

Keele University- HR Excellence in Research Award Six Year Review Report November 2019

Keele has held the HR Excellence in Research Award since 2013 and has continued to work diligently to progress implementation of its Research Concordat Action Plans. This report details progress made in achieving the actions and outcomes set out in our current Research Concordat Action Plan, the formulation of a new Action Plan and forms part of Keele's six-year review for the HR Excellence in Research Award. The report is supported by the submission of our completed 2017-19 Research Concordat Action Plan and the new 2019-21 Action Plan for. These documents are available to view on our [website](#).

Internal review process

Development and implementation of Keele's Research Concordat Action Plans is undertaken by the Concordat Action Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise. Membership of the group comprises a wide range of stakeholders from across the University, including diverse researcher representation from each of the three faculties, (leaders/PIs, and experienced and early career researchers) and professional teams supporting research (RIE, HR, the Organisational and Academic Development teams). Keele University is committed to understanding and responding to the views of all its researchers, which includes 112 research only staff, 500 research-active academic staff, 48 early career lecturers undertaking research, and 603 post-graduate research students.

Evaluation of the 2017-2019 action plan and its progress was conducted by the University's Researcher Developer during the summer of 2019, in collaboration the Concordat Action Plan Group, and following conversations with other key stakeholder representatives such as Athena Swan, [Keele Women Staff Network](#), [BAME Staff Network](#), Disability and Inclusion and [Keele Postgraduate Association](#) (PGR student representative body). Wider consultation included the views of a number of researchers in different roles, including Post-Doc and other early career researchers, and on different contracts, including fixed term, who are not part of the Concordat Action Group. Researcher voice is gathered in a number of ways throughout the academic year, including direct conversations with researchers in both informal and formal settings across the University (i.e. individual and group conversations and online communications around specific themes such as PGR Supervisor support and researcher career development and anonymised training and other CPD feedback); collective Faculty researcher views fed back by researcher representatives at the Concordat Action Plan Group meetings; the analysis of anonymised survey data (including an internal research questionnaire in 2018, and CROS and PIRLS surveys, 2017 and 2019). All researcher voice input is reviewed by the Researcher Development Concordat Action Group, and used to agree and shape actions that will improve the researcher working environment and career development opportunities. The Concordat evaluation process and conversations helped inform the development of the new 2019-21 Action Plan, which the Concordat Action Group 2019-21 will continue to work on in collaboration with the wider researcher body and other key stakeholders.

Oversight of the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat is the formal responsibility of the University's Research Committee (URC), chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise, which reports directly to Senate. The URC leads, and is responsible for, all matters relating to research strategy and the management, monitoring and support of research. Research Staff and Postgraduate Research Students are formally represented on URC and updates to the Concordat Action Plan are reviewed annually by the URC and before being published online bi-annually.

Summary of progress against the 2017-19 action plan & key achievements

Progress against the 2017-19 action plan has been very positive, highlights include:

- **Launch of a new centralised service to support development of academic projects:** the [Research and Innovation Support Enhancement \(RaISE\)](#) team, was launched in September 2017. Since the launch of RaISE, sustained work has been undertaken to improve awareness of research funding opportunities, leading to a significantly enhanced uptake in researchers submitting and securing larger funding awards

- **Preparing for REF 2021:** undertaking institutional preparation for REF 2021 has been a key priority during the reporting period and has provided the opportunity to review and agree a minimum allocation of a minimum of 20% of time for academics to be considered to have significant responsibility for research. This is enshrined in [Keele's REF Code of Practice](#)
- **Enhanced support for public engagement:** feedback from the 2017 CROS indicated that 50% of researchers would like training in public engagement, knowledge that coincided with the University's successful application for a UKRI funded grant: [Strategic Support to Expedite Embedding Public Engagement with Research](#) (SEE-PER), enabling Keele to increase support for Public Engagement. A further [extension grant](#) in 2018, and University match funding, has provided opportunities for staff training, with 4 workshops held during 2018-19 (attended by a total of 55 staff, including 44 researchers), and the launch of activities such as drop in clinics for 1:1 support. Public engagement resources and case studies are in development and will be made available on the website in the near future
- **Promoting research mentoring:** during the reporting period, significant work has been undertaken to enhance awareness and understanding of the value of research mentoring to support development and progression. New mentoring guidance has been produced and is available via the Keele [website](#). In addition, a mentoring masterclass was held in 2017 and attended by 47 academic/research staff. A recording of the event was made available to all staff on the Keele website. Workshops on mentoring are now offered to staff on an ongoing basis.

Progress by Concordat Principle

More detailed information can be found in the updated Action Plan for 2017-2019 accompanying this report. In brief, the key achievements, by Concordat principle, not already highlighted, are as follows.

Principle 1: Recruitment, selection and retention

- In response to feedback a new academic employee probation procedure has been approved and implemented
- Three positive action statements, relating to the support of women/men ratios and minority groups employed, and promoted to senior roles, are now embedded in recruitment and promotion practices
- Recruitment guidance and supporting documents have been updated to stipulate that it is a University policy to have a gender mix on shortlisting and interview panels
- Work has been undertaken with interview panel chairs to ensure the target female representation in the professoriate is registered at the outset of every professorial appointment and promotions round

Principle 2: Recognition and value

- Work has continued to embed an institution-wide approach to mandatory Staff Performance Review and Enhancement (SPRE), the University's appraisal process, as this is a key tool in helping to recognise and value staff skills and achievements. Consequently, there has been a steady rise in numbers of academic staff participating in the SPRE process. Through SPRE training, managers are encouraged to use the RDF as a reference point to structure SPRE conversations with Researchers
- Requests from academic/research staff for leadership training led to the development of a Strategic Research Leaders programme. The programme was launched in 2018-19 and delivered by Advance HE, 32 academic staff attended the programme. Feedback was used to inform delivery of the programme as it progressed, and has also been valuable in the development of a new bespoke annual Academic Leaders Programme, due to launch in the 2019-20 academic year
- A new [PGR Code of Practice \(CoP\)](#) launched in 2018. The CoP aims to more succinctly and clearly set out the framework through which Keele delivers its postgraduate research (PGR) degrees. The CoP also has a companion document which summarises key milestones and provides an easy reference guide for PGR supervisors and students. A key feature of the launch was the organisation of a number of workshops (attended by 140 staff) that helped spread awareness of the new CoP. The importance of the CoP and key features continue to be highlighted at student inductions and as part of the CPD programme for PGR supervisors, which runs twice biannually

- Recognition of technicians that support academics and researchers in their work has been formalised through Keele [signing up to the Technician Commitment during 2017](#). Aligned to this, Keele has developed an action plan supporting technician recognition and career development. An annual Keele conference for technicians during 2019 was attended by more than 50% of technicians, and representation was sent to the [HETS national conference](#). There is an ongoing emphasis on the identification and promotion of relevant apprenticeship training programmes that aim to support the development of technical staff skills

Principle 3 & 4: Support, Career Development and Training

- Following the successful piloting of the Keele Impact Acceleration Funding Pilot Scheme in 2015-16, a second round of impact acceleration funding was launched in 2018, supporting 29 projects. A further scheme during 2019-20 provided funding for an additional 54 projects. Alongside this, Keele organised an inaugural [Celebrating Impact Conference](#) in June 2018, attended by 89 staff, 71 of which were researchers. A second event followed in 2019, 50 people attended, 43 were research staff. The conferences enabled Keele researchers to benefit from sharing experiences and meeting a range of external impact experts. More opportunities for researchers to develop knowledge and skills related to impact and engagement were made available through a series of five impact workshops delivered during 2018-19. In total over 50 academic/research staff attended these workshops, further information can be found [here](#)
- The implementation of a [Researcher Summer School](#), targeted at staff and PGR students and held outside of the academic year has been very successful in increasing the opportunity for researchers to attend training. Researcher feedback from the first Summer School (held in 2017) was used to develop the initiative in 2018 and 2019. In both 2018 and 2019, in response to researcher voice, new workshops were introduced, 2019 included a grant writing workshop that also raised awareness of Research and Innovation Support Enhancement (RaiSE), a new central body that aims to support research staff skill development in robust grant applications and was offered alongside new workshops focused on public engagement. In addition, a new mid-week format created space for a full day session on networking and career development, this event was the best attended of the week with 31 ECR's and PhD students present and most attending the full day
- Writing Retreats are now well established at Keele, they are offered at least monthly and usually reach capacity. Staff and students understand and benefit from attendance and the Writing retreat has become a feature of the Researcher Summer School and the backbone of Writefest, a celebration and incentive to progress all academic writing, where Writing Retreats feature each week during November
- The number of research staff engaged in workshops offered through the LPDC have increased from 863 for 2015-2017 to 2,522 for Jan 2017- Jan 2019, an increase of 192%. LPDC Academic Development staff, including the Researcher Developer, have now become part of the new Institute for Innovation and Teaching Excellence ([KIITE](#)).

Principle 5:

- A new [Intellectual Property Code of Practice](#) was published during 2017 and clearly identifies responsibilities and principles of IP ownership. Since publication, work has been undertaken to improve awareness and knowledge of IP and commercialisation. through workshops and provision of one-to-one support
- Work has undertaken to expand the MA in Higher Education Practice (the recommended CPD for all new lecturing staff) to include a route for researchers. Running for the first time in the 2017-18 academic year, 18 researchers registered for and attended the year 1 module, IP is specifically addressed as part of this module.

- Academics have expressed an interest in developing knowledge and understanding of media engagement. In response to this a number of media engagement events have been organised. In collaboration with [The Conversation](#), two events were held: Nov 2017 (25 attendees) and March 2018 (22 attendees). Feedback from these events led to a new broadcast media offer for the 2018-19 academic year, aimed at academic staff, postdoctoral and early career researchers with little experience of dealing with the media. Supported by external experts the events and additional offer of one-to-one appointments have proved very successful, engaging and upskilling academic staff. Since 2017 there has been an increase in the number of articles submitted to the Conversation, with articles read 1.9 million times during 2017-18

Strategy and success measures for the next two years

In line with the publication of the new strategic vision: [Our Future](#), Keele is about to embark on a revision of its [Research Strategy](#), which will include a clear emphasis on ensuring a positive working environment, supportive of career development and quality standards for all staff involved in undertaking and supporting research. This ethos is consistent with the Keele [People Strategy](#).

The new action plan will build on the positive work carried out over the past 6 years and will set out a focus for the next two years, identifying actions that aim to support university strategy and policy. Development of the new action plan has been informed by the views of key stakeholders represented in the Concordat Action Group. Key objectives will include:

- Establishment of a Keele Doctoral Academy (KDA) which aims to ensure alignment between the postgraduate research community at Keele and the University's research, teaching & learning strategies; provide a distinctive internal and external brand for postgraduate research at Keele; and acts as a bridge between central and faculty support functions, ensuring these operate effectively and with a focus on providing an excellent postgraduate student experience.
- A review of all training provision aims to ensure that Keele's researcher development activities remain fit for purpose and continue to meet the needs of our researcher community
- A continued emphasis on supporting development of academic leadership skills, building on the work carried out in the previous action plan, with a view to developing a set of distinct Keele academic leadership principles
- Alongside other Midlands Innovation Partners, Keele has secured funding from Research England to deliver the [MICRA](#) project which will enable staff to develop from additional expertise and support in developing IP and commercialisation activities

The views of all stakeholders, particularly researchers, will be used to inform implementation of the Concordat Action Plan. Researcher views continue to be gathered and analysed continuously through workshop and event evaluations, annually through bespoke surveys (2018 internal survey and 2019 CROS and PIRLS) and the use of key University datasets. The plan to run a series of focus groups with researchers will supplement researcher voice during 2020-21.

We have identified a range of quantitative and qualitative success measures to evaluate implementation of the Concordat Action Plan, which will include:

- Submission of School Athena Swan awards, renewal of the University Bronze award and implementation and success of the actions from current University/school action plans
- The launch of new, or revised, services, events and training provision, including more online courses.
- Analysis of feedback and participation rates at training and development workshops and events
- Response rates to surveys – internal and CROS and PIRLS, and analysis of feedback from these surveys, and other means of gathering researcher input.
- Reports outlining progress and further developmental work.
- Consistent researcher voice through a variety of means – the Action Plan Group Research staff members, Focus Groups and other formal and informal conversations with researchers in different contexts.