**Institute of Cancer Research (Cohort 15) - HR Excellence in Research report for 2 year review post 2019 external assessment**

1. *outline how the internal evaluation was undertaken (including how researchers' views were taken into account during the review and, where relevant, how the review links with existing QA and other implementation/monitoring mechanisms)*

Existing actions from our HR Excellence in Research 2018 action plan were reviewed in a number of different forums. The five yearly student training review undertook a full gap analysis in 2019/20 to identify new actions needed to enhance the existