UNIVERSITY *of* **GREENWICH**

Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

Action Plan (2018-2020)

1.   Context

Organisations that hold the *HR Excellence in Research* award are required to undertake regular (two- and four-year) self-assessment reviews of progress measured against the ethos of the Concordat, to define an "implementation" plan, deriving actions that feed into a forward-look plan. Online (http://www2.gre.ac.uk/research/support/concordat) you will find a detailed analysis of the key achievements and challenges at Greenwich, presented as a *Gap Analysis* with a "snap-shot" taken at April 2017. The same information is also presented in *Summary* form. This document outlines our action plan for the next two years. The direction and targets set out here have been dovetailed to the overarching University-wide strategies to ensure a holistic and joined-up environment for the career development of all staff, irrespective of career stage.

The *University Strategic Plan (2012-2017)* and its successor *University Strategic Plan II (2017-2022)* has at its core, clear aims to ensure the University "..transforms lives through inspired teaching and research", with the aspiration to ".. enhance science and society with excellent research and enterprise", quantified as "at least 150 full-time equivalent staff achieving world-leading/international quality (3*/4* level) outputs in the Research Excellence Framework 2020–21 (REF2021)". The activities described in this plan are broader than REF2021, but shaped by that agenda. Central to this endeavour is the creation of a Research and Enterprise Training Institute (RETI), to shape the career development of all researchers within the University.

The University has more widely improved the environment and support structures for all staff, many of which impact on the researcher community, both directly and indirectly. These include a more clear expression of what being an academic at the University of Greenwich entails and the support is available to deliver that role. These are embodied in policies such as the Balanced Academic Workload (BAW), the Academic Career Pathways (ACP) and ultimately, the "values" and "behaviours" we strive to promote. Both of these projects have been set into a contextualised online environment, so staff can very easily locate information to help guide, and draw down, training and support activities.

Staff at any career stage can call upon support from a variety of sources, ranging from advice and mentoring at Departmental and Faculty level, through the many University-wide activities provided by the newly created University's Staff Development hub (https://www.gre.ac.uk/staff-development), the Educational Development Unit (EDU) and in the context of research, the Research and Enterprise Training Institute (RETI), which was launched in December 2017 (https://www.gre.ac.uk/about-us/news/articles/2017/a3974-reti-launch). The sections below outline what is available to all staff, with emphasis on the relevance for the ECR community.

2.   Understanding and supporting our ECR community

The ECR population at the University of Greenwich numbers around 100 FTEs (roughly 15% of the total academic population), with approximately 20% on a fixed term contract. 85% of these 100 FTEs have selected a research orientated career pathway. The greatest number of these FTEs are located in the Faculties of Engineering and Science (FES),

Business (FBUS) and Architecture, Computing and Humanities (FACH) with a smaller number in the Faculty of Education and Health (FEH). The ECR community is therefore realistically homogeneously distributed across the University. In terms of the overarching University objectives, about 33% of these FTEs are currently on track to be REF-able measured in terms of the quality and volume of their research outputs; less than 5% have independent funding; and whilst a significant number are involved in supervising PhD students, few have supervised PhD students to completion. Helping ECRs to meet the expectations of the University in these areas is a keen focus for RETI, and the support required to achieve this is evident in the organised workshops.

Previously, overall responsibility for the University's engagement, implementation and compliance of the Concordat rested with the Early Career Researcher Steering Group (ECRSG), a body that enjoyed full support from the Vice-Chancellor's (Management) Group (VCG). The composition of ECRSG was drawn from lead researchers within the academic Departments, research managers within the University and key researchers, assisted by ECR Ambassadors within each of the four Faculties. It did not have a substantial ECR membership, and therefore was felt to be too disconnected from the ECR community, so has been disbanded and replaced with an ECR Forum, comprising two postgraduate research students (PGRs) and two ECRs from each Faculty. The forum is chaired by the Head of RETI, and reports directly to the Research and Enterprise Committee, and thence, Academic Council. Thus, the voice of the ECR community has been greatly enhanced.

3.   Activities, targets and milestones

University-wide, the staff development agenda is being taken forward, aggressively, under three headings; *research* through RETI; *teaching*, through EDU where educational specialists are connected to each degree programme evolution to ensure the latest pedagogical thinking is incorporated into our teaching portfolio; and *leadership*, where HR make strategic interventions to upskill key staff cohorts, e.g. Heads of Department and ECRs. The former two are most relevant to ECRs, but RETI in collaboration with Faculties, has sought to identify a selection of ECRs with whom additional mentoring and coaching will be offered.

PRINCIPLE 1: Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research

The rigour within the process of appointing (research) staff has been significantly enhanced after the implementation of the e-Recruitment system in May 2014, and further refined in 2017. Shortlisting is carried out by several people, with interview panels now comprising a diverse membership to ensure no unintended bias. Reporting is also much more formal. An ECR is invited to sit on these interview panels.

The Learning and Talent Development (LND) team within HR have been expanded to drive the staff enhancement agenda, and offer a wide ranging series of activity spanning annual University wide events, through to more focused Department-level interventions. The strategic HR agenda going forward is focused on the "people strategy", concentrating on the general upskilling of our staff base.

RETI will also work much more closely with those supervisors who have line management responsibilities of ECRs (especially fixed term researchers) to ensure that all career development opportunities are embraced. Supervisors of fixed term ECRs will be encouraged to engage with RETI's new programme around the responsibilities associated with managing staff. The aim is to make attendance at this refresher training (and related workshops) mandatory over two year cycle.

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.

Part of the "people strategy" is a rewards and recognition element. The appraisal system, BAW and ACP projects have changed the landscape of (teaching and) research within the University so that the contribution that all colleagues make to the University is openly and transparently recognised. A formal training needs analysis (TNA) has been undertaken by the Research Development Services team in Greenwich Research and Enterprise (GRE) and has identified cohorts of colleagues who may benefit from additional training and awareness raising. This insight has been passed to RETI for elaboration, in collaboration with EDU and LND. Further TNA insight has been identified *via* the annual appraisal cycle, informal feedback from questionnaires, as well as *via* the ECR Forum, all segmented by career stage.

Within RETI, twice-yearly workshops have been arranged with both internal and external facilitators, to assist colleagues in developing their career, such as improving publication strategies (be that getting started or getting published in higher quality journals), identifying and supporting funding opportunities, supervising and examining PhD students, as well as support for wellbeing and mental health issues. The range of development activities will be continually reviewed in response to feedback from the various stakeholder groups, including the ECR forum.

Of the ECR community, 85% have selected the research career pathway – the aim is to increase this to 95% after one year, by providing the environment that ECRs feel engaged with as well as feeling a constituent of the research community.

PRINCIPLE 3: Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.

RETI, working alongside EDU and LND, and within the "people strategy", has formulated the Staff Development hub, a vehicle to collate the opportunities for all staff to significantly improve their career trajectories. Within RETI, seven new posts have been recruited to, and these will utilise the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and associated initiatives as a basis to help develop the research activities of staff. Familiarisation with the RDF is now a mandatory part of local induction for academic staff and appears on the line managers' checklist. New RDF web pages explaining the self-assessment process and outlining training offered have been developed on the GRE section of the University web pages (i.e. a new Moodle page hosting the Epigeum suite of e-learning courses mapped against the RDF domains). Introduction of similar researcher-specific information has been incorporated into the corporate New Employee Welcome and Introduction Programme (NEWI).

PRINCIPLE 4: The importance of researchers' personal career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career

As a reflection of the importance of researchers' commitment to their personal career development, RETI has significantly expanded its support structure. Each of the new seven posts within RETI has a specific focus - three colleagues to oversee the 550+ PGR community, one specific role to identify and address the training needs of 100 ECRs (by creating a fertile environment by implementing internal and external career development opportunities) and further role targeted at more established researchers, all coordinated by a new senior academic appointment. Segmenting the researcher population like this enables specific interventions to be identified, provided and their impact assessed.

The target is to engage at least 50 percent of the ECR cohort in a formal career development activity over the next two years.

PRINCIPLE 5: Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.

The BAW, ACP and RETI are major initiatives aimed at helping researchers take ownership of- and evolve- their career aspirations. These will be supported by a regular programme

of events from the EDU, including generic skills training through to a formal PGCert in HE for all new staff. Career development is monitored as part of the cyclical appraisal process, and support for developmental activities available within Faculties.

To reflect further this shared ownership, the University runs a number awards for ECRs in recognition of- and support for- their achievements including ECR Communicator Awards, ECR Excellence Awards and travel bursaries. These are being expanded as budgets permit, but currently stand at £5K each.

PRINCIPLE 6: Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers

The University has been awarded an Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze status, a new Staff and Student Bullying and Harassment Policy has been approved, The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) Staff Network recently won the Network Group of the Year 2017 from Stonewall and is ranked in their Top 100 list of the nation's best-performing employers for the second year running.

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

The ECR forum meets 4 times a year, with a formal reporting line to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) (DVC(R&E)). This has been designed as a vibrant two-way communication channel to ensure that the ECR voice is clearly heard, and the aspirations and evolution of the University is effectively communicated to the ECR cohort.

After the launch, RETI has engaged the entire researcher cohort in an online "Ideas Centre" to ensure that no training or development event have been overlooked and to set appropriate priorities for the year ahead. It is anticipated this will become an annual event. Further, the University engages in the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS). Results from these surveys help inform the support and training offered by RETI.

The ECR population will be closely monitored and their career trajectories measured (e.g. number of fixed term ECRs securing academic or associated roles, success of ECRs at internal promotion panels) within RETI.

4.   Summary

Over the last few years, the staff development and research agendas have significantly evolved and become coupled, with University-wide processes becoming established and embedded in the culture, to create an environment that better reflects and supports career development within the research arena, especially in the context of encouraging research activity and researcher evolution. RETI has been created as a vehicle to coordinate this effort, and working alongside related structures (LND, EDU), there is a focus on and considerable support for ECRs within the University .