London South Bank University

HR Excellence in Research Award: Four-Year External Review Report, 2018

London South Bank University (LSBU) received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in May 2014; it was reviewed and reconfirmed in 2016.

1. Internal evaluation process

Internal evaluation of the Implementation review and action plans has been overseen by Central Research Services (CRS). CRS supports researchers in the following areas: applications for research funding (pre- and post-award); management of PGR programmes; tracking and identifying LSBU research impact; REF submission; researcher development events and opportunities. CRS is part of the university's Research, Innovation and Enterprise (REI) unit, effective in combining LSBU's strengths in applied research, community engagement and business start-up. Internal review comprised three stages:

Review of the Implementation Plan by the Researcher Development Group (RDG) (formerly the Concordat Group). The RDG has responsibility for the university's compliance with the seven principles of the Concordat for Researcher Development, and manages the action and implementation plans. The review considered progress to date against the original submission in 2014 and the resubmission in 2016, and the implementation plan was discussed at the meetings on December 5th 2017 and January 15th 2018. It involved participation from researchers, research leaders, People & Organisation-Organisational Development (PO-OD) and CRS representatives; the Research Environment Lead, and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Project Lead.

Researcher engagement and dissemination, involving access to all tiers of research management and activity in order to gain feedback on the **implementation plan** and the future **action plan**. This involved: **A**, meetings with Directors of Research and Enterprise (DORE) and Postgraduate Directors (DPGR) to discuss activity according to the Implementation Plan, and research needs for the Action Plan (Jan-March 2017). **B**, feedback from the Directors of Research and Enterprise at the DORE meetings on March 5th and 7th 2018. **C**, participation at School Research Days and Research Centres; this involved discussion and feedback gathering with researchers at all grades on research progress and future actions. **D**, one-to-one meetings (Jan-Feb 2018) with Research Centre heads to identify future actions. **E**, networking events with researchers and PGR students in the London Doctoral Academy, discussing activities and requirements. **F**, feedback from the findings of the 2017 CROS, PIRLS and PRES surveys. **G**, researcher feedback from the Annual University Research Audit. **H**, Training Needs Analysis (TNA) data collated by PO-OD following the appraisal cycle, in 2017-18.

Review and Update of the Implementation Plan and Action Plan was completed by CRS in association with Research Leaders in REI.

2. Key Achievements and Progress Against Action Plans 2014-2016

The University was restructured in September 2014, moving from four Faculties to seven Schools, with new Management and Committee structures. The Concordat Group evolved in line with this, becoming the Researcher Development Group in order to widen participation and to ensure representation and support of both early career and experienced researchers from the Schools, People and Organisation, and Research, Enterprise and Innovation. Restructuring of CRS in 2017 has led to an increase in Research Support, with sub-teams, comprising fourteen full and part-time staff, supporting: the London Doctoral Academy (3.6 FTE); Research Environment and Impact (4.5 FTE); and Pre- and Post-Awards (5 FTE). The development of both the Academic Pathway and the Leadership Academy have been pivotal in identifying the development goals of researchers. The Centre for Research Informed Teaching (CRIT) was established in 2016 to support this vital component of work.

Further developments to strengthen the research environment have seen, in 2017: **A,** the establishment of the London Doctoral Academy in order to provide focus for research culture amongst early-career researchers. This has: established training programmes; day-to-day support for early-career researchers; and a hub to facilitate networking and discussion. **B**, the formation of 14 Research Centres and 33 Groups. These act to develop research excellence, serving as a means of catalysing and supporting collaborations, enabling academics to learn from their peers and support development of early career researchers.

Further investment in support for researchers includes subscriptions to resources including: the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) Planner; funding opportunities and policy database; institutional ORCID; research intelligence software.

Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection

Human Resource policies. The university completes a regular review of Human Resources policies. These are due for completion in November 2018. This will supersede the current policy, which is designed to 'attract and retain the highest calibre staff', so that these staff meet 'the University Mission, Corporate Strategy, Behavioural Framework and Core Values'. Since 2015, staff have been expected to comment on how they have adhered to the University's core values in their annual appraisal (95.6% completion rate in 2017). LSBU recognises the importance of retaining skilled research staff, and has re-iterated its commitment to offering permanent contracts to those who have been in place for two years; this principle was embedded into the new workforce planning process in December 2017.

Principle 2: Recognition and Value

Training and development: The university's new online system for appraisal has been completed and launched with 92.22% take up; this provides specific data that assists in the development of specific training sessions from both PO-OD and REI, targeted to the needs of researchers. REI has redesigned and redeveloped its Key Skills Development Programme, with specific courses mapped to both development stage and Researcher Development Framework (RDF) domains, providing specific and bespoke researcher training in key areas of research practice, including writing, research bid development, PGR supervision and researcher integrity. **Leadership:** LSBU's Leadership Academy supports research leaders, PIs and other senior staff, with 28.9% take up since first launching, giving the opportunity for increased understanding of pressures and responsibilities of research staff, and team members of Centres and Groups. **Researcher contracts and needs:**

LSBU's 'Your Career Matters' pathway provides clear guidance to researcher development. Researcher's terms and conditions are now harmonised with Professional Staff Group (PSG) staff, with respect to London Weighting & Leave allowances.

Principles 3 & 4: Support and Career Development

Mentoring: Formal mentoring was initiated in 2017, with PO-OD training senior staff to act as mentors (11 in total) and to support the development of mentoring and coaching across Schools, with 7 coaching relationships developed. Research Centres (14) and Groups (33), initiated in 2017, now provide the means of peer-to-peer mentoring, coaching and review, of early career researchers. **Extra-academic experience:** Participation in the Outside Insight programme, and the supporting academic activity in external companies has been achieved through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) and Knowledge Exchange Vouchers (KEV) totalling 14 active (28 historically, 2016-2018). **Training and support:** REI has run a number of networking, training and support sessions for researchers and academics. Five external networking events were held to engage researchers in examining funding opportunities, and a further five themed networking sessions were held to examine multidisciplinary research areas. The opening of the London Doctoral Academy space provides the means of hosting and developing such events effectively. The publication of a specific grant writing guide in 2017 supports the development of researchers in bid writing. All training courses are now hosted on the central PO-OD system, with a clear, published Research and Enterprise support calendar and an increase in courses offered from 21 (2015-16) to 96 (2018-19), each course mapped according to stage and RDF domain. **Engagement:** The research Summer School provides a means of developing staff and engaging them in the staff research cycle, with an increase in participation of 50% and an increase in engagement with the poster competition of 20%. **PGR Supervision:** The Epigeum training programme, introduced in January 2017 has been promoted in order to up-skill researchers in PGR supervision, with 15 completions in the period 2017-18. This has been aided by the development of the university's *PGR Manager* online support system.

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

Impact training and development: REI appointed an Impact Manager in 2016, who developed and rolled out training sessions to increase awareness of research impact. Impact courses form part of the Research Events Calendar, and over half of all schools have now received bespoke impact training, from courses offered twice a year. Impacts are published in annual impact guides. Networking forums were created to ensure that researchers have the opportunity to engage with external organisations in order to further develop their skills and engage with non-academic organisations and SMEs. **Research Development Strategy (RDS):** LSBU's RDS was rolled-out to all schools with senior research staff in ten dedicated sessions, Town Halls and other forums. Researcher Development has been re-focussed to ensure a focus on a deeper understanding of the Vitae RDF planning wheel.

Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

EDI Action Plan: The EDI Action plan is now live and complete, and is being updated regularly to maintain its effectiveness. **Dignity at work (DAW):** LSBU has set up a DAW Network scheme in order to support staff who might feel that they are not being treated with dignity, support and courtesy, with a dedicated plan, policy and relevant communications.

Athena SWAN: The Athena SWAN Self-Assessment team is integrated into LSBU's governance, in order to progress the institution's action plan. A review carried out in 2017 identifies that LSBU is above the sector average in having a greater number of female professors in relation to UKGCE norms. LSBU is working towards achieving bronze in 2019.

Principle 7: Implementation & Review

Researcher Feedback: LSBU participated in the 2017 PRES (24% response rate), PIRLS (an increase of double the response for 2015); participation in CROS had lower rates. Feedback from surveys was reviewed and discussed at Research Board of Study and RDG.

3. Summary of actions and next steps to May 2022

Principles 1 & 2 Recruitment, Recognition and Value:

Researcher recruitment and retention: Review of Research staff policy to ensure that research contracts, entitlements and facilities are fit for purpose, and supporting research staff in order to deliver high quality research outputs and deliver career development. ***Success measure:*** establishment of an annual review to identify success. **Research leadership**: Upskilling of senior researchers and research leaders to support the development, recruitment and retention of research staff; development of a Professoriate to provide intellectual leadership. ***Success measure***: 10% increased participation in leadership academy and establishment of Professoriate as a working body.

Principles 3 & 4 Support and Career Development

External engagement & CPD: Effective mapping of researchers' needs to deliver the engagement in external organisations and build collaborations. ***Success measure:*** increased participation and uptake by 10%. **Appraisal outcomes:** Harvesting of Researcher opinions through the Annual Appraisals to inform the development of researchers. ***Success measure:*** increase in specific data collection by 20%. **Training and induction**: Development of bespoke training programmes and researcher induction to deliver on training needs identified in the appraisal outcomes and the annual AURA research audit. ***Success measure:*** delivery of four new training pathways. **Sabbaticals:** Deliver on Sabbaticals to increase the development of research skills. ***Success measure:*** increased participation in Sabbaticals by 20%.

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities

Networking and engagement: Development of forums to increase networking opportunities; work on the development of training. ***Success measure:*** increased participation and engagement in the training by 10%.

Principle 6: Diversity and Equality

Success measure: Attainment of Athena SWAN bronze award in 2019.

Principle 7: Implementation and Review

Participation in CROS, PIRLS and PRES 2019. Analysis of results and comparison with data from the 2017 surveys. ***Success measure:*** increased participation rates in the surveys, by 20%.