

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

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London Met has undergone a significant transformation since 2019. Our institutional strategy 2019/20 -2024/25 defines our mission to effect positive social change through the power of education, with research as an integral driver in delivering this vision. Over the past four years we have comprehensively reshaped the profile and culture of research at London Met through significant investment in an infrastructure to support our ambitions and our people. This commitment and the subsequent launch of a more detailed Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2020/21-2024/25, has enabled the long-term development of a thriving research culture for staff and students. Having spent the first half of our strategic timeline embedding the processes and policies to empower our staff to develop their research careers, we are able to assess the progress we are making and are now looking to the future and where we plan to be beyond 2025.

Crucially, the work that we do to support our researchers is underpinned by our commitment to equity, aligned to our sector-leading Centre for Equity and Inclusion. This university-wide agenda to address gaps in employment, pay and opportunities for minoritised colleagues, also informs the way we support the careers of our researchers as well as our connections with local communities and wider society.

The infrastructure put in place by the PVC RKE is designed to manage all levels and types of research-related interaction, providing guidance, policies and processes, and supporting the framework for career progression. This centralised support includes the establishment of the Research and Postgraduate Office (RPO) and the appointment of a head of Staff Researcher Development. This has created significant traction for improvements to all aspects of research and research culture and provides the leadership and oversight needed to drive through significant positive changes.

The Staff Researcher Development Programme (SRDP) delivers a cohesive training programme accessible to all staff whether they are research-active or wish to be in future. We understand that strong research culture is only created by fostering collaborative and interdisciplinary initiatives across all disciplines, facilitating skills and knowledge exchange, and forging new research opportunities. The programme has doubled the number of workshops on offer

since its inception in 2021 and is supported by other key functions and external speakers, as well as the Academic Schools and key leadership and management staff across the University. Our SRDP provides a platform for cooperation for both staff and students.

By providing the training, support systems and career pathways we are able to empower our staff to achieve their professional objectives. Reward and recognition is at the heart of this. We have created a number of new roles across the Academic Schools to deliver our agenda at local level and to provide mentorship and peer-to-peer support.

All staff, particularly ECRs, returners to research, women, and colleagues from minoritised groups (who have been supported to do PhDs with fee waivers) have been better provisioned. Staff are awarded significant numbers of hours through the Academic Workload Allocation Model (AWAM), providing hours that cannot be filled with teaching, together with the opportunity to apply for, usually semester length, research leave. We also now have an annual promotion round covering Professorships and Associate Professorships for L&T, Enterprise and Research. Career progression is supported through mentorship, training and personal 5-year research plans.

We recognise that no research can be carried out without financial support, QR funds are distributed among the Schools for small-scale funding, eg: conference attendance. We have also introduced larger internal funding schemes to provide seeding money for projects, particularly for ECRs.

Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan

This plan is mapped to points in our University Strategic Plan (USP)*. We aim to:

1. Establish and grow SRD programme ensuring 10 days CPD is provided for research active staff. (USP 1, 2, 3,4)
2. Create and maintain an online hub for researcher development. (USP 3, 4)

3. Encourage and support inclusive research practices. (USP 3, 4)
4. Support inclusive academic promotions and training. (USP 3,4)
5. Improve research culture and management of researchers. (USP 3)
6. Establish and grow mentoring. (USP 1)
7. Support and develop ECRs and Returners to Research. (USP 1)
8. Promote and encourage KE and Impact (USP 2)

London Metropolitan University's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat:

*Derived from wider University ambitions, the University's Strategic Plan (USP) - 2019/20- 2024/25 commits us to:

1. To grow the volume of world-leading and internationally excellent research that we undertake.
2. To improve the visibility of our research and the impact it has on some of the biggest challenges facing society today.
3. To ensure our staff with research workloads, and those promoted via the research route, reflect the diversity of our staff.
4. To challenge and support our Centres and Groups to drive research by supporting their communities in the round, from providing PGR training and recruitment to promoting collaboration and supporting bidding.

Environment and culture:

The Research and Postgraduate office (RPO) is set up to support and grow our research staff base and to drive and manage our RKE strategy. The RKE Strategy was produced in consultation with staff. We have set out clear objectives for all those involved in RKE activity. Staff have a sense of ownership in delivering our KPIs. The direction of travel is one we take together.

Our overall strategic goal aims to provide a supportive and inclusive infrastructure as the basis for strong Research and KE. The University is dedicated to being fully inclusive, informed by the University strategy, the Centre for Equity and Inclusion and

our purposeful focus on women and minoritised groups in SRDP. In addition, staff have mandatory inclusivity training and a wide range of CPD to choose from aside from the SRDP.

We use researcher's fora (through SRDP) and conversation events to 'take the temperature' with respect to perceptions of research culture, in addition to an annual internal staff survey and we use the biannual Vitae CEDARS survey for the specific benchmarking of research culture. Feedback from these surveys has been used to further review workloads and training needs and to evaluate the direction of travel.

Measures of success:

We measure the inclusivity of our staffing initiatives by monitoring the diversity of our research staff base and expect it to better reflect the diversity of our student body. We also expect that staff satisfaction and trust in our processes increases if our processes are effective (USP 3, 4)

Professional development of researchers:

Signing the Researcher Development Concordat has been very important to establishing our invigorated research culture. Information surrounding the Concordat is disseminated to staff, through the Staff Researcher Development (SRD) WebLearn organisation. This information hub provides resources for staff that are designed to engender, support and elevate research activity.

Our Research Centres are key to creating a vibrant culture for research in the Academic Schools as well as creating interdisciplinary opportunities and providing Research Students with opportunities for membership and networking, both internally and externally. We have overhauled these Centres by providing a clear support and strategy, as well as introducing a Research Centre Peer Learning Group.

Our impact tracker application is specially designed to help researchers record impact evidence and link projects together thus aiding researchers to collaborate both internally and externally.

Measures of success:

Growing use of the SRDP information hub. Increased numbers of successful collaborations. Better REF submission and better impact case studies. (USP 1,2,4)

Employment:

To ensure fair workloads, our revamped workload allocation model is designed to improve teaching workloads and recognise research activity. This is reviewed annually.

Our research leave scheme is very supportive of employees' research agendas, together with having effective anti-discriminatory policies including for trans and non-binary staff. We have a new Wellbeing Strategy, clear guidance on Research Integrity and Ethics and promotions which reward both researchers and teaching professionals. We also have added an enterprise strand to establish an improved infrastructure to support high-quality and high-impact research.

Measures of success:

Increase in research hours allocated to staff. Staff reporting and perceiving that their workloads are manageable, more research plans submitted, more bidding activity recorded. Engagement with promotions process and clear evidence of fair practices reflected in demographic profile of successful promotions. (USP 1,3)

Summary of actions taken and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period

Environment and culture	Institution: The University created the position of Executive Director of People to transform our capacity and capability amongst all staff, drive confidence, ambition and pride across our institution and promote
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wellbeing and inclusion. Our PVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange, who has driven the research agenda since 2019, has created a new impetus for research which has seen an increase in research leave: in 2019, 23% of all staff had research hours as compared to 2023 where we have 43% with research hours. We expect an improved REF return in 2028 exercise, a significant increase in staff engaging in research and an increase in research income won by the university. We ensure our researchers are working in healthy and supportive environments, and equipped and empowered to succeed. We reward and support staff and have seen an improvement that correlates with increased RKE success.

Internal funding, derived from QR and HEIF, is granted to individuals and teams via a clear and transparent system of bidding. Two central funds can be bid for, the smaller Rescaling fund and the larger Transformation fund. These funds are aimed at enabling researchers to fund pilot studies and enhance their ability to attract external funding, produce meaningful outputs, increase impact and develop KE and relationships with business.

These funding allocations have been scrutinised to make sure that the allocations are fairly distributed (Table 1.0).

Staff grouping	Total applicants	Staff awarded Transformation funds (up to 4k)	Staff awarded Rescaling funds (up to 20k)
Minoritised	36%	27%	38%
Women	52%	50%	50%
Total number	58	26	16
P=0.841 not significantly different from expected			

Table 1.0: Distribution of internal funding awards across minoritised ethnic groups and women. The distribution can be seen as equitable since it does not differ from what is expected from the distribution of staff groups ($p=0.814$).

With respect to the current REF audit (in preparation for the next REF) we have 78 contributing individuals from minoritised groups, which represents 35% of overall output, compared to 27% in last REF submission (2021). We have 48% women who have contributed to this audit as opposed to 41% for the last REF (with 53% women in the academic staff base).

Academic Managers of Researchers:

We have annual appraisals, 3-5 year rolling research plans, research leave (one semester), research time allocation (150-450 hours p/a), a competitive internal funding stream and a vibrant mentoring programme.

