LSBU EST 1892

HR Excellence in Research Award: Eight-Year External Review Report, 2022

London South Bank University (LSBU) is a diverse and enterprising civic university with a research strategy that addresses real world challenges. LSBU's target group for researcher development and support includes: 41 researchers; 321 research and teaching staff, and 352 PGR students. LSBU first received the HR Excellence in Research Award in May 2014; it was reviewed and reconfirmed in 2016, 2018 and 2020.

1. Challenges, 2020-2022

LSBU was subject to a sustained cyber-attack in December 2020 which had a significant impact on its online systems for at least a year, with the staff intranet only being restored in May 2022. Compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic this meant that many of the actions set out in the plan were subject to modification or amendment, leading to carrying forward of some actions to the next action plan; this also had an impact on dissemination of initiatives and staff engagement.

2. LSBU's Internal evaluation process

Internal evaluation of the Implementation review and action plans was overseen by the Research Office (RO) and People and Organisational Development (P-OD). The RO supports researchers in the following areas: Research Centre support and review; tracking and identifying LSBU research activities and impact; annual researcher auditing review; REF preparation and review; researcher integrity support researcher development events and opportunities; the management and delivery of PGR programmes; and the support of ECR and Contract Researchers. The P-OD has responsibility for Staff surveys; appraisal; training and development, and Well-Being and Mental Health initiatives. Internal review comprised three stages:

A. Review of the Implementation Plan by the Researcher Development Group (RDG). The RDG has responsibility for the university's compliance with the principles of the Concordat for Researcher Development, and manages the action and implementation plans, feeding through to the University Research Committee (URC) for scrutiny. The URC has overall responsibility for the implementation and interrogation of research activities at LSBU, and is chaired by the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research (APVC-R), which is a new appointment (May 2020) with responsibility for LSBU's research strategy, researcher development and PGR. Review of the plan was carried out online due to due to the impact of Covid-19) on 19 March 2020 involving participation from researchers, research leaders, OD and RO Following issues associated with the cyber-attack and pandemic conditions, the opportunity was taken to re-formulate the RDG in February 2022, confirming membership from the RO, P-OD, the Inclusive Researcher Group (IRG), the Annual University Research Audit (AURA) Working Group, the Race Equality Charter (REC) Working Group, colleagues from across the schools, and ECR and Research-only colleagues. The Action Plan and Implementation Review documentation was fully reviewed, considering progress to date against the submission of the four-year implementation plan (2018), and the actions that had been carried forward from the 2020 review process. The Implementation Review was ratified by the RDG meetings on 24 February and 31 March; the Action Plan was developed and agreed in meetings on the 25 and 27 April and ratified on 24 May. Annual statements of RDG/Concordat actions are a standing item on the agenda of the URC, with progress review on 30 Sept. 2020, 29 Sept 2021 and a final preparatory review on 18 May 2022.

B. 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 data input from: A, discussion of action and implementation plans at University Research Committee (URC), with engagement of researchers at all levels; B, feedback from the Directors of Research and Enterprise at DORE meetings; C, participation at School Research Days and Research Centres involving discussion and feedback from researchers at all grades; D, participation in Research Centre Review meetings to identify future actions; E, networking events with researchers and PGR students in the London Doctoral Academy, Summer School (online in 2020, 2021); F, researcher feedback from Annual University Research Audit Working Group and Audit (June-September 2022); G, feedback from staff engagement survey 2021; H, Training Needs Analysis (TNA) data, also part of this process, was interrupted by the cyberattack.

C. Review and Update of the Implementation Plan and Action Plan was completed by RO with input and under oversight of the RDG and URC, in association with OD, with the timescale for meetings as described above.

3. Key Achievements and Progress Against Action Plan 2020-22

Developments to strengthen the research environment have seen, in 2020-22, strengthening of the Research Office by employment of additional 1.5 FTE supported by a new APVC-R with specific responsibility for: A, Researcher Development; B, Researcher Integrity compliance; C, monitor and assess research quality in line with the principles of responsible metrics, defined by DORA; D, manage and develop the Annual University Research Audit (AURA) and oversee development of research impact; E, guide and support colleagues in REF, and manage REF and impact; F, development and growth of the 12 Research Centres and 33 Groups; and, G, manage and deliver on the aims of the London Doctoral Academy.

Principle 1: Recruitment and Selection. *Human Resource policies***:** Regular reviews of HR policies is carried out on an annual basis (January 2020, 2021), with a policy schedule inventory including the recruitment and selection policy, ensuring continuous review of new legislation and implementation of best practice. LSBU's recruitment is under review as part of the HR Brand project, which will examine the way in which the university approaches its appointments, including Academic, Support, Researchers and Technicians. Research is identified as a significant component of our recruitment. A significant development is the entrenchment of the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment The principles of DORA are firmly entrenched in LSBU in terms of recruitment and promotion.

Principle 2: Recognition and Value. *Researcher development & training*: The Annual University Research Audit (AURA) is an important vehicle for assessing research activity and supporting researchers and was re-developed by the AURA working group to increase its effectiveness, and to permit alignment with the appraisal process. Though affected by the cyber-attack, this work will continue into the new action plan, with the appraisal process under full review. The principles of DORA, accepted by the institution, inform this approach. Supporting our staff, Training Needs Analysis identifies support for researchers; though this was paused by the cyber-attack; it will be carried out in the 2022 cycle onwards. Training pathways were similarly affected but a new approach has emerged, derived from the experiences of the pandemic, with much more effective use of online resources, and this is in train with the new action plan. Participation in the Leadership Academy increased during the pandemic, with new programmes for management introduced. Progress has been made in recognising that access to e-mail for a period post-contract would be beneficial to the contract holder and university, and continues. *Review of Research Centres & Professoriate***:** The Centre Review framework was overhauled to ensure that reporting on staff development, focussing on ECR and contact staff was established. The Professoriate meetings have been affected by the pandemic/cyber-attack, but are included in the new action plan.

Principles 3 & 4: Support and Career Development. *Research Centres and Mentoring*: Development of mentoring and coaching continues to be focussed on Research Centres (12) with peer-to-peer mentoring, coaching and review; with at least 40 individuals being mentored and 54 in process of being so via the Research Centres. There has been a 25% increase in the number of contract researchers being members of RCs. LSBU's research cohort has increased to 199 (from 119 in 2014). *Extra-academic experience*: Participation in the Outside Insight programme has continued with 80% of applicants successfully matched. *Training & support*: Academic Induction has been successful in engaging all new starters, meeting the target set. As discussed, the training offer has been affected adversely by the cyber-attack, but will be part of the on-going development. P-OD run training courses have seen an increase of 30% engagement over the period. The Research Summer School runs each year in July, and though there were challenges, some 40 individuals participated. *PGR Supervision*: The Epigeum programme has been overhauled, with LSBU directly engaged, and this is under review for the new action plan. The Research Supervision training pathway remains available to all. *Research Sabbaticals***: i**ntroduced in 2018, has seen year-on-year success, with a 20% increase in Sabbatical awards in 2022 from 2021.

Principle 5: Researchers' Responsibilities. *R&E Forums and Impact:* affected by the cyber-attack, these now form part of the on-going action plan, with an Impact Action Plan is under development *AURA*: Participation reflects different priorities in some Schools, though rate of participation by ECRs has increased. AURA was reviewed and revised and led to an increased engagement from the researcher cohort, reaching 89% return of this cohort.

Training pathways: P-OD run training courses have seen an increase of 30% engagement over the period. The Research Summer School runs each year in July, and though there were challenges, some 40 individuals participated. Communications relating to the training is cascaded from the Research Office through the Directors of Research and Enterprise, Research Centre heads, research group meetings and through online platforms. Training in media outreach was provided by 'The Conversation' with 4 sessions, 50 participants and 7 online articles. ***Integrity***: LSBU is compliant with the UK RIO requirements for researcher integrity. There has been an increase by 25% uptake by PGR students and work is progressing on developing an online training platform.

Principle 6: Diversity and Equality. ***Unconscious Bias***: This training was successful, reaching 35 individuals, and is part of the compulsory training set. ***EDI Key Deliverables***: Deliverables from this plan led to an increased satisfaction with LSBU staff in terms of valued comments, fairness, inclusion and progression. Three Cultural Competency workshops were delivered to 24 people. ***Athena SWAN***: LSBU has delivered on its action plan, with respect to workforce Planning; the evaluation of the training strategy, and the review of appraisals.

Principle 7: Implementation & Review. ***Researcher Feedback***: LSBU participated in the PRES survey in 2019 and 2021, with increase in satisfaction in supervision, teaching and building responsibilities. Increasing participation remains the primary goal for the next action plan. LSBU will take part in the next CEDARS exercise to gather effective data.

4. **Summary of actions and next steps to 2025**
A. **Environment & Culture. Awareness – Expansi**on of the RDG, establishment of the IRG and development of AURA. *Success*: AURA responses at 90% engagement, outcome of RA work for IRG. **WB&MH –** Revision of workload model; ECR/CR support strand; increase in SRR; reducing barriers to participation and consideration of staff circumstances; expansion of Sabbaticals. *Success*: Universal WLM; development cohort of 10 ECRs and increase in SRR by 50%; uptake in training by 30%. **B&H –** Behavioural framework; DAW champions; training providers. *Success*: evaluation of the schemes and procurement of the champions and providers. **EDI –** EDI training requirement; Athena Swann Delivery; EDI champions; Establishment of IRG. *Success:* 80% engagement; 10% increase in EDI leads; outcome of IRG RA. **Integrity –** Training module and contacts. *Success:* 20% participation increase per year; maintenance of contact and compliance. **Policy –** APVC-R, Strategy review and Centres review. *Success:* Review and overhaul.

B. **Employment. Recruitment**: Employer Brand project; incorporation of DORA principles; development of Induction & Researcher induction. *Success*: completion; 50% new starters. **RR&P** Personal Circumstances panel; recognition of researchers on HAPLO; Staff awards. *Success*: establishment of principles. **Responsibilities**: Training and guidance. *Success*: guidance pack for managers; 80% satisfaction with courses. **People management:** appraisals and mentoring support. *Success*: 70% engagement; review of mentoring. **Job security:** Review of roles across LSBU. *Success:* embedding key actions across LSBU.

C. **Professional & Career Development. Championing –** Development of bespoke mentoring, improved iTrent feedback. *Measure:* new strategy rollout; 70% feedback target. **Career development** – training, effective appraisals and PDP. Measure: 10% increase in training and similar in PDP. **Support –** mentoring framework and research training pathways. *Success*: established principles; 10% uptake in mentoring & 20% in training. **Research identity –** Epigeum training; increased sabbaticals; Impact development; media training; leadership programme. *Success:* incremental growth of uptake in all areas by 10%. **Diverse careers** – Third sector engagement; Enterprise forums & training. *Success*: engagement of individuals; 80% satisfaction in training.