



## **HR Excellence in Research Award: Year Six Internal Review Report**

### **Context**

At Leeds Beckett University, we are governed by a [Board of Governors and Academic Board](#), along with our executive groups to support the Vice Chancellor's leadership and management of the university. These include the Senior Management Group – of which our new Pro Vice Chancellor – Research and Enterprise – is a member. Our Research and Enterprise Committee is one of several committees which constitute our Academic Board. This committee has oversight for our HR Excellence in Research action plan.

### **How our internal evaluation was undertaken**

LBU Research staff, Research and Teaching staff, and PGRs were consulted and provided feedback for the internal evaluation. This feedback was gathered through: an internal development needs analysis distributed to ECRs and FCRs, as well as information gathered through our CROS and PIRLS 2019 data, PRES survey, institutional colleague survey and an Athena SWAN survey. This was further supported via feedback received from attendees on our training and development courses (including post-workshop evaluation forms), our school committee meetings, and the Vitae training needs analysis.

The current Research and Enterprise (R&E) infrastructure at the University facilitates communication and consultation with LBU research staff and monitoring of progress toward targets. School-based Directors of Research, who are responsible for Units of Assessment and have a key role to play in the development of research centres and institutes in their schools, feed into the [Research and Enterprise committee](#), via the R&E service. The committee's remit includes: promoting the strategic development of research and enterprise and other scholarly related activity across our university; overseeing preparations for all external assessments of research quality and enterprise; overseeing the provision of research degrees; auditing and evaluating our university's research regulations; and promoting good practice, innovation, and ethical conduct in research and enterprise and other scholarly activity.

The review of our efforts around the Concordat was supported by: key staff who lead workstreams and activity as part of our institutional commitments to researcher development and the annual colleague survey; Athena Swan; The Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2021; the institutional HEIF, KEC and Workforce Plan and included our Directors of Research, HR team and Library researcher support team; Collaboration between our People and Organisational Development (POD) team with researcher staff and academics on how best to support them; and Key achievements and progress against our original action plan.

### **Achievements and Progress**

**Environment and Culture:** We introduced a University statement on racism in December 2020. We have strengthened our focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) with the creation of a new EDI Steering Group, led by the Pro Vice Chancellor and Director of Human Resources (in addition to our EDI Committee). A new Associate Director of EDI has been appointed and joined the HR team in August 2021.

We are embarking on a long-term programme to prevent and address bullying and all forms of harassment and sexual misconduct. In November 2021 we launched an online reporting tool for students and colleagues, with clear reporting mechanisms and access to support and advice. We published a new policy on Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. We are recruiting volunteers to become Dignity and Respect Advisors - unbiased, neutral colleagues providing a confidential and informal service to listen and support individuals that may have been subject to bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct.

As reported in our Public Sector Equality Duty Report (2021), the female representation within our professoriate has increased from 27.69% in 2018 to 32.73% in 2020.

**Employment:** New Flexible Working Policies, Principles and guidance were launched in early 2021. We held a 'Let's Talk Flexible Working' panel discussion in March 2021 to provide managers with support on a more informal approach to agreeing flexible working requests. 73 University managers attended. A recording of the session is available on our website. We also provide a recorded webinar for colleagues to explain the flexible working principles and display the Working Families' 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' logo on our jobs webpage.

Earlier this year we updated our recruitment and selection training for panel members to contribute to fairness, consistency, and the best assessment of the candidates' potential in our recruitment processes.

### **Professional and Career Development**

- a. **Our new Performance and Development Review (PDR) system:** The last two PDR cycles have had an increased focus on wellbeing. A new system to support user friendly recording of PDR discussion outcomes went live in July 2021. Our People and Organisational Development (POD) team worked with academic and research colleagues to provide resources to better support academic and research PDR conversations. The POD team have also provided a bank of research example objectives to support managers of researchers. These documents have been validated by a Professor, external to Leeds Beckett University, in the role of critical friend. We sent targeted communications to Heads of Subject and Course Directors signposting PDR support for academic and research colleagues.
- b. **Our new Academy for Research and Knowledge Exchange (ARKE):** Our REF 2021 submission has shown that we need to further enhance our training to researchers specifically around research integrity and impact. We have committed to doing this by creating the ARKE which will launch in 2022. This will provide a comprehensive development programme to all academic staff - with a specific focus on research active staff - providing development pathways for each stage of their research journey.
- c. **Our new training and development programme:** As a result of feedback through surveys, we redeveloped our Research and Enterprise (R&E) staff development and training programme in 2021. The programme provides a suite of workshops and online toolkits supporting staff in all stages of their research careers – there has already been a notable increase in registrations since October 2021.

**Communications:** We have developed a comprehensive communications strategy over the past year and created new communication channels to share and celebrate our researchers' successes externally and internally: including a new MS Teams channel for the research community, and an R&E Twitter account. Successes are also shared through newsletters, the website, blogs, press releases, the VC's daily news email, and social media.

Starting in June 2021, we further developed our engagement with new research staff which included a targeted introduction email that highlights the researcher development and training available, and a targeted research staff induction presentation. We have seen an increase in buy-in from researchers – we now have 268 members of the MS Team, 612 followers on Twitter, and we are delivering more development workshops, across a broader range of areas, to increased numbers.

### **Next steps and the focus of the strategy for the next two years, including success measures**

We conducted an in-depth review of our progress to date while developing our 2022-24 action plan, consulting LBU research staff specifically through: discussions at the University Research and Enterprise Committee; school updates on progress via the Directors of Research forum; updates from relevant professional services departments and other interested parties; and our analysis of progress on Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter. Moving forward, we will incorporate existing communications into the ARKE and build a stronger dialogue, particularly with our research staff, in areas that interact with the Concordat, in addition to other institutional initiatives (Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter etc).

We are committed to enhancing researchers' development at all stages of their careers, to maximise their potential. To support this, we are developing the ARKE to fully meet the multifaceted roles that researchers play at the university and in the community, and to support the University's long-term objectives outlined in the [University's Strategic Planning Framework 2021-2026](#).

The development of the ARKE and training programmes will be transparently informed by our researchers. We will seek out the views of researchers at each stage of their careers, involving them in relevant committees, including our newly developed School-based Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. This allows schools and their research staff to input into decisions about environment and culture, employment and professional and career development. We have examined our plan of action and structured our priorities accordingly with our top priorities as follows:

**Environment and Culture:** To improve the mental health of our whole community, colleagues and students, and demonstrate our ongoing commitment to achieving good wellbeing for the institution, we aim to achieve the University Mental Health Charter (2022). We also aim to achieve the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award (2023) – following our successful retention of our Athena SWAN bronze Award (2022).

KPMG audited compliance with the Research Integrity (RI) Concordat in Summer 2022. The audit rating was 'Significant Assurance with minor improvement opportunities' and it was agreed that we will develop a checklist to record and map procedures and process associated with RI. This will include a RI Framework that will inform the review and updating of policies such as: Research Ethics; Investigating Allegations of Misconduct in Research; and Research Integrity. This will result in updated reporting mechanisms and a multi-faceted development programme for researchers at all stages.

**Employment:** We are developing our new ARKE, which will provide pathways for researcher career development and include a new induction programme for researchers to inform them about relevant development opportunities. We will also regularly promote all training and development through managers and our range of internal communications.

Our new Strategic Workforce Plan (SWP) will define the LBU academic and create a framework of typical responsibilities. We will also define what it means to be a LBU Researcher as part of the ARKE development framework. Through the SWP we will deliver leadership training for managers, and support managers with PDR guidance and training to ensure these take place for all researchers.

A key objective is to develop a training framework, including development pathways that map out the career trajectory for researchers interested in pursuing academic careers. The pathways will show the typical characteristics of research undertaken at each stage, the responsibilities (including legal and governance requirements) of the researcher, the PI and institution. The training and development available for each stage will be documented with expected outcomes for each level of researcher.

**Professional and Career Development** - We are investing heavily in our EDI – including our new Black and Global Majority Researcher Network; and delivering the new Advance HE Researcher Development programme on behalf of our EDI team, to support early and mid-career colleagues to increase their research impact and prepare for promotion – with underrepresented groups particularly encouraged to apply.

We are investing significantly into our training for researchers – through developing the ARKE and its associated development framework, potential career development opportunities and Festival for Research and Knowledge Exchange (FoRKE), as well as the new Vitae development programme for up to 250 colleagues at all career stages.

We will focus on reviewing the current career advice available to our research only staff with the view of embedding and promoting the current offer/creating a new offer to support this area. One of the methods we will achieve this through is the proposed FoRKE which will take place over multiple days with a primary focus on development of our research staff with one element potentially being focused on career development. This provides some immediate support to our researchers in addition to being a mechanism for feedback to support the development of this provision moving forwards.

This pilot year of our new training and development programme and ARKE will be followed by evaluation – we will recruit champions who have attended the Vitae course to help us define and develop the training programme going forwards.