Using university-wide focus groups with managers and staff, we explored tensions between research and teaching duties with the topic set as Research Culture.

Since time is the principal demand from staff, we provide this through tailored workloads, ringfenced research leave and through supporting successful funding bids. We have excellent staff engagement with the SRD organisation and the training sessions. All academic staff are signed onto the WebLearn organisation. This represents approximately 450 active users with a modal attendance of 20 at each session. Active users include, in the main, academic staff and associate lecturers with other interested individuals joining. In the most recent completed semester, 2022/23 Autumn (1.9.2022-20.2.2023), the site had 1739 hits on a Monday when the sessions run with 5229 hits in total covering a period where we ran 22 sessions.

	<p>Over the last two years, we have had 332 (2020/21) and 372 (2021/22) individuals attending (including 16 non-academics) from approximately 450 of our target audience representing 73% and 82% respectively, of active individuals attending at least one session. We have seen an increase of 4.5% in total number of attendees, but with a larger increase in attendees from minoritized groups, of 7%, over the period between 2020/2021 and 2021/22</p> <p>Researchers:</p> <p>Working with our Communications Office, we have sought to maximise the means to communicate the full range of our research outputs to the widest possible audience, improving all facets of our web presence, from our Research and KE front pages, our KE through the London Met Lab and business partnerships through our Business Accelerator to renewed individual research centres and groups. Centres are supported by RPO to get their messages out there. The RPO produces a termly Research and KE newsletter, celebrating success among our research staff and student community.</p> <p>Furthermore, we provide regular communication of routes for promotion rounds, training programmes, pathways to impact and research funding streams.</p>
Employment	<p>Institution:</p> <p>Our Research and Postgraduate Office (RPO) support senior staff, managers, researchers and PGR students to achieve their ambitions and facilitate the delivery and growth of research and knowledge exchange by enabling new processes to run smoothly, providing support and signposting. The RPO maintains a scheme of financial support for RKE projects (now</p>

approaching its third year) and ensures our varying approaches to staff, student, business, and other forms of RKE are mutually supportive and sensitive to needs.

We are actively recruiting research staff with a focus on enhancing our inclusivity and decolonising the research agenda. The proportion of black and minoritised colleagues, with research and KE allowances, is growing and is up to 43% of that group, nearly double the 23% figure in 2021.

We have established BAME networking groups for RKE in addition to university-wide organisations and we are committed to addressing inequality for staff, and students. We have been awarded Athena Swan Bronze, and will continue inviting staff and students to form the working group to deliver our action plan. We have entered the Stonewall Diversity Champion programme and have joined Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index process, to assist us in implementing LGBT+ inclusive policies and practices across the University.

We are committed to maintaining an annual round, rewarding all routes, including KE. We evaluate the outcomes of applications for promotion in the three themes (R, L&T, and KE), and act on imbalances, for example through recruitment. We are an equal opportunities employer with a policy of inclusive recruitment and diverse representation across our recruitment panels. We wish to be an institution that values diversity and equity, and have devised a recruitment drive which highlights our ambitions and mission to provide career opportunities for all. Table 2.0 shows the effects of promotion and recruitment, and where we still have work to do.

Professorial/ Reader level posts	Internal promotion	Total recruited
All posts	68%	32%
Women	38%	15%
Minoritised	26%	46%
Disabled individuals	3%	8%

Table 2.0: Posts include Associate Professor, Reader, Professor, Senior Professor.

We have more BAME, disabled and researchers with caring responsibilities than the sector norm. We also have a higher rate of staff who believe that the university supports inclusivity. Most of our staff think that our employment practices are fair, inclusive, transparent and merit based (80-92%) (CEDARS Survey, 2021).

Academic Managers of Researchers:

As described previously, managers of Research use a redesigned workload model, awarding time for research and KE only activities, which enables researchers to spend dedicated stretches of time with no teaching responsibilities. Importantly, we have developed mentorship programmes for staff and the introduction of 3–5-year Plans for all staff interested in developing their research careers.

Researchers:

In 2023, we will undertake the second CEDARS survey among our Research and KE community. We will use this to enable us to provide greater support to our staff and deliver the best possible results and learn from experience. Recruitment practices, as perceived by the staff, however, were significantly above the sector in our last survey.

