring support for postdocs and fellows came from their line managers. Based on central and local mentoring schemes, barriers for mentors included a lack of recognition of the time commitment into their workload models, and a perception that mentoring wasn't a recognised form of teaching to evidence in processes like promotion and accreditation through Advance HE. Barriers for organisers of mentoring schemes included that they can be resource intensive to run. Barriers from postdocs' perspectives include not being completely aware of the mentoring support available across Queen Mary. Informed by the work in AP2020, the RD team will carry forward an action to explore how the barriers identified could be overcome to allow greater accessibility to mentoring for postdocs, **as AP2022 – Aim 5.**

Aim 5 – Success measures updated, carried forward | Provide greater support to maintain local Research Staff Associations (RSAs), ensuring greater continuity to support and amplify our researchers' voices.
Update: Though most of the larger local RSAs reported activity in the recent past, lockdown restrictions severely impacted RSA activity, and over half of research staff communicated that either they didn't have or weren't aware of any local RSAs. Some Schools/Institutes described launching new online-based (usually hosted on MS Teams) 'coffee-mornings' to enable some social contact between isolated researchers. The RD Team had to prioritise the redevelopment of online provision during lockdown and the launch of the new RDCIG in 2020/21. **This aim is carried forward as AP2020 – Aim 6, with updated success measures.**

Aim 6 – Success measures updated, carried Forward | Race Equality Charter submission by February 2021
Update: During the pandemic, we received an extension on our Race Equality Charter (REC) submission. Work is underway, supported by a new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Manager to lead on race equality (currently underway). With this post, Queen Mary will have recruited three senior staff dedicated to EDI since our last Action Plan. The two other senior appointments were: Sheila Gupta, our VP-PCI (and Concordat Champion); and Alex Prestage, the Head of EDI (who also sits on the RDCIG. The EDI Team will focus on delivering our People, Culture & Inclusion Enabling Plan that will include implementing a new operating model for the team and updating university strategies for Gender and Race Equality, LGBTQIA+ and Disability Inclusion, supported by Athena Swan, REC, Disability Confident schemes, and the University Mental Health

Charter. This will be **carried forward as AP2022 Aim 7 to update EDI strategy with follow-on aims to be reported in our AP2023**.

Aim 7 – Complete | Queen Mary to create a new RDCIG to oversee RD Concordat Implementation.
Update: The new RDCIG has met monthly since October 2020. The Group is Championed by our VP-PCI, Sheila Gupta, and has representation for research staff and managers of researchers (academic staff) from all three faculties, Faculty level research managers, HR, the Executive Officer for Research and Innovation, and the Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. The group is chaired, managed, and supported by the RD Team in the Queen Mary Academy. The Terms of Reference for the RDCID were published in December 2020. **These** will **be reviewed in 2021/22 – See AP2022 – Aim 9, and biennially after that.**

Part 2: Concordat Signatory Status, and 2022-2024 Action Plan (AP2022) – for detail see Appendix 2

Guided by the Queen Mary Strategy 2030 and informed by the gap analysis and the outcomes of AP2020, our action plan for the next two years describes initiatives that align with our PCI and Research and Innovation Enabling Plans. We present ten Aims that focus on further improving our support for research staff and for the academic staff who manage them which fall under four themes:

- **Improving communications with our researchers and their managers** so that they are better aware of the support mechanisms and resources available for them, assisting them to be productive sooner;
- **Supporting researchers' Development & Career Progression** to ensure our researchers and managers are their best equipped to carry out excellent research;
- **Supporting our research culture**, so that our researchers are better connected in a strong, diverse and inclusive community;
- and **Improving our support systems** for the research community, to better enable them to flourish during their time at Queen Mary.

Improved Comms	Dev & Career	Research Culture	Better Systems	Action Plan 2022-2024 (AP2022)	Continuing from AP2020 Aim
★		★		**Aim 1:** Host a Launch Event for the Concordat Action Plan, the new Research Staff Code of Practice and Welcome Packs, and give researchers a chance to network with peers across all faculties. This event will run in February 2022 (Leads: RDCIG and relevant stakeholders).	2
★		★	★	**Aim 2:** Launch new Researcher Induction events as follow-ons from our Staff Welcome events from by January 2023, and three-times per year thereafter (Leads: RD Team with OPD).	2
	★		★	**Aim 3:** Reorganise the RD programme and website for research staff in line with their feedback for the 2022/23 academic year (Leads: RD Team).	3
	★		★	**Aim 4**: Explore functionality of new Learning Management System (LMS) for CPD tracking. It is expected that the new LMS will be in place by Sept 2022 (Leads: RD team with OPD and ITS).	3
★	★			**Aim 5**: Pause the RD team mentoring scheme for review of how barriers identified in AP2020 can be overcome to increase access to mentoring in 2021/22 (Leads: RD team).	4
		★		**Aim 6**: Support local research cultures Support local research cultures by exploring good practice and barriers for local Research Staff Associations over 2021-22 and sharing the findings over 2022-23 (Leads: RD team with local RSAs).	5
		★		**Aim 7:** Implement a new operating model for EDI team and update the university-wide EDI strategy by 2023 (Leads: EDI team).	6
	★			**Aim 8**: Review training available for managers of researchers and undertake a training needs analysis by Sept 2022 (Leads: RD team with OPD and Faculties).	
★		★		**Aim 9:** Embed Concordat implementation into Faculties by the next reporting round (Leads: RD team with central teams and Faculties).	7
	★			**Aim 10:** Create new support for research commercialisation by exploring how Q-Researcher Enterprise and the Queen Mary Entrepreneur Club can be expanded to include postdoctoral researchers by February 2023 (Leads: Enterprise team).	

Where new aims were picking up on previous work from AP2020, we list the relevant Aim number. See Appendix 2 for the full detail of the actions along with timelines and success measures.

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