

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH - CONCORDAT ACTION PLAN PROGRESS – SEPTEMBER 2019

“LSE recognises the importance of personal and career development for Research Staff at all stages of their career. Through a number of concrete mechanisms, such as Career Development Reviews, we support and encourage researchers to pro-actively engage in their personal, career and lifelong development”

- LSE Research Staff Policy Statement (2016)

1. School Context

LSE has held the HR Excellence in Research award since 2010 and during this period we have continued to make significant efforts to identify and address the needs of our researchers across the School, in direct collaboration with them. While we have been addressing the areas identified in our previous Action Plans, our work in this area has and will continue to evolve, e.g. based on our findings from the recent staff survey and forthcoming research staff surveys, as well as work being undertaken on the implementation of the recently approved 10 year School strategy, LSE 2030. In September 2019, we have also received the revised Concordat following the 10 year review and will be updating and modifying our Action Plan to reflect the changes, as well as undertaking further work in addressing areas identified in our recent Vitae panel review.

In 2019 The School community gave feedback via an extensive staff survey on a wide range of issues, and we are now in the process of examining the results and identifying areas that require action and further support. Alongside this, as noted above, we have also recently launched the LSE 2030 strategy which lays out the School’s long-term vision, guiding principles and commitments, and this will also help shape the support we provide to our research staff community. Our guiding principles include sustaining excellence in our research and other work through an inclusive and diverse community, extending our impact and reach and ensuring a sustainable future. In addition, we have a newly appointed Pro-Director (Research) who will be a key figure in driving the future development of research activities within the School.

Our strategic plan, LSE 2030, links back to the founding vision of LSE, as ‘a community of people and ideas, founded to know the causes of things, for the betterment of society’. Three key priorities have been identified and these include “educate for impact”, “research for the world” and “developing LSE for everyone”. Each of these clearly have our staff communities, crucially including our research staff, at their core:

Research for the world – how we aim to achieve this:

- Invest in a broad disciplinary base and vibrant research environment, with targeted funding, support and career guidance for our faculty
- Curate cross-cutting research themes to join up international expertise and interests to shape evidence-based interventions around key social and economic issues
- Provide a platform for world-class social science research that upholds the highest standards of rigorous enquiry
- Invest in the social scientists of the future through more scholarships and enhanced support for PhDs, postdoctoral and early career researchers
- Engage with leading global researchers and actively champion diversity of voice
- Collaborate with natural sciences to understand changes to economies, politics, communities and societies

- Strengthen our connections with policy-makers, alumni and strategic partners and cultivate new relationships with the private sector
- Invest in world-class digital and physical facilities
- Engage citizens around the world and develop thought leadership, building on our renowned public lecture programme and award-winning LSE IQ podcasts.

Develop LSE for everyone – how we aim to achieve this:

- Support faculty to maximise their time for teaching and research
- Launch a digital Staff Hub to improve access to services and opportunities
- Empower staff to shape their own development, including giving all staff access to LSE’s courses and programmes
- Launch a digital Alumni Hub to complement the new Alumni Centre
- Develop a Welcome Centre to improve visitor experience on campus
- Invest in School-wide resources to advance diversity of staff and students and address systemic inequalities
- Ensure policies are in place to foster equitable and inclusive working practices
- Continue to invest in capital development to upgrade teaching, learning and social spaces, including a new education and conference facility
- Use our strengths in data analysis to inform decision-making and robustly evaluate our own activities
- Empower and support staff and students to innovate and lead change.

In addition to the above, the School is working on approaches to commercialisation of its research, where appropriate, and the career development implications arising for researchers as a result of this.

Currently, implementation plans for both the recently-launched School strategy and the actions arising from the recently-completed staff survey are being developed. These will entail a number of key activities that will support and enhance the development of research staff colleagues and we will be building these into our Concordat action plan in the coming academic session 2019-20.

2. Evaluation

The key monitoring and implementation mechanism for our Concordat Action Plan is the Research Staff Committee (RSC), for which the Action Plan forms the core strategic focus of work. The membership of the RSC is set up to ensure that research staff themselves, as well as stakeholders involved in providing support to research staff (e.g. those involved in research staff induction, and in overseeing their Career Development Review process), are able to provide feedback on various topics outlined in the Action Plan, or proposed for inclusion. The Chair of the Research Staff Association (RSA) is a member of the Committee. To ensure representation from early career researchers, a Research Officer/Policy Officer level staff member representative has recently been added to the set membership of this committee from 2019-20 session onwards, taking the research staff membership to four, not including the Chair of the RSA and a UCU research staff representation. As an indication that the School leadership takes research staff issues as a top priority, the RSC membership also includes the Pro Director (Faculty Development), the Pro Director (Research) and the Vice Chair of the Appointments Committee (see below).

Both via the RSC itself, and through separate meetings/exchanges, we regularly consult with the LSE’s Research Staff Association (RSA), a community group established in 2012 to provide a means by which research staff can discuss a range of issues and communicate their views back to the School – as well as creating a greater sense of community amongst research staff colleagues at the LSE. The Chair of the RSA also regularly shares Committee agenda items with

the network, providing feedback at RSC meetings. The Head of Organisational Learning who attends RSC, also attends the RSA informal lunch meetings to obtain feedback on career development support offered by the Organisational Learning team and to discuss improvements that could be made to support and engage research staff in this area. The Research Staff Association through its Chair have also contributed towards the writing of this report and the development of each Concordat Action Plan.

We also undertake an annual HR Organisational Learning survey every summer (commencing in 2018) which aims to explore researchers' views on learning and development provision for the previous academic session, as well as any needs for the forthcoming session. Previous feedback has helped to shape the delivery methods used for sessions, as well as the timing, duration and content. The 2019 results will be available in due course and will also form the basis of future actions in the Concordat Action Plan.

As outlined above, the School undertook a comprehensive School staff survey in 2019 – as is done every three years. Initial results suggest that 89% of our research colleagues are 'proud to work for LSE', 76% 'would recommend LSE as a great place to work', and 84% said that their 'job makes good use of my skills and abilities'. Building from the initial analysis, an action plan is in development to look at survey results and themes and a research staff member is on the Staff Engagement Advisory Group. The group provides cross-institutional advice on staff engagement activities at LSE and acts as a sounding board to senior management, Human Resources and Internal Communications to ensure that staff views are taken on board in the development of engagement initiatives, including the staff survey itself.

Themes raised in Career Development Reviews (CDRs) with research staff are also used for feedback on our Action Plan. Every research staff CDR is read, every year, by the School's Vice-Chair of the Appointments Committee (VCAC) who is also Chair of the RSC. Any themes raised in research staff CDRs – e.g. the important question of continuity of employment, or issues surrounding mentoring – can thus be fed back to the RSC and other relevant committees in the School and used as a basis for making changes to the CDR guidance or form for the following year, as well as informing the Action Plan and School policy more broadly. The Head of Organisational Learning also reviews the learning and development section of these reviews to identify themes and training needs, which are in turn built into the next year's development programme.

LSE Research and Innovation and LSE Library are also undertaking a project that aims to analyse the experience of researchers and the efficiency of research support at LSE, from which the results will be available in due course.

3. Key areas of progress:

Outlined below are some of the key areas of progress that have been achieved in recent years. These should be read in the context of ongoing institutional changes and developments:

A. Recruitment & Selection - Principle 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.

Recruitment: We have a strong track record in recruiting and retaining outstanding early and mid-career researchers, including into our New Research Staff Career (NRSC). As part of this, we continually monitor and seek to improve our hiring procedures via the LSE's Appointments Committee and other mechanisms – e.g., in order to ensure that our EDI principles are applied in relation to research staff appointments, and that researchers are given solid career development advice on a regular basis. In terms of attracting applications: all relevant research roles at the School are now advertised on EURAXESS alongside other mediums.

B. Recognition & Value - Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation's human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research

School strategy: As noted above, research is at the heart of LSE 2030, and this includes a focus on the support and development of research staff, as can be seen in the introduction of the New Research Staff Career, the work of the Research Staff Committee, and other mechanisms.

Bridging Fund: The School's Bridging Fund – which can help cover funding gaps in research staff contracts – is currently being revised by the School and the RSC has been invited to provide feedback. RSC have been briefed on Bridging Funds issues on a number of occasions by Director of LSE Research & Innovation. We expect to finalise all recommendations arising from the Review of the Research Incentives Policy (of which Bridging Funds are one part) by the end of 2019-20. Final recommendations will go through the School's approvals process with a view to implementation in August 2020.

More broadly, the question of how to support research staff in achieving continuity of employment is one that we continue to focus on in our discussions and via support mechanisms such as CDRs (see below).

Communications strategy: A tailored newsletter is now circulated by LSE Careers to research staff on a termly basis and has received positive feedback. The School is also looking to develop an overall communications strategy for research staff to identify the best means of communication for this staff group, as well as undergoing continuous improvement of its web pages through having a tailored area of the website specifically for research staff learning and development. Individual Divisions are also undertaking internal reviews to ensure that web content is easily accessible and of value to research staff. Links to external areas such as EURAXESS and Vitae are also signposted and guidance on using the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) has also been included. We are also in the process of developing video content of research staff experiences to support awareness, among other things, of job opportunities at the School.

Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021: Research staff representatives on the Research Staff Committee have provided substantive feedback on the School's draft REF 2021 Code of Practice as part of the School's commitment to ensuring that REF preparation does encompass all research active staff. Furthermore, in summer term all research staff received an email outlining the REF rules which included a summary of the REF Code of Practice and linking to the full version. The email will be sent out again at the start of the new academic session.

Once the School's REF Code of Practice has been approved by Research England in November 2019, all research staff will also be individually informed by email as to whether they are eligible for REF 2021, based on the School's explanation of the REF rules in the Code of Practice. This also includes an appeals process if they believe they have been wrongly classified.

C. Support and Career Development - Principle 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment. **& Principle 4:** The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career

Career Development: Professional development for research staff is supported a range of different units in the School, including HR Organisational Learning, LSE Research and Innovation (previously Research Division), the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and LSE Careers. These providers endeavour to be as joined up as possible in offering learning and development support within their respective areas as well as collaboratively and hold a termly meeting to share progress and future activity. They have also developed a single web page signposting all learning and development

available and advertise this availability collectively. We do face the challenge of attendees cancelling their reservations for courses at short notice and in order to address this have asked for feedback. Following feedback, we have changed the way we release the courses for booking; previously, sessions available for the whole academic year were advertised, which enabled prospective attendees to book onto courses up to 10 months in advance. We have now changed this to releasing course bookings on a termly basis and this has resulted in an increase in attendance at courses and a decline in last minute cancellations.

For 2018-19, a new range of provision has also become available from the Research and Knowledge exchange area and this has been included in the joint approach mentioned earlier. The providers are currently achieving satisfaction scores of above 90%.

Career Development Reviews: The RSC annually reviews the Research Staff Career Development Review (CDR) guidance and form and undertakes regular reviews to ensure that it is meeting the needs of LSE researchers. Feedback is received from Departments/Centres on how the process, guidance and form could be improved the following year. For example, we have specifically added issues surrounding continuity of employment on the form and in the guidance, so that these are considered on an annual basis. Regular updates on the CDR process are also received from the Vice-Chair of the Appointments Committee (VCAC) on CDR engagement rates (for research staff this was 87% for 2017-18, the 2018-19 process is still in progress) as well as any themes that might be emerging in Departments/Centres or amongst research staff, as noted above. Additional guidance for undertaking CDRs has also been developed to support this.

Policy Fellow Career Track: In Summer Term 2018, the School also agreed a new Policy Fellow career track with the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU). This arose as a natural consequence of the introduction of the New Research Staff Career (NRSC) at the School and the closure of recruitment and promotion to and within the 'old' research fellow career track. The Policy Fellow career track is for those who principally undertake research on policy and engage in user-orientated work; in general, the publication profile of policy track staff will not fit that required of NRSC staff. (That is, Policy staff publish mainly policy-oriented reports and analyses in, for example, working papers or specially commissioned reports; their work is not normally orientated towards publication in peer-reviewed journals.) The move to introduce this track demonstrates an essential need for such work within the School and it is particularly valuable for enhancing the School's engagement and impact, and has been strongly welcomed by the research staff community at the School.

Mentoring: The Research Staff Mentoring process (which is in addition to the annual CDR process) is also signposted within the Concordat Action Plan and the RSC undertakes regular reviews to ensure that it meets the needs of mentors and mentees. Regular updates are also received by the Committee from the VCAC on the allocation of mentors, as well as any themes that might be emerging in Departments/Centres or amongst research staff. Work has also been undertaken to provide support for new mentors, for example by offering training sessions for new mentors. Guidance on undertaking mentoring has now also been developed and made available on the LSE website – although we feel that greater work is required to increase engagement with training sessions and online information.

Development of the Intellectual Property Policy: The Research Staff Committee has continued to receive updates from LSE Research Committee and the Research and Innovation Division on this area of work. A new School Intellectual Property Policy was submitted to Academic Board in the Summer term 2019. The Committee will receive a draft for comments at its November 2019 meeting, and research staff will also have the opportunity to provide feedback directly through the Research Staff Association.

D. Researchers Responsibilities - Principle 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to proactively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

The School expects researchers to reserve time to undertake career development activities, and expects supervisors of research staff to encourage their participation. Formal School processes such as the Career Development Review scheme provide an opportunity to dedicate time to reflect on the previous session and plan career development activities for the following year, as well as ensuring that development sessions are booked in and attended.

E. Diversity and Equality - Principle 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

Annual data review: Meeting our EDI objectives is a central priority for the School community, and this holds across all of our activities. The RSC receives diversity and equality data on an annual basis, along with other research staff data profiles to help inform and shape the Committee's plan of work. This data is also evaluated and discussed by the School's Promotions Committee and Appointments Committee on an annual basis.

F. Implementation and Review

Principle 7: The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

Exit data: The Committee has been engaged in providing feedback on the School's exit questionnaire, which is circulated to all staff, including research staff. A subgroup of the Committee was set up to look at the exit questions and provided recommendations for changes which have now been implemented into the revised questionnaire. It is hoped that the revised questions may encourage more colleagues to complete the survey, providing the School with improved leavers data.

4. Future direction and next steps

The Concordat will continue to be monitored through the RSC, with support from key stakeholders within the School. We will continue to draw on feedback from the Vitae panel, as well as our findings from the recent 2019 staff survey, forthcoming research staff surveys, our 2030 School Strategy and the launch of the revised Concordat and will feed this into the next steps in how we support and engage research staff at the School.

Research Staff Committee

London School of Economics & Political Science, September 2019