	<p>We have updated all policies, including an induction checklist for newly engaged research staff, specific statements on early-career colleagues and created dedicated support avenues for ECRs and returners to research.</p>
<p>Professional development</p>	<p>Institution:</p> <p>One of the pillars of the continuous improvement in research culture has been the creation of the bespoke SRDP delivered through the Staff Researcher Development Weblearn Organisation.</p> <p>This year, we have provided over 80 hours of Researcher Development training almost entirely delivered by current staff. All the sessions are recorded and allow asynchronous viewing. The hours of carefully curated training have increased over the last three years with women and minoritised staff groups being well represented as the session leads.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers:</p> <p>Through the SRDP we have been able to provide the opportunity, and place staff in the best possible position, to meet University research goals. In addition to staff being trained, they are also the trainers providing valuable exchange of skills within the university community.</p> <p>Managers are enrolled on the programme and are able to engage in research conversations, suggest agendas and voice concerns at university wide fora. We respond in a “you said, we did” format.</p> <p>Staff asked for more training in researcher development,</p>

including research funding and we did this and more with double the number of training hours provided across the year since 2021. Staff asked for more help with career development, and we developed and expanded our training and mentoring programme for ECRs, returners to research and mid-career researchers. Staff asked for provision of resources, and we have developed a dynamic set of research resources on the SRD Weblearn page, including funding databases and key documents such as the Researcher Development concordat.

Researchers:

Academic and research active staff across the University are signed onto the Weblearn organisation and receive notification and access to the training and resources. Staff are engaged and enjoy the sessions:

“Having the researcher development programme in London Met, is such an innovative approach that ensures an efficient and better working environment. I have attended seminars that aim to build professional relations, promote transparency of professional processes and decisions, and get to know our colleagues better. Upon reflection, undoubtedly a very useful and must have programme within London Met!”

“Thank you for all the Monday SRDP sessions that you offer. They are a wonderful and wonderfully diverse set of offerings that we absolutely hold on to, to keep us feeling and acting like researchers!”

Resources are available on the website including a research funding data base, impact resources, induction checklist and the Researcher Development concordat. All schedules are archived

along with slide presentations and audio of the live delivery of the sessions.

This training content ranges from information on university processes, through engaging externally to empowerment of minoritized staff. Additionally, we have established Researcher Mini Symposia. Year 1 had a COVID symposium, Year 2 COVID symposium and a Climate Change symposium. In year 3 this will be combined as an environmental symposium entitled Environment: COVID and Climate Change. From the SRD we also launched a KE strand in 2020/2021: Fact or Fiction (concerning the COVID virus, vaccinations and infection control) which reached out to our university community and the wider London community in conjunction with London Met Labs. We presented nine sessions in total and reached out to the vaccine hesitant community. This work also became part of a research initiative. On the back of this a series of fact or fiction, KE events have been launched with other schools of other topics such as climate change.

To encourage and support all our researchers in pursuing impactful research, we have embarked on a programme of impact training aimed at embedding impact into the developing research culture and to move the focus away from the specific needs of REF Impact Case Studies to a wider understanding of the impact of research.

Following a pilot session in June 2022, we have introduced a series of Impact Conversation events. These are small group sessions (maximum 10 participants) based on an Action Learning Set format, in which researchers are enabled to explore all of the potential impact their research may generate and to formulate plans to ensure that the impact will to place.

	<p>Most recently we are negotiating with NUPP in the Ukraine to help them run their university, in the midst of a war, by sharing our SRD programme with them.</p>
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Lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result:

It is a very exciting time for London metropolitan University with respect to research growth. There is an impressive and inspiring depth and breadth of projects going on across the university, being carried out by energetic and committed staff. Our research profile is going from strength to strength, and it is compelling to be part of that process in the coming years. We need to continue to ensure our research staff are feeling that they are fully supported at work. In addition, we should continue to improve the experience of women and minoritised staff, ensuring they have access to fair treatment and to see that action is taken where treatment is not fair. Our researchers need to continue to trust that the university is committed to equity and inclusivity and further work needs to be done to decolonise our research agenda.

It is necessary to continue to review and improve the work loading with respect to research staff. Research management training should be enhanced and researcher training and the associated Concordats, needs to be more effectively signposted. Although our success in gaining external funding has developed greatly, further training is also needed to drive up external funding bids. We currently rely more commonly on internal funding and self-funding with significantly lower rates of funding attracted from research charities and UKRI funders than the sector average. We still have BAME colleagues who report that middle-aged male voices are dominating conversations. In 2021 we established a London Met Black, Asian minority Ethnic Voice network to create a forum for support and conversation, and we clearly need to do more to highlight this.

