HR Excellence in Research 4 Year Report 2023

Introduction and Background

Lancaster is a research-intensive institution In REF2021, 91% of our research was independently rated as 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent', including 46% rated in the highest category of 4*. We take pride in our research environment, and 99% of Lancaster's overall research environment was rated world-leading or internationally excellent. This includes areas such as research support, training and facilities. We are still growing in scale, with 50% more staff submitted in 2021 than in 2014. This increase in research activity has refocussed attention and resource on the cultural elements of the research environment, with a Research Culture Manager being appointed in 2023 and the introduction of a new Research Culture Working Group focussing on specific areas for improvement.

Lancaster University first received the European HR Excellence in Research Award (HR EiR) in 2011. Since the 2021 year-10 submission and following the challenges of COVID-19 with the need to support all staff with remote working, there has been a period of continuous change. Lancaster was quick to respond by switching to online delivery of all staff developme10.6 (v1(e)401 Tw [(b)-0.8 Tc(d)-0.7 (4(li)3 (c)-1.9.J1)vi0.6 (w)80

CIG works closely with the Athena Swan Implementation Group (ASIG) to ensure the two action plans have similar themes, this has now been expanded to also include the EDI institutional plan and once completed, the Race Equality Charter (REC) action plan.

The Research Culture Working Group, established in 2023 is looking to be formally accepted into university governance by becoming a subcommittee of Research Committee in 2024. This new Working Group will be chaired by the academic lead for research culture, with a representative membership, including research only staff. It will oversee all elements of research culture linking with other relevant committees such as EDI, Ethics and Integrity, Open Research and the CIG. It will initiate task and finish groups to undertake detailed analysis and design action plans to address areas of research culture that could be further developed in line with the institutional research culture statement and action plan which will be developed in 2024.

Researcher voice

As well as being active members of CIG, the Research Staff Association (RSA) hosts themed events once a term, allowing for direct in-person communication with the broader researcher community. There is also a researcher group in the faculty of health and medicine, with members sitting on several committees.

Regular newsletters are circulated directly to all research staff keeping them up to date with development opportunities, these are in addition to local departmental and faculty communications. Researchers are reporting that communication within the departments, previously an area of concern, has improved in the last two years. Researchers new to the institution are invited to a bespoke researcher induction and ITHS site and encouraged to join the RSA and/or the Faculty Researcher representative groups.

Lancaster undertakes CEDAR surveys annually to keep the flow of feedback current and relevant. This in turn directly informs the action plan and open discussions as part of the RSA events series.

Evaluation Process

To build on the data collected as part of the 2021 CEDAR Survey, Lancaster ran its own internal CEDAR survey in 2022 and followed this with several focus groups and one-to-one interviews. A researcher culture report was commissioned with QR funding, which highlighted some of the key issues researchers were experiencing, this was undertaken by a Lancaster researcher who ran focus groups with researchers and research managers and others in support roles. These issues were agreed with the RSA as being of importance to them and informed several new short-term priority actions, these included:

Equity – Consistency in application of policies around funding for conferences etc. There are clearer processes and Research staff have a priority for development funding in Faculty of Health and Medicine (FHM) this is being held as good practice to be encouraged across the faculties.

Researcher Voice/inclusion – Inclusion of research staff in all communications etc. this is now reported by our researchers at our focus groups, as having improved across the institution.

Identity – Agreed nomenclature, use of the term research staff (instead of ECR, Post Doc, etc) is now embedded in most areas

New development modules and training post We have procured digital training modules for research integrity, impact, safeguarding, trusted research and ethics. These and other training and skills will be supported by a new Training and Skills development post currently under recruitment. This will help to fully embed our investment in researcher and research manager training

Research Culture manager To ensure that the development rel6 (u)2.3 (lt)-3 (u)2 (d)2. (d)22 (e d)pthththee1nde d

support hybrid events and exhibitions using visual and multimedia research outputs. This investment has allowed us to grow our existing collaborative events such as Data Conversations and Open Research Café which allow researchers to explore numerous aspects of research culture. It will help us to realise our vision of an interdisciplinary incubator where researchers from different disciplines can connect, embedding collaboration and collegiality into the research culture. These spaces have also hosted events with Lancaster's partner institutions and other external HE, again developing networks for the researcher population. Still in the early stages, numbers attending events and using the space has increase, but more importantly the new space has a distinct identity, and it provides researchers with their own space, that is welcoming and inspiring, and prompts them to collaborate and think differently about their research and has become the 'unofficial home of cross disciplinary research and open research'

Employment

All research only staff have been moved to 'indefinite with an end date' contracts – giving full employment rights and access to enhanced redeployment opportunities. This has been a bitter sweet action as it does mean that some researchers are now not eligible to apply for some 'contract researcher' grants, as it has not been welcomed by all research staff. Contracts are still time limited, resulting in job insecurity, and so cause concern for staff. On a positive note, all new grants (where applicable) should have promotional costs built in, allowing researchers opportunities to apply for promotion.

Professional and Career development

Lancaster continues to run a full range of support programmes for research staff at all career stages. These include: a bespoke Introduction to Research at Lancaster for all new researchers, a cross institution mid career researcher mentoring scheme, launched following a pilot last year (and featured at the Vitae conference); and a range of research leadership and management workshops. In direct response to feedback from the RSA, our week-long event 'Preparing for Promotion' features research only pathway case studies and processes, and balances the Prosper project, which looks at careers beyond academia (Lancaster partnered with Liverpool and Manchester in producing this portal and support programme, which is now widely available to all institutions).

These programmes are in addition to research skills training, developed by the Library and the Research Services Office, media and engagement support and teaching support options. We now have a broad range of online tools available for research managers including a change and uncertainty toolkit.

This year Lancaster has introduced a new tracking system, allowing researchers to request to use some of their 10-day development allocation, linked to their professional career conversation as part of the Performance Development Review (PDR) process. The system will capture the number of days used and breakdown of the type of development activity undertaken. A web page offers guidance to researchers and managers as to the types of development activity that is appropriate, making it clear that this is in addition to role-specific training.

3-year key objectives

Improve researcher voice and representation, increase research staff engagement with formal feedback processes.	x A set of guidelines to be drawn up to add clarity and aid with recruitment to the role of researcher representatives on formal committees. Currently no formal feedback/feedforward reporting process is in place, and there are no role outlines or recruitment guidelines.
	x New research culture workshops and planned thematic culture cafes will increase direct access to researchers.
	x New Faculty based Researcher, Career and Development groups to be formed using the pilot group from FHM as good practice. This will allow Faculties to communicate directly with their own

research staff and offer broader opportunities for loc
development interventions.

x Faculty RCAD chairs to sit on CIG to feed into

| | to be a powerful tool in achieving cultural change across the EDI agenda. Staff time will be saved and a cohesive message across all reports and submissions. Actions completed to be celebrated Institution wide. |

Acronyms

AS – Athena Swan
CEDARS – Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey
CIG – Concordat Implementation Group
DORA – San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment
EDI – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
PDR – Professional Development Review
POED – People and Organisational Effectiveness Division
QR – Quality Research
RCWG – Research culture Working Group
REC – Race Equality Charter
REF – Research Excellence Framework
RSA – Research Staff Association