

# HR Excellence in Research 2-year review - London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

## Executive summary

### 1. Institutional context

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is committed to providing an inclusive research, education and working environment reflected through a community that everyone feels a part of, which is safe, respectful, supportive and enables all to reach their full potential. LSHTM is renowned for its research, postgraduate studies and continuing education in public and global health. Research at LSHTM is focused within three Faculties (Epidemiology and Population Health, Public Health and Policy and Infectious and Tropical Diseases) and two MRC Units (MRC Unit The Gambia at LSHTM and MRC/UVRI & LSHTM Uganda Research Unit).

As a research-intensive organisation, all academic staff (Research Assistant, Research Fellow, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor) are engaged in research. Actions in the 2021-2023 action plan focus on staff on fixed-term contracts (Research Assistants, Research Fellows and Assistant Professors). The School's research headcount as of October 2021 was: 112 Research Assistants, 367 Research Fellows and 273 Assistant Professors.

LSHTM was awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) in November 2019 based on our gap analysis and proposed action plan. Work on the gap analysis in 2019 involved seeking the views of research staff through face-to-face meetings, focus group discussions, email requests for information and desk research. Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued our work to support researchers by implementing our action plan while being flexible to the changing needs of staff at LSHTM. LSHTM is fully committed to implementing the Researcher Development Concordat and became a signatory in May 2020.

In August 2021, the School appointed a new Director whose focus is on creating an environment which enables everyone to thrive and reach their potential. This will positively impact the work we are doing for the HREiR award and will affect some of the actions going forward due to the priorities laid out by the Director and Executive team.

Work is ongoing to determine how best to include the MRC Units in the HREiR Award and the MRC Unit representatives on the Research Staff Forum will play a key role in this. This is also something that all initiatives at the School are working together to address.

### 2. Internal Evaluation

A Concordat Monitoring Group (CMG) was established to ensure the action plan is taken forward and progress is reviewed. The CMG includes members from the Talent and Educational Development team (TED), the Strategic Research Office (SRO), Human Resources (HR), the Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team and the Research Governance and Integrity Office (RGIO) and is chaired by the Head of Talent & Educational Development. The CMG reports to the Deputy Director & Provost and the Chief Operating Officer and findings are reported to Council, Executive Team and the People Committee annually. Engagement with research staff is essential for the delivery of the action plan and for measuring successes. As part of this work, the School created a Research Staff Forum in 2020 that meet regularly to provide input and feedback on activities to implement the Concordat at the School. Discussion groups have been held with members of the Research Staff Forum to determine gaps based on the principles of the Concordat and required actions and the group also reviewed the action plans and summary. Both groups meet once a term. A progress report is sent annually to the Executive Team and People Committee and then further reported for information to Council and Senate. The Research Staff Forum representation will be reviewed and updated in 2022 to better reflect the main audience for the action plan 2021-2023 of staff on fixed term contracts and at Research Assistant, Research Fellow and Assistant Professor grades.

School-wide staff consultation events take place regularly at the School which feed into the HREiR action plan as well as other initiatives. For the evaluation of the work related to the Concordat, the School ran the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) for the first time in 2021 with 279 respondents and a 15% response rate; of which 155 were on fixed term contracts at the Research Assistant, Research Fellow and Assistant Professor grades. The CEDARS results provided the evidence base to inform the review of the 2019 action plan and to identify areas where action is needed. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the School decided to postpone the School-wide staff survey from 2021 to 2022. Instead two working

from home surveys were run in 2020 and 2021 to ensure staff are well supported and that the transition to hybrid working is made smoothly. As the staff survey wasn't conducted, progress was measured using data from CEDARS. Further monitoring will be done after the staff survey results are published in Autumn 2022 as well as using the self-assessment for the Race Equality Charter and the Athena SWAN processes to further determine progress against the 2019-2021 action plan. Through discussions with the Research Staff Forum and other groups across the School along with the anonymous CEDARS results, we were able to get a broad range of views for us to reflect on our progress to date and plan for our next two years.

### 3. Key achievements

The CEDARS results and discussions with staff illustrated that although there are key areas where further work is needed, LSHTM's research environment and culture is progressing and aligning with the Concordat's principles. Many of the actions from the 2019-2021 action plan are now business as usual and will be maintained and monitored.

**Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection:** The Recruitment and Selection Skills training is now available as a webinar and includes training on EDI considerations and unconscious bias. This session remains a priority for staff on recruitment panels and is required to attend as a refresher every three years. Recruitment and Selection Policies and Procedures are reviewed annually and academic templates for job descriptions are updated annually. An EDI briefing with information on unconscious bias has been produced and is being used for all interview panels. In CEDARS 2021, recently appointed staff agreed or strongly agreed that their recruitment, selection and appointment process had been fair (84.9%), inclusive (74.3%), transparent (74.3%) and merit-based (89.2%).

**Principles 2, 3 and 4: Support and Career Development:** There has already been significant work to ensure that staff feel valued at the School. The ongoing HREiR work will consider actions from the Framework for Action plan which addresses issues arising from the 2019 staff survey focusing on staff feeling valued. The School's Early Career Researcher (ECR) Network has over 400 members, termly newsletters are sent and a private Sharepoint site with useful information for ECRs has been created. Working with ECRs, the Training & Development Advisor and the Strategic Research Officer have been organising an ECR week that will include a broad range of sessions addressing key points that came out of a faculty funded project looking at ECR needs. A Changing Expectations event showcasing non-academic career paths was held in February 2021 with 77 attendees, 100% of respondents to the feedback survey agreed the session was effective. Career Corner sessions where staff discuss their career journey to date have been organised every 2 months since August 2020 and have been well attended. The SRO supports research staff with external funding applications and the team met with 241 academics in 2019 and 258 academics in 2020, the majority of which are Research Fellows and Assistant Professors. Fellowship applications supported by the SRO had a success rate of 32% for 2019 and preliminary data indicates a success rate of 24% for 2020. The SRO will also start monitoring EDI characteristics of staff the team supports to ensure there are no missed groups.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the move towards online training increasing access for all staff. All training is now delivered online and the TED team have increased their offering with WATCH&GO and through LinkedIn Learning. The move to online training has increased engagement and is more accessible for staff based overseas. The TED intranet pages have been updated to make navigation easier. Training offered at the School will be mapped to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) in the upcoming academic year. 50 ECRs volunteered to trial the Vitae RDF planner and respondents indicated they did not recommend the School pursue the Vitae RDF planner. Performance Development Review (PDR) completion rate for 2020 was 81.8% and 88% in 2021. 78% of CEDARS respondents agree or strongly agree that their line manager encourages them to engage in personal and career development in question 30.1.

**Principle 5: Researchers responsibilities:** Training and activities in knowledge exchange and innovation have increased and in 2020 and 2021, 84 and 82 people respectively attended events. The School has agreed to provide 10 days protected time guaranteed for staff to attend training and development activities. This has been publicised to staff through the Faculty newsletters, TED bulletin and SRO Research funding alerts. Staff will be encouraged to keep a personal log, which is linked to the TED booking system, of their activities and time taken will be monitored in CEDARS aiming to increase the number of days staff undertake training from the CEDARS

2021 results where 76.4% of respondents indicated they did 4 or less days of training in the past 12 months. The Concordat and various initiatives have been promoted to staff through the TED bulletin, SRO research funding alerts and the ECR newsletter. Intranet pages were created on the SRO space relating to researcher development and the Concordat. Awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat was quite low with 82.6% and 78% of respondents from CROS 2019 indicating they had never heard of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity respectively. This decreased to 56.4% and 64.5% in CEDARS 2021 in questions 43.1 and 43.2 but further work needs to be done.

**Principle 6: Diversity and equality:** Since the original application, the School's EDI team has been re-established with a new EDI strategy and action plan developed, launched in July 2021. There is now a School-level Athena SWAN working group that has cross membership with the CMG to ensure open communication and to avoid duplication. LSHTM signed up to the Race Equality charter in June 2020 with a staff member recruited to lead on work for the self-assessment to apply for the Bronze award and a Race Equality Working Group established. The CMG will work closely with the Race Equality Working Group. Four places have been offered onto the Advance HE Diversifying Leadership course in 2021 and 5 for 2022. The online Report and Support tool has been launched and Anti-Bullying and Harassment advisors have been recruited and trained to serve as points of contact. The anti-bullying and harassment policy was reviewed by various groups at the School including the Research Staff Forum. Microaggressions and active bystander training was rolled out in 2021. Due to the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, changes have been happening at the School regarding EDI which will reflect action plans.

**Principle 7: Implementation and Review:** Engagement with research staff is essential for the delivery of the action plan and for measuring successes. One of the points that the CMG has been working on is to ensure that there is co-operation with other initiatives and priorities at the School to guarantee that actions are delivered and worked on together across the School. Notes taken from relevant external meetings are shared with the Research Staff Forum and relevant events are promoted.

#### 4. Next steps

Several actions have been carried over from the 2019-2021 action plan due to delays from shifting priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These actions are incorporated in the 2021-2023 action plan and fit within the broader LSHTM strategy.

With a new Director and with the LSHTM Strategy 2017-22 coming to an end, work is being carried out on a new LSHTM Strategy. The School's commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and in implementing the principles by delivering the action plan will remain a focus of the future strategy. A number of initiatives at the School will complement and positively impact the HREiR work. Further work needs to be done to improve the research culture and environment at the School which is outlined in the forward-looking action plan 2021-2023. The action plan 2021-2023 was developed using CEDARS 2021 results focusing on responses from staff indicating they are on fixed term contracts and through discussions with staff at the School to set out areas where work is needed for the HREiR Award and focuses on staff on fixed-term contracts. Areas of focus include:

- Career support: Promote staff taking 10 days for personal and professional development and encourage staff to have a clear development plan. Investigate increasing career support through internal and external provision and enhanced engagement with the career services. Improve PDRs to include discussions about career development plans for staff.
- Fixed-term contract procedure and redeployment: to improve redeployment support and ensure staff are aware of the type of support available to them and the redundancy and redeployment processes.
- Induction and on-boarding: to ensure that staff are well integrated at the School and are aware of policies and procedures relevant to their role.
- Wellbeing and workload: to ensure the effective management of workloads and focus on staff's wellbeing.

Progress to date from our previous action plan 2019-2021 can be found in Appendix A and actions and success measures for the next two years are given in our forward-looking action plan 2021-2023 in Appendix B.