We also have to take account of a number of recommendations of a recent set of focus groups run by one of our professorial women. While these groups were small, and many recommendations and complaints were individual, we will take them seriously and will act on them. A series of responses is now being drawn up by the PVC RKE's office. Some of those suggestions are small and easy to fix. But others relate to the underrepresentation of minoritised ethnic and women colleagues in research. Both of these numbers are improving in line with our commitments made in the REF narrative, but we still have work to do.

Key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period:

- **Establish and grow SRD programme ensuring 10 days CPD is provided for research staff. (USP 1, 2, 3,4)**

The SRDP has grown over the last three years from being embedded in the main university CPD offering to being an independent offering. We will be adding sessions and working with Schools to deliver and embed researcher development activity that is both specially requested and to host sessions that are already delivered. We anticipate that this will lead to a better REF submission and better impact case studies.

- **Create and maintain an online hub for researcher development. (USP 3, 4)**

We will continue to build the role of the Researcher Development website to act as a repository of information, an active resource, a driver for change and a dynamic and responsive space.

- **Encourage and support inclusive research practices. (USP 3, 4)**

We will be responsive to the needs and requirements of our researchers. But we will monitor progress using data. We will continue to create an environment that removes rather than create barriers. We will expect that staff satisfaction and trust in our processes increases if our processes are effective.

- **Support inclusive academic promotions and training. (USP 3,4)**

We have been offering promotions to our staff after many years of there being very few pathways to promotions. The progress on this has been prestigious. However, we will continue to keep a data driven approach and to make sure that inclusivity is realised and not just ideated. Our inclusive training will not only help staff to be promoted but to provide the foundation for a diverse research active workforce who can act as mentors for ECRs and returners to research.

- **Improve research culture and management of researchers. (USP 3)**

This area is one which needs careful attention and is a continuous process. Balancing teaching and research time can be achieved by consultation with staff and managers and needs a flexible, responsive approach. We want to ensure that we balance growing new researchers, ECRs and returners to research with appropriate allocations for established researchers. We will expect that staff will report and perceive that their workloads are more manageable, that more research plans submitted, and more bidding activity recorded. Engagement with promotions processes and clear evidence of fair practices reflected in demographic profile of successful promotions. (USP 1,3)

- **Establish and grow mentoring. (USP 1)**

Part of nurturing ECRs and returners to research includes mentoring. This scheme has been launched and is being ramped up through the SRDP and focused mentoring 'festivals' where staff are invited to find new mentors and sources of advice. We will continue to promote mentoring and to highlight the benefits for both the mentor and mentee.

- **Support and develop ECRs and Returners to Research. (USP 1)**

ECRS and returners to research will continue to be supported by the innovative internal funding process, the accessible and inclusive promotions and training opportunities directed at this group. This includes active encouragement for staff to do PhDs and assistance in the form of fee waiver and appropriate workloads.

- **Promote and encourage KE and Impact. (USP 2)**

KE is promoted through the London Met Labs led by the Director for London

Engagement and the Business Accelerator led by the Head of Enterprise. Impact is lead, in the RPO by the Impact Manager who has been training staff to use our Hive impact Tracker app.

Researchers can receive, funding, training and networking opportunities to enhance their levels of engagement with KE and impact. We will continue to evaluate the efficacy of these relatively fresh approaches.

Approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body:

Governance:

This document will be presented by the Head of Researcher Development to the Research and Postgraduate office (RPO) for comments. The Head of Researcher Development works within the RPO headed by the PVC RKE. This Office is responsible for carrying out the Concordat requirements and has used the tenets of the Concordat to build a successful, dynamic, responsive programme that is part of the wide-reaching remit of the RPO that drives and supports all aspects of research at London Metropolitan University

Next the document will be approved by the PVC RKE of who is overseeing strategy and innovation driving the striking evolution of research that has taken place over the last three years.

The document then will be presented by PVC RKE to the University Senior Leadership Team for their views and confirmation that it adheres to the University mission and strategies.

Finally, it will be presented to the London Metropolitan University Governors for their approval, prior to publication on the website.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries: u.fairbrother@londonmet.ac.uk

This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk



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Tijs Broeke

Chair of the Board of Governors