

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

aka. The Researcher Development (RD) Concordat

University and Research institutes

Name of Institution	Queen Mary University of London
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We have defined acronyms in the text, but for a list, refer to the final page of our [Concordat Action Plan](#).

Creating and Maintaining a Positive and Inclusive Research Culture

Queen Mary's Mission is to create a truly inclusive environment, building on our cherished cultural diversity, where students and staff flourish, reach their full potential, and are proud to be part of the University. It is home to 643 postdocs and fellows (the primary beneficiaries of the Concordat), 1,240 academics, and 2,090 postgraduate researchers (PGRs) across three Faculties: Medicine and Dentistry (FMD), Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), and Science and Engineering (S&E), sub-divided into 19 Schools/ Institutes, plus two interdisciplinary institutes.

A supportive research culture is central to our strategy, which includes entrepreneurialism, inclusion, productivity, curiosity, and integrity at its five themes. Recognised for our distinctive, world-leading curiosity driven and applied research, we aim to attract the best researchers worldwide, and develop our staff and research students to become world leaders in disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and innovation. We regularly assess how we support, review, and undertake research to foster diversity and inclusion and ensure that our research practice is of the highest quality in terms of research ethics and integrity. Implementing the Researcher Development (RD) Concordat is key to delivering our strategy.

Teams supporting research culture at institutional level include Research Services (supporting research funding and collaboration, PGR student support, impact, and commercialisation, and the new Research Culture (RC) team), the Queen Mary Academy (QMA) (supporting development of researchers and educators), Careers and Enterprise (C&E), The Centre for Public Engagement (CPE), and HR's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team. Focused support for disciplines is provided at faculty and school levels.

Our investment in a new 3 FTE RC Team demonstrates our continued commitment to research culture. Queen Mary's new research culture strategy aims to foster and celebrate excellent research *cultures* across the university, recognising differences in approach across disciplines and in different areas, but linked through our five core principles (above).

The QMA's Researcher Development Team (RD/QMA) oversees the RD Concordat Implementation Group (RDCIG) and runs and analyses Culture Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS). RD/QMA delivers a programme to support postdocs' professional development, runs Postdoc Appreciation Week activities, and co-creates the new Queen Mary Postdoc Conference with a multi-disciplinary team of postdocs. The CPE supports our commitment to being an institution connected to communities where our work has impact, with Queen Mary being the first Platinum Engage Watermark holder from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. Investment in the EDI Team brings five new colleagues, leading on Gender, Race, LGBTQIA+ and Disabled Equality. The EDI team run Staff Networks providing peer support and social interaction supporting a positive and inclusive working environment. We renewed our Athena Swan Silver award in 2023 and will submit for Gold in 2027, and were awarded a Bronze Race Equality Charter mark this year.

Faculty level research culture discussions led to 10 faculty-owned actions being contributed to Action Plan for 2024-2027 (AP2024). Researchers are supported locally by managers, mentors and colleagues. There are research meetings, journal clubs, workshops, and five Schools/ Institutes have postdoc-led groups (representing 70% of postdocs). Postdocs participate in local decision-making committees and recruitment panels, with actions 8 and 9 of AP2024 extending this.

Strategic Objectives and Implementations Plans for 2024-2027

Our AP2024 actions (listed as superscript) to implement the Concordat build upon our past successes and apply a postdoc lens to the Research and Innovation Enabling plan, part of the University Strategy 2030, and our institutional values:

- Attract the best researchers from all over the world^{1,2,7,11-13, 15, 19, 20, 23} and support our researchers to develop^{1,2,5-7,8,9,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18} and to work collaboratively^{1,5,7,8,14,17,19} and across boundaries^{1,2,5,7,10-15,19}.
- Significantly increase external research funding, including our number of externally-funded Research Fellows and postdocs^{15,19}, and provide them with a core training of essential skills and competencies^{5,6,15-21}, including in knowledge exchange¹⁹ and leadership^{1,2,15}, and allowing space for researchers to boost their skills in line with their aspirations for the next stages of their careers, either within or outside of academia^{1,2,8,10,12,13,15-22}.
- Produce world-leading research outputs, with a focus on global and local economic and societal impact. We will ensure that our research is accessible^{1,10,11,18-20}.
- Nurture a world-class research culture^{all}, including capturing the researcher voice more efficiently^{1,7,12,13} recognising and celebrating successes^{1,11}, researching ethically and with integrity^{6,10}, and fostering diversity and inclusion^{1,3,7,9,16}.
- The five themes of our RC Strategy are reflected in the action plan: entrepreneurialism¹⁹, inclusion^{1,3,7,9,12,13,16}, productivity^{1,2,4,5,7,16,17,19,20,21}, curiosity^{1,7,16,18}, and integrity^{6,10}.

Implementation Plan: Environment and culture

Our plans over the next three years include continuing to fund and support postdoc-led activity throughout the University using the Enhancing Research and Innovation Culture fund (Action 5). The Postdoc Conference will continue to run as a flagship event for our research community (Action 1), amplifying postdoc voice and providing a platform to engage with senior leadership. The Postdoc Peer Support Programme (Action 2) utilises a peer problem solving approach, which we are trialing in a number of our Researcher Development interventions with postdocs and Early-Career Researchers (ECRs), to help postdocs to support each other.

Our Research Culture (RC) team was recruited about a year ago and they continue to examine our university (data) systems for improved ways to capture and assess research-staff data (Action 4), while also connecting with RC stakeholders in our Faculties, Schools, and Institutes (Action 3). Our Research Ethics and Integrity team will focus on procuring and launching new Research Integrity training and support solutions at Queen Mary (Actions 6 and 10).

In addition, a number faculty-based efforts will seek to better connect their postdocs with each other across School lines (Action 7), and with HR processes and policies including those governing bullying and harassment (Actions 8, 9).

Implementation Plan: Employment

How postdoc contributions are rewarded and recognised through our Research and Innovation Awards (Action 11) will be examined, along with support induction events (Action 14), and the degree to which postdocs are included in various decision-making processes (Actions 12 and 13). The FMD will put postdocs on indefinite contracts with funding clauses (Action 23).

Implementation Plan: Professional Development of Researchers

The Queen Mary Postdoc development programme run by the Queen Mary Academy will be relaunched (Action 15), and include several new elements like a mentoring programme (Action 19), a development programme for under-represented groups in the research community (Action 16), support to track and plan Continued Professional Development (CPD) activity (Action 17), and a programme to support and encourage research commercialisation (Action 18), alongside faculty-based efforts to encourage more proactive engagement with career development planning (Actions 20-22).

We will assess progress of AP2024 annually, as outlined in the [2024-2027 Implementation Report](#) and [Appendix 2](#), as Year 1 (ending 31 July 2024), Year 2 (ending 31 July 2025), and Year 3 (ending 31 July 2026).

Summary of Progress from Year 1 of our Current Action Plan (928/1800 words)

Action Status Key	Actions
Action Completed as planned or ahead of schedule	3/23
Action Partially Complete and on-track to complete as planned	12/23
Action replanned within this action planning period (2024-27)	3/23
Actions not reporting in this period (Jan 2024 – July 2024)	5/23

Environment and Culture: Institution

Order of actions is grouped by UUK form heading

Action 1 – Run a yearly Postdoc Conference at Queen Mary organised by Postdocs, for Postdocs. A diverse team representing 3/4 Faculties and URIs helped organise the 2024 Postdoc Conference whose theme was postdoc visibility. The event successfully engaged over 100 (actual count: 110 attendees) postdocs who contributed to a conference paper that will be presented to the Research and Innovation Board (chaired by the VP Research and Innovation) in October 2024. Success Measure (SM) 1: to report in March/April 2025 (100% from Conference feedback (N=32); SM2: 4.81 rating (N=32); SM3: to report in March/April 2025.

Action 4 – Improved capturing and assessing of data to inform decision making. Research Culture Team had to re-recruit for their data analysis post, and the new team member is starting in September. New milestone dates will be reported with our next Concordat update.

Action 8 – HSS to work with HR to improve communications. Initial meetings between faculty and HR stakeholders have happened, and work is proceeding to plan.

Environment and Culture: Institution & Researchers

Action 2 – Launch more cohorts of the Postdoc Peer Support Programme. Recruited two cohorts that devolved into one by the end. Will investigate the use of this cohort approach with other programme elements in 24/25 to see if there is better engagement with this peer support approach. SM: 100% (N=4) would recommend to a colleague.

Action 5 – Use the Enhancing Research Culture Funding from Research England to directly benefit researchers and support delivery of the Research Culture strategic priorities. The Enhancing Research & Innovation Cultures funding scheme awarded around 210k to 18 projects across the university’s faculties and professional service departments. Several awards were made to initiatives led by postdocs or aimed at supporting postdocs, including the Queen Mary Postdoc Conference, the Postdoc Led Research Culture Activity Fund, and the Whitechapel Postdoc Forum.

Action 7 – Create opportunities for S&E postdocs to organise events to enable them to network & socialise. Following faculty-level REF People Culture and Environment planning, S&E has decided to fold this work into those plans, and will update our action planning in time for the next round of reporting.

Environment and Culture: Institution & Managers

Action 6 – Better embed RI Training through the Epigeum platform across The University. Queen Mary is finalising the procurement of the Epigeum platform to enable RI training across the institution. Details of the roll out and milestones around engagement will be reported in our 2026 Concordat update.

Action 10 – Development of a New Faculty Research Integrity (RI) Policy with input from the FRCEC. FMD has rolled-out the LabArchives e-lab books and Epigium training across the faculty, and new strategy document was approved by the research strategy board, and VP Health Executive. SM1: 2/6 FMD institutes are compliant (>85% completed training within 3-months).

Employment: Institution

Action 11 – Consider how Research & Innovation Awards can be more inclusive in celebrating postdoc contributions beyond those to research outputs. Research and Innovation Awards (RalAs) ran in May, with _____ many applications from postdocs. The next RalAs run in 2026, and we will consult with postdocs about engagement, and report on this in next year’s annual update.

Action 14 – Design and deliver a HSS Faculty Research Induction for newly joined ECRs. Pilot event ran successfully in January 2024 with a small uptake. Faculty will address uptake through seeking feedback from postdocs, and improved marketing and communications for 2025 events.

Action 23 – FMD postdocs to have indefinite contracts with a funding clause by June 2024. All new FMD Postdocs starting after Jan 1st 2024 are on indefinite contracts with a funding clause.

Professional Development: Institution

Action 15 – Build the new postdoc RD programme, introducing a cohort approach and built-in impact measures. 2023/24 saw the redevelopment of the postdoc programme to include longer programmes of support, and the introduction of peer-based support (“cohorts”) to many of the courses. Feedback is collected with each course/event run, and on average, 98% of our participants would (76%) or might (22%) recommend our courses to a colleague. and the programme is evaluated holistically annually in July and August, as we prepare and plan the following year’s programme.

Action 16 – To develop and deliver a development programme in support of BAME postdocs. Initial focus groups about this programme ran at the Postdoc Conference. We will commission an external contractor before the end of the calendar year to use this input to develop a programme to pilot before the end of 24/25 academic year.

- **Actions 17 – Support postdocs to proactively engage with, plan and document their 10 days CPD Activity.** The recommendation for postdocs to engage in 10-days (70 hours) of annual CPD activity is embedded in the Postdoc Conference, QMA/RD provision, and Careers and Enterprise provision for postdocs. LMS update will follow early in the new calendar year.
- **Action 18 – New development programme to support research commercialisation and entrepreneurship for postdocs.** Research commercialisation remains an important focus at Queen Mary. We are introducing a Postdoc Edition of the Entrepreneurs club that will feature postdoc alumni for Postdoc Appreciation Week (2024). The commercialisation programme is still being co-developed by QMA/RD and QMI, and we will report progress with our next update.
- **Action 19 – Roll out a scalable, annual mentoring cohort that Schools/ Institutes can opt-in to.** Following a successful pilot, the Queen Mary Postdoc Mentoring Programme will begin recruitment in September/October 2024.
- **Action 20 – To develop and deliver an HSS-specific programme of careers workshops.** Initial strategizing between HSS and Careers has taken place in April 2024. Programme is being designed and is on track to pilot elements by May 2025.
- **Action 21 - To better promote engagement with their own career development, and the support available through the QMUL careers service to postdoctoral researchers.** Careers advisor has attended induction events and been consulting with HSS-Research Advisory Group on an ongoing basis. On track to launch strategy as planned.

Lessons Learned from Implementation of AP2024 in Year 1

The changes that have been introduced to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Environment section (now: People, Culture, and Environment) are reverberating through the sector, and this has encouraged stakeholders at Queen Mary to examine ongoing work and activity in this area. To this end, Action 7 will be replanned and updated with our next round of reporting in January 2026.

Key Objectives in Delivering our Plan in the Next Period

Our AP2024 listed 23 actions that would report progress and success measures throughout our action planning window (ending in late summer 2026; final report January 2027). Please refer to the [2024-2027 Implementation Report](#) and [Appendix 2](#) for full details.

We will continue to use the bi-monthly RDCIG meetings to track progress and replan actions as necessary.

Key objectives to enable the delivery of AP2024 include the successful running of major survey instruments like the Queen Mary Staff Survey (all staff), and CEDARS 2025 and 2027. This year's staff survey saw a 3-fold increase in postdoc response (66%, up from 20%), enabling us to examine results from this lens. CEDARS, a much longer though targeted survey, regularly surveys up to a third of postdocs at Queen Mary. Following on from the success of the Staff Survey, we aim to achieve an increased response from postdocs when CEDARS runs in March 2023.

Queen Mary's Institutional Approval Process (

Meeting bimonthly, the RDCIG oversees implementation, reporting and action planning. It is chaired and managed by the RD/QMA and has wide stakeholder representation. Each faculty has two postdocs, one academic, and the Faculty Strategic Research Manager; reporting into their faculty leadership. Institutional representatives are the head of the Research Culture team, a Senior Strategic HR partner, and an EDI Manager.

Data informing action planning included CEDARS (biennial, odd years), The Queen Mary Staff Survey (annual), QM systems data (e.g., HR, training booking), and input from the Postdoc Conference. The annual Conference (Action 1) is an important conduit for postdoc voice, bringing postdocs together to discuss their experiences, summarised in a postdoc-authored paper to the Vice Principal for Research and Innovation's (VP-R&I) Research and Innovation Board (RIB), alongside other papers and working groups with other relevant stakeholders (e.g., HR).

The RDCIG Manager compiled progress reports and actions from across Queen Mary in this Report and Action Plan, which was approved by RIB (which includes the faculty Deans for Research and is chaired by the VP-R&I), then the Senior Executive Team (comprising the Principal, Senior Vice-Principal and Vice-Principals), and finally by Council.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Rui Pires Martins

(as RD Concordat Implementation Group Manager)

Contact for queries:

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This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk