

HRER Summary Report – The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Our Institutional Context

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) is a research-intensive Higher Education Institution (HEI), offering postgraduate studies and continuing education in public and global health. Our Research and Education 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). We have ~ 3,500 staff conducting research in over 100 countries and ~ 4,700 students, all working with a collective purpose to improve health and health equity worldwide. LSHTM has been ranked 2nd in the world and 1st in the UK for public health in the 2024 Shanghai Ranking.

Our dedicated and talented staff all play an important part in our mission to improve health worldwide. We are committed to creating a positive and inclusive working environment by recruiting, developing and retaining excellent people for a wide range of roles. We work to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion for everyone, and to actively support staff engagement and wellbeing.

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 2024-2027 action plan focus on those research staff on fixed-term contracts at Research Assistant, Research Fellow and Assistant Professor level. Our headcount for these levels as at 1 September 2024 was: 99 Research Assistants, 334 Research Fellows and 207 Assistant Professors.

We were awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) in November 2019 and publicly acknowledged our commitment to implementing the Researcher Development Concordat by becoming a signatory in 2020. We underwent our two year HREiR review in November 2021.

In January 2023 we recruited a new Pro-Director Research & Academic Development, Professor Caroline Relton. As a member of the Executive Team Professor Relton's responsibilities include oversight of the research, innovation and impact strategy, research culture, governance and integrity, partnerships, the Doctoral College, inter-disciplinary Centres and academic development (career development and academic promotions). One of Professor Relton's early actions was to establish a Research Committee with a purpose to nurture a positive research culture within LSHTM and in how researchers work with partner organisations to ensure that research and researchers can flourish.

Since our review in 2021, significant work has been undertaken to develop an institution-wide [strategy](#) which was launched in 2022. There are three pillars - Research, Innovation and Impact; Education; People and Culture and under each are a number of strategic priorities and workstreams related to specific actions which will drive forward our mission to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide, and create a thriving environment to work and study.

Since our HREiR review in 2021 there have been a number of staffing challenges in the teams with responsibility for delivering the action plan – Talent Development and Strategic Research. Two key members of staff left the organisation, and this meant that several projects were delayed or affected in other ways. These actions have since been revised and/or transferred to our forward-looking action plan with revised dates.

Our Internal Evaluation

Our gap analysis and evaluation were undertaken through:

- regular review of our action plan by the Concordat Monitoring Group (CMG)
- measuring response data to the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) 2023 and our Staff Survey 2022
- meetings with key stakeholders within LSHTM
- aligning with the LSHTM strategy actions and workstreams
- communicating with early career researchers

The response from early career researchers to our CEDARs survey, was disappointingly low at 12% (n=76). The response rate has been historically low and may have been affected by running it a few months after the LSHTM-wide staff survey in 2022. We recognise this and have included specific actions in our forward-looking action plan to address this and improve the response rate. These actions include enhanced exposure in our new staff induction, integrating Concordat principles into existing training sessions, running additional features on the Concordat in the staff weekly newsletter and using the re-established Research Staff Forum to encourage researchers to engage with their peers. This will give us confidence that our future planning is meeting identified needs. The response rate to our staff survey in 2022 was 61% (n=1104) and from this, 35% (n=384) were responses from early career researchers at research assistant, research fellow and assistant professor level. We were able to drill down on specific questions to review the responses from early career researchers and have used this data to assess impact of our actions and identify areas where action is needed on our forward-looking action plan.

Members of the CMG also meet regularly with stakeholders, including the three Associate Deans for Research (one in each Faculty) and attend Faculty Management Group meetings. Some CMG members are also members of the Research Committee. These conversations are useful in establishing the impact of interventions that have been introduced and to better understand the specific challenges within each Faculty setting. This information is used to update progress on our action plan and feeds into planning actions in our forward-looking plan.

In developing the overall LSHTM strategy a number of workshops were held and were open to all members of staff to contribute, including early career researchers. The feedback and discussion in these workshops fed into the final strategy workstreams and specifically a workstream under the Research Strategy which focuses on the career development of research staff. This workstream has representation from early career researchers and the actions that this workstream is responsible for are mirrored in our forward-looking action plan.

We recognise that engagement with research staff is essential for evaluating the impact of our action plan and for planning future actions. In 2020 we established the ECR network which is open to all early career researchers. This is an informal network where researchers can opt to join an email circulation list. This is one of the communication channels used to circulate information to this group of staff. We also established a Research Staff Forum in

2020. This group met on eight occasions over the course of the full review period, until staffing challenges resulted in us pausing meetings. The forum was created to discuss and recommend actions to support researcher development and ensure that LSHTM fulfils the principles of the Concordat. Its membership included research staff from across LSHTM with a particular focus on early career researchers. Committee members participated in and contributed to a number of initiatives for example: Discussions that fed into the 2 year review of the HR excellence in research award as well as providing feedback on the documents; LSHTM Values consultation; Bullying and harassment policy consultation etc. We recognise the importance of re-establishing this forum to ensure the researcher voice is heard and have included this as a priority action in our forward-looking action plan.

Our Governance Structure

LSHTM's main governing body is Council and people related issues are governed by a sub-committee of Council - the People, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (PEDIC). Senior strategic leadership is delegated to the Director and the Executive Team, which includes senior academic and professional services staff, including the Pro-Director Research and Academic Development.

The Concordat Monitoring Group (CMG) reports into the Pro-Director Research and Academic Development and its membership includes colleagues from Talent Development, the Strategic Research Office, Human Resources, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Research, Governance and Integrity Office. It is chaired by the Head of Talent Development. The responsibility of this group is to review and monitor the action plan, revising actions and establishing areas where future action is needed and ensuring the target dates are met. This group had been meeting every six weeks (and met nine times over the course of the full review period) but has also been affected by staffing changes. It was also noted that the membership should include representation from research staff and this has been included as a priority action in our forward-looking action plan. Overall accountability for ensuring the action plan is delivered rests with the Executive Team and we provide regular update reports on projects to this group and formally report progress towards our action plan on an annual basis. A formal annual report is also submitted to PEDIC and Council.

The Research Committee is chaired by the Pro-Director Research and Academic Development and also reports to the Executive Team. The remit of this committee covers all aspects of LSHTM which impact on research including – open science; training and development; research governance and integrity, fundraising and alumni; partnerships; EDI. Membership includes representatives from each Faculty, early career researchers, LAORS, Strategic Research Office, Talent Development. It differs from the CMG in that its remit is much broader. The work of this committee does however inform the CMG with several individuals sitting on both committees.

The work of the CMG is also informed by other relevant groups e.g. Gender Equity Taskforce (responsible for Athena SWAN) and the Race Equality Task Force (responsible for the Race Equality Charter). The Chair of the CMG takes a strategic view across these groups to ensure actions are not duplicated and areas for action complement each other and are aligned.

Past Progress and Achievements

Many of the actions from our 2021-2024 action plan are now considered business as usual and will be maintained and monitored. Other areas where we have made progress are:

Environment and Culture

- We have increased awareness of the Concordat and the 10 days development commitment. We recognise there is more work to be done on this and have factored this into our forward-looking plan.
- Significant progress has been made on our EDI agenda; we retained the Athena SWAN bronze award and will soon submit our application for the Race Equality Charter. Additionally, EDI contributions are now recognised within the reward and recognition processes for research staff, demonstrating our efforts to ensure sufficient value is given to EDI activities.
- We have introduced a *Report and Support* platform to enable all staff to report any incidences of bullying and harassment on a named or anonymous basis. Our data shows a >30% increase in ECRs saying they are familiar with the mechanisms to report bullying and harassment incidents.
- We have developed a *Values and Behaviour Framework* which has been embedded into various activities across LSHTM. This includes the development of a Managers' Toolkit, to help managers and team leaders embed the framework within their teams.
- We have launched a Workload Allocation Model, which is currently being used to manage and monitor teaching workload. The aim is to expand this to capture a fuller picture of academic activities (doctoral supervision, research, training, citizenship).
- Our Wellbeing agenda has been re-shaped and we are working to integrate this into the talent development provision – we have launched *LSHTM Extras* (a staff benefits and retail discount portal), reviewed our dignity at work policy and launched a new *Safeguarding Framework*.
- We have continued with our management and leadership development provision and have recently revised the entire programme, ensuring all levels of managers are covered. We have redefined a role within the Talent Development team to focus on leadership and management development and have a new three-year strategy to support developments.

Employment

- We have initiated a review of our employment model.
- Phase 1 of the review has involved taking a more strategic approach to managing fixed term contracts and teaching management roles; exploring an education-only academic track within our employment arrangements; reviewing our Without Duration Contract Guidance and Criteria; enhanced support mechanisms for early and mid-career researchers in terms of contract length.
- Phase 2 will involve working towards having a workforce model that aligns more closely to LSHTM's key research and education strategic priorities, and having support provisions in place that enable early and mid-career researchers to have thriving careers at LSHTM.
- Our forward-looking action plan reflects the work involved in Phase 2 of this workstream.
- We continue to monitor and review our reward and academic promotions processes, collecting and reviewing data annually and collating feedback from committee members and observers.

Professional and Career Development

- We have developed a system for researchers to record their 10 days development and have supported this with additional written guidance available on our intranet.
- Our annual PDR (appraisal) round has been revised to include more emphasis on personal development as well as setting work related objectives.
- We have responded to development needs of our leaders and managers by running needs led interventions.
- We run an annual CV review process to support early career researchers with career development and planning.
- We have revised the mentoring programme and reduced the time taken to match mentee with mentor.
- We have launched the Tackling Infections: Skills Mobility Accelerator (TISMA) programme, which supports early career researchers with obtaining knowledge exchange placements outside of academia.
- We have developed guidance on creating a Personal Development Plan and made this accessible on our intranet.
- We have launched a Grant Acquisition Programme which nurtures researchers at the point of making a grant application.

Our Strategic Objectives and Implementation Plan

Our strategy for the next three years is to ensure we embed those actions which have become business as usual and re-establish those actions which have been affected by staffing challenges. We will also ensure the Concordat strategy links directly to the three pillars of LSHTM strategy and specifically the Research pillar.

Within the Research pillar of the strategy there is a workstream *Supporting the Careers of Future Researchers* and within this there are a number of priorities and actions relating to early career researcher development which have been incorporated into our forward-looking action plan.

As a result of our evaluation and gap analysis we have identified further action required around:

- Further development of our Workload Allocation Management System.
- Continued focus on reviewing and revising our employment model, based on strategic drivers whilst ensuring the needs of early career researchers are taken into account.
- Promoting a healthy work environment through additional wellbeing training and support.
- Ensuring our new Learning Management System enables better tracking and monitoring of training completion.
- Developing additional ways and channels in which early career researchers can contribute to policy development and improving the way in which we capture the “researcher voice”.
- Improving the career development support we provide to early career researchers.
- Enhanced management and leadership development targeted for differing levels of researchers.

LSHTM November 2024