

## **1. General introduction**

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in 2010 and successfully retained it in 2014 after an external review process. As part of our award, we are reporting here on our progress over the last two years against our HREiR Action Plan for 2018-2020. The period 2018-20 covered by the Reflective Plan represents a period of continued significant and strategic change in the provision of support for researchers at the University of Central Lancashire. "Research Excellence" was one of the foundations of the Research Strategy 2018-2020 and is defined as the creation and execution of research that has the potential to be world leading and world changing and recognises the movement towards transdisciplinary working. This will be a continuing and an underlying strand for our future strategy which will support the University from 2021 to 2028 (provisional time period).

## **2. About the University of Central Lancashire**

The University of Central Lancashire at the 8yr review stage has the following Mission.

### **OUR MISSION: TRANSFORMING LIVES**

#### **Our mission: transforming lives**

Inspiring people from all walks of life to unleash their potential, seize opportunities and achieve things they never thought possible is what we've always been about. Our graduates tell us that their time as a student at the University of Central Lancashire was transformational, changing the direction of their lives and opening doors to careers they had always dreamed of.

#### **Opportunity for all**

We believe that everyone should have the same opportunity to study at university, regardless of their background, and we are champions of social mobility. We work closely with under-represented groups to ensure that everyone can enjoy the life-changing benefits of higher education.

#### **Our motto**

The motto of our institution is "Ex Solo Ad Solem", which translates as "From the Earth to the Sun." It calls on people to rise up and develop themselves to their full potential. The motto dates all the way back to one of our forerunners, The Harris Institute (1882-1956). It reflects our mission today.

The University of Central Lancashire and its predecessors have been transforming lives in Preston and beyond for almost 200 years. We officially gained university status in 1992. But our roots go back much further starting with the Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge in 1828.

The University spread over 4 campuses in Preston, Burnley, Westlakes, Cumbria and Cyprus has 38,000+ staff and students, with 2,000+ international students contributing to a multicultural university with staff and students from more than 100 countries. There is a worldwide alumni network of 180,000.

The University received a silver quality award for "consistently exceeding rigorous national quality requirements" in the first ever national Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) assessment. We hold a Bronze Athena Swan Award.

## **3. Research**

UCLan is a major teaching and research institution. Many of our academic staff are recognised as leading experts within their fields. Their work is leading to new discoveries and making a positive impact on people's lives all over the world and thus the scope of UCLan's research activity is far-reaching. Our staff work collaboratively with major international organisations, from the United Nations and the World Health Organisation to the European Space Agency and NASA. In the

Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, the 16 subject areas in which our research was assessed were judged to contain “world-leading” elements.

### 3.1 Staff

Research staff at the University can be classed as Research only, Academic (teaching and research) and Management. Figure 1., provides further details.

**Figure 1. Number of people per role**

Grade	Research Only role	No.	Academic role (Teaching & Research)	No.
E	Research Assistant	25		
F	Senior Research Assistants	22		
G	Research Associate	52		
H	Research Fellow	42	Lecturer	484
I	Senior Research Fellow	27	Senior Lecturer	502
J			Principal Lecturer/ Reader	92
Management			Professor	75
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1153</b>
Various grades	Technicians	10		
Various grades	Clinicians	67		
n/a	Postgraduate Researchers	645		
Various grades	Professional Support staff	97		
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>819</b>		

### 3.2 Support structures for HREiR

The people who undertake and support the development of researchers at UCLan are vital to the achievement of the research strategy. As reported in the 6yr report there was an internal review of support available to researchers and that resulted in the newly formed Research Services in 2018, within which was hosted the Researcher Development Unit. With the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor, during the 2019-2020 academic year there has been a further review of all Academic Schools and Professional Services at UCLan. The new academic structure has given greater prominence to School Research Leads (SRL) who will now be at Professorial level and will be able to support and drive the research activity of the School. The School Research Leads are supported by a Faculty Director of Research (FDR). Both the SRL and FDR are important in implementing the HREiR Award activities and supporting the research community.

The current HR Excellence in Research programme is being led by the PVC for Research and Enterprise, Prof. StJohn Crean, supported by the Director of Research Services, Dr. Alexis Holden. The operation of the action plans is the remit of the Researcher Development Unit within Research Services and they are supported by the Development Team within Human Resources.

### 3.3 Governance Process

The identification, planning, implementation and review of activities proposed for 2020-2022 will be overseen by the Researcher Development Steering Group. (RDSG). The RDSG will report their activities, findings and recommendations to the Faculty Research, Innovation and Ethics Committees as well as the University Research and Innovation Committee. With the new Academic and Professional Services restructures<sup>1</sup> there is a range of individuals who will be available to, and expected to, support the embracing of the Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers.

Figure 1. Reporting flow for Researcher Development

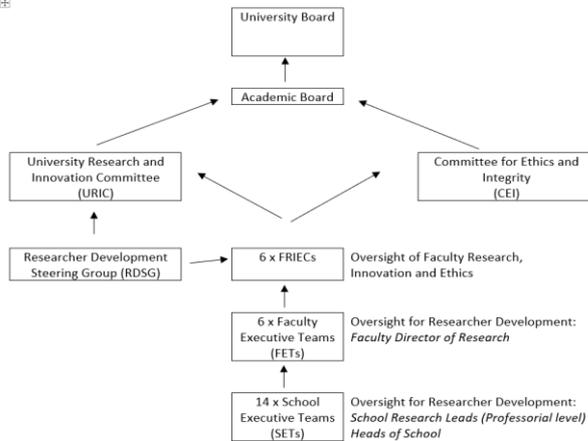


Figure 1. outlines the support available and the reporting mechanisms. The responsibility for assuring compliance with the Concordat Principles and supporting the needs of Researchers will rest with Research Services. Research Services will be primarily supported by the Development Team within Human Resources. Other areas of the University which will also be involved are the Centre for Collaborative Learning (CCL), The Careers Service, and the Innovation and Enterprise Service.

#### 4. The review process

The internal evaluation was managed by the

Researcher Development Working Group which was Chaired by the Director of Research Services and comprised a representative from each Faculty (below Professor/ Reader level and included an ECR) plus the Researcher Development Unit Training Officer, the Leadership and Development Manager from HR, alongside the HR Manager responsible for promotion and staff changes.

The recently established Early Career Researcher (ECR) Network continually asked members what their needs were and offered support identifying such.

#### 5. Key achievements and progress

Over the last 2 years there have been some significant developments with respect to supporting researchers; a number are listed below.

##### 1. Continuing support for the University-wide Early Career Researcher Forum

This is growing in engaged membership, initial meetings had 20 attendees, but now 168 members receive invites to events. The membership is identifying what support they need, and who they wish to hear from over the forthcoming year.

##### 2. Establishment of the University-wide Mid-Career Researcher Forum.

This supports those senior ECRs and academics who are on teaching and research contracts at Lecturer and Senior Lecturer level.

##### 3. Created a Researcher Development Blog to support greater communication about opportunities and information around career development.

This provides an opportunity for greater links to the researcher community and is looking to house everything in one space.

##### 4. Internal research assessment exercises have continued as part of the preparation and development for REF2021 with emphasis on the developing Code of Practice (CoP) to provide a support pathway for those staff who are not currently eligible for return to REF2021 but have aspirations for inclusion in REF2028

Raising the awareness of the CoP and the inclusion of ECRs in the University's return is positive and promotes the need to focus on sustainability and support for researchers through their career.

##### 5. Additional documentation to support appraisers and appraisees in discussions focusing on development of research careers and deliverables.

This has raised the profile of research inputs and outputs and the need to support researchers in delivery to enable career progression. The information is provided for Heads of School and Line Managers who may not always be research active.

##### 6. University retained its Athena Swan Bronze status.

This enables the University to build on the Action Plan and work towards the Silver Award.

**7. Reworking of the Academic Research Induction Programme into a modular system; the RDU session which specifically focusses on the Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers, the Researcher Development Framework and highlights resources and opportunities to aid development.**

This session is profile raising for the support and opportunities available to new staff, many of whom are ECRs and demonstrates our commitment to the Concordat. It also provides an opportunity for networking across the University.

**8. Creation of a dedicated section on the HR web pages with all the institutional policies and practices specifically for researchers to be able to access and linking the Researcher Development webpages with those of relevance on the HR webpages.**

This has started to focus the needs of the researchers and has aided the identification of gaps and opportunities for future development.

## 6. Next Steps

**Next Steps and Measures of Success** UCLan will apply to become a signatory to the Concordat by the end of 2020. This will then provide a framework for the University and its employees to build on the progress made in the previous years for researcher development. The senior manager champion for the Concordat will be Professor StJohn Crean, who is the PVC for Research and Enterprise. Broad<sup>2</sup> key activities, as discussed in the 'Action Plan to 2022' will include:

- (i) Review of the membership of the Researcher Development Steering Group, in light of the academic schools and professional services restructure during 2019-2020;
- (ii) Active promotion of the Concordat to academic researchers;
- (iii) Undertake a gap analysis against the Concordat principles ensuring the academic community are engaged in the process and review;
- (iv) Greater use of Case Studies and Masterclasses to share experience and good practice;
- (v) Aligning data requirements for this Concordat and other concordats to help greater effective and efficient working practices;
- (vi) Publish an annual report which includes the strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plans, and progress made.

Post submission of the 8yr review documentation, work will start immediately on the revision of the RDSG to enable a preliminary report and action plan to be submitted to the Faculty Research, Innovation and Ethics Committees as well as the University Research and Innovation Committee. These will be held during October and November 2022.

### 6.1. Key Actions for Next Review

A full Action Plan is available but key actions within it are (as mapped against the Concordat for Researcher Development):

- Engagement with the CEDARS survey and action upon results
- Promotion of the Concordat for Researcher Development and the HREiR Award
- Supporting and growing researcher networks and especially the ECR network
- Increase support for appraisees and appraisers in the appraisal process
- Training and development opportunities designed to support professional responsibilities associated with the role
- Improved communication routes to raise awareness of information and support available.
- Effective leadership programme for Managers and Researchers (new PIs)
- Support the knowledge of alternative careers for researchers not wishing to, or able to pursue an academic career.
- Improve mechanisms of data collection and collation to inform review of Action Plan delivery.

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<sup>2</sup> More detailed activities are stated in the Action Plan to 2022 document.