

HR Excellence in Research Award

King's College London: 8 year Self-Assessment Report, July 2020

Summary

King's College London (KCL) established a new Centre for Research Staff Development (CRSD) in 2016 with responsibility for implementing the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (Concordat). The CRSD is increasingly achieving collaboration between academic Faculties and professional services Directorates as it matures. This continues to enable the university to work more effectively in promoting policy and practice in support of research staff, alongside other important initiatives such as Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter Mark. This report outlines progress on our action plan for the HR Excellence in Research Award over the last two years and describes our priorities and actions for the next two years.

This report is accompanied by a retrospective action plan and review for the 2018-20 period and a future action plan for 2020-2022, both summarised below. Items are referenced according to the Concordat Principles in the plans.

Internal review process

College Research Committee (CRC), chaired by the Vice-President and Vice-Principal (Research), has overall responsibility for KCL's commitment to the Concordat. The CRSD leads on implementation. The CRSD is guided by an Oversight Group (CRSD OG) comprised of representatives responsible for research staff from seven of our nine academic Faculties and two research staff representatives. The research staff representatives are drawn from the Research Staff Representative Committee (RSRC) that covers the entire university.

The CRSD has conducted an in-depth review of progress to date, through:

- Analysis of the latest 2019 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) data and comparison with previous years
- Ongoing engagement and discussion with the RSRC regarding issues of particular concern
- Faculty updates on progress and individual action plans via the CRSD OG
- Updates from relevant Professional Services departments and other interested parties
- Analysis of progress on Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter initiatives

Key achievements and progress against the 2018-2020 action plan

KCL commitment to delivering tangible benefits for research staff is exemplified by:

- Contributing through Researchers 14 to the revision of the Concordat and being amongst the first universities to sign the revised version
- Further embedding and raising of visibility of the CRSD within the wider community, resulting in strong relationships inside KCL with faculties and professional services departments and directorates enabling more cohesive policy-making, and outside KCL through Researchers14 and Vitae
- Commitment to addressing issues relating to Fixed-Term Contracts (FTCs)

Examples of progress against each of the three revised Concordat principles are outlined below, with additional details provided in the accompanying updated action plan for 2018-20.

Environment and Culture (Principle 1)

- Emails sent bi-annually to academic staff up to May 2019 to raise awareness of the Concordat review and KCL's successful renewal of the Concordat, with an average 58% open rate. ECI1.1
- KCL's faculties, departments, and divisions now hold a total of 5 Silver and 5 Bronze Athena SWAN Awards between them, with more renewals and an institutional Silver application in the pipeline. ECI2.2
- 860 participants attended Diversity Matters training between January 2018 and April 2019 to promote inclusivity across KCL. ECI2.8
- Relevant institutional policies and practices are now readily available on the CRSD's intranet site (<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/crsd/Policies-for-You>). ECI2.10

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- A digital Wellbeing Toolkit aimed specifically at research staff was launched by the CRSD in January 2020. Six additional wellbeing online courses were delivered between April-July 2020 to promote wellbeing during the pandemic. A suite of courses also provided by Organisation Development. Additional to previous action plan.
- Three Open Researcher virtual meetings held from May-July 2020 to facilitate two-way dialogue and trust between research staff and King's Vice-Principal and Vice-President (Research) during the pandemic. Additional to previous action plan.

Employment (Principle 2)

- Welcome to King's email sent bi-monthly to 200-300 new research staff with an average 60% open rate to inform them about relevant policies, practices, and support services. EI2.1
- "Why Engage with Professional Development?" webpage (<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/crsd/Why-Engage-with-Professional-Development>), featuring research staff case studies and video interviews with KCL's academics and senior management endorsing the value of professional development launched in October 2019 and received 90 unique page views. The Careers Beyond Academia Case Studies webpage (<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/crsd/Careers-Beyond-Academia-Case-Studies>) received 274 views during 2018-2019. EI3.3
- As a result of KCL's revised policy on FTCs introduced in August 2019, which commits to the transfer of staff employed continuously for 4 years or more on FTCs to open-ended contracts, 208 out of approximately 2,000 research staff university-wide are on open-ended contracts as of June 2020. Additional to previous action plan.
- KCL's Internal Talent Database was launched in March 2020 to advertise short-term, bridging employment opportunities, especially to research staff 6 months prior to their contract ending. 38 staff have registered and 1 job advert has been created; however, due to current COVID-19 interruption at KCL, use of this database is paused. EI6.1
- New resources developed to support research staff in preparing for performance development reviews (PDRs), including career models and interactive infographics customised for role, discipline, and career stage outlining ideas for development activities (<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/crsd/Professional-Development-Options-Resources/preparing-for-your-pdr>). The resources webpage had 1,426 unique views between 2018-19 and 288 views between 2019-20 prior to advertising for PDR season. EM4.6

Professional & Career Development (Principle 3)

- A net total of 41 research staff-specific courses offered, some run more than once, in 2019-20, some in response to the pandemic as well as requests from research staff, including on grant writing, impact, leadership, and navigating change and uncertainty. Courses continue to be well attended, with a boost in attendance of online courses during the pandemic. PCDI1.1
- New face-to-face Careers & Employability courses were delivered, including on Career Planning, Working Abroad as an Academic, Career Inspiration and Understanding Researchers' Knowledge, Attributes, Skills and Experience. There were 166 attendees in 2018-19 and 159 in 2019-20. PCDI3.2
- King's Careers & Employability run approximately 40 'Discover Careers in' sector-led panel events each academic year, of which the majority are of interest to researchers. Specifically, relevant panels always have at least one employer guest who has a PhD. The *Careers in your Ears* podcast, now in its 3rd series, features conversations with researchers often discussing their career post-King's and has reached 2000 listeners. PCDI5.1
- Events on funding and applying for Health Sciences and Arts & Sciences fellowships were held in collaboration with major UK funders in 2019 and 2020, respectively. The events were well attended, with approximately 200 attendees at the Health Sciences event and 100 attendees at online Arts & Sciences events held in June 2020. PCDI1.2
- CRSD Mentoring Scheme rolled out university-wide in September 2019, with mentors drawn internally and externally from roles within and beyond academia. To date, 32 mentoring pairs have successfully engaged in relationships. PCDI3.6
- The Research Staff Representative Committee (RSRC) continues to be supported through CRSD website and newsletter promotion, as well as secretariat support, enabling research staff to input on key university-wide policy and practice. PCDR6.3
- Major input provided to the London Postdoc Network at their national meeting in September 2019 to provide an opportunity and support for research staff to engage in professional development. Approximately 200 postdocs attended, of which 100 were from King's. PCDR1.14

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Next steps and strategy for 2020-2022

The next two years will undoubtedly be influenced by three key factors: the COVID-19 pandemic, the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the growing interest in Research Culture. The pandemic has disrupted the way we do research profoundly by delaying or pausing various projects and made future timing uncertain. The three issues together have also provided new avenues to explore. This is reflected in the actions to which we are giving priority over the next two years.

KCL has revised its Research Strategy in response to COVID-19, items from which are incorporated into the action plan. This Research Strategy gives prominence to research staff and includes measures to ensure that groups who may be disproportionately disenfranchised because of the impact of COVID-19, e.g. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and women, are specifically supported.

In generating this plan we have sought to move away from what is now routine, e.g. providing courses for research staff, and towards addressing underlying issues, such as the causes of bullying and harassment and reasons why research staff feel undervalued. We believe that by working in this way we will also be addressing such things as resistance to engagement with professional development from both research staff and their managers and resistance to exploring careers paths other than that of the classical academic. Our early university-wide agreement about who is covered by the Concordat at KCL will enable us to have more clarity about the scope and application of the outcomes of the projects detailed in this plan.

In this next two year period the CRSD will focus on four central priority issues. Various Faculties and Professional Services departments will drive forward individual projects as pilots that others are interested in adopting in the future. While there are still many gaps in our coverage of all the Concordat principles we look forward to covering those in our plans as we progress. We also envisage future working with external organisations, e.g. funders, to influence the external as well as the internal arena at KCL.

CRSD-led Projects

The CRSD is working on four major projects. Three of these fall under the remit of the 'Research Culture' Task & Finish Group (TFG) that was initiated by the CRC in March 2020. They arose from issues raised in the CROS and have been adopted by the CRC and at the behest of the RSRC as a priority for 2020/21. Six other projects were also identified from the CROS (not included in the action plan) and these will be addressed if time permits. The fourth project arose from the Concordat directly and is supported by the CRC.

- TFG1. Bullying, Harassment & Victimisation – will work alongside Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and faculty groups to address this issue in the research staff context using discussions and published research. The aim is to identify the underlying causes and devise ways and means to change the culture that enables this behaviour. ECI3.6
- TFG2. Reward & Recognition – research staff often report that they are not recognised for the work that they do. This project aims to explore what recognition research staff would like to have and what can feasibly be provided, bringing together representation from research staff themselves, their managers and their departments and faculties. EI3.2
- TFG3. Career Opportunities and Progression – while there are obvious career steps in the academic and research sphere, not all opportunities are so obvious and confusion exists around what promotion options are available. This project will explore how research staff perceive promotion, how to navigate the paucity of opportunities in academia and what the alternatives within a Higher Education setting might be. EI3.1
- The CRSD will address the issue of what constitutes professional development and the time that should be devoted to it plus a system to record it. The intention is to enable open and constructive discussions between managers and research staff about their professional development and encourage research staff to make full use of the opportunities available to them. PCD11.1

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Faculty-led projects

- Arts & Humanities (A&H) intends to create a series of podcasts to be used to influence managerial perspectives and foster more effective relationships between managers and the research staff they manage. PCDM5.1
- The Faculty of Dentistry, Oral and Craniofacial Sciences (FoDOCS) will pilot an online system to monitor uptake of the 10 days for professional development policy, inform managers of research staff of the mandatory nature of this policy and advertise opportunities directly. PCDI1.2
- The Faculty of Life Sciences & Medicine (FoLSM) is addressing Research Culture through two projects, the first building on exploration of bullying and harassment and resulting in a programme of activity to address this issue and the second a Cultural Change Initiative to resolve disputes more effectively. ECI3.5
- The Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) is drafting a code of conduct covering protected characteristics and specifically relating it to research staff.
- Commitment from Faculties to review and revise induction programmes to make them fit for purpose for research staff. EI2.1

Research Staff-led Projects

- The King's Open Research Group Initiative (KORGI) is a research staff-led project addressing open research and improving access in this arena for research staff. ECI5.5
- Research staff representatives and the RSRC will continue to be supported by faculties and the CRSD and encouraged to continue with the progress they have made in contributing to policy and practice. EI7.1

Professional Services and Directorate-led Projects

- Human Resources (HR) will continue to move research staff whose contracts extend beyond 4 years onto open contracts. EI6.1
- A new online HR system is being implemented and will bring about a major change in the way that we gather data, making it far easier to identify trends in, for example make-up of recruitment panels. EI1.1
- Using the "Dignity at King's" initiative the university will address bullying, harassment and victimisation firstly by creating relevant policy and then addressing the underlying causes of this behaviour and mechanisms to alleviate it. ECI3.4
- The Research, Governance, Ethics and Integrity (RGEI) team will generate a Research Integrity Code of Conduct and appoint Research Integrity Champions and Advisors to influence behaviour in faculties. ECI5.1
- Careers & Employability will launch their online system that will provide greater ease of access to their services. PCDI1.4
- Organisation Development (OD) will promote their new online Manager's toolkit that provides easily accessible training to managers of research staff. PCDM1.2
- Staff wellbeing served by a comprehensive programme from OD and research staff-specific provision by the CRSD. ECI3.1 and ECI3.2
- Project to address how we implement the San Francisco Declaration on Research Achievement (DORA). ECI5.6

Success measures

Alongside timely completion of the specific deliverables detailed in the action plan, the following indicators will be used to measure success:

- Ongoing improvement of all metrics in survey data in 2020-2022 compared to previous years.
- Outcomes and improvements brought about by the Research Culture TFGs indicated by survey data
- Numbers of Principal Investigators (PIs) attending training courses (target increase by 10%).
- Percentage of research staff indicating their PDRs were of value (up to 90% of eligible staff).
- Better collection and use of data provided by the new HR system, e.g. in recruitment
- Reinvigoration of researcher societies in all Faculties/Divisions covering all roles.
- Maintain and/or renew as appropriate Athena SWAN, Race Equality and Juno awards.

Dr Kathy Barrett, Head of Research Staff Development, Centre for Research Staff Development, July 2020

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List of Acronyms

A&H	Arts & Humanities	FTC	Fixed-Term Contract
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	HR	Human Resources
COVID-19	Coronavirus-induced Disease 2019	IoPPN	Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience
CRC	College Research Committee	KCL	King's College London
CROS	Careers in Research Online Survey	KORGI	The King's Open Research Group Initiative
CRSD	Centre for Research Staff Development	NMS	Natural & Mathematical Sciences
CRSD OG	Centre for Research Staff Development Oversight Group	OD	Organisation Development (team within HR)
CV	Coronavirus	PDR	Performance and Development Review (KCL's appraisal system)
D&I	Diversity & Inclusion	PI	Principal Investigator
DORA	San Francisco Declaration on Research Achievement	REC	Race Equality Charter
EDI	Equality Diversity & Inclusion	RGEI	Research Governance, Ethics & Integrity
FNFNM&PC	Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Palliative Care	RSRC	Research Staff Representative Committee
FoDOCS	Faculty of Dentistry, Oral & Craniofacial Surgery	TFG	Task & Finish Group
FoLSM	Faculty of Life Sciences & Medicine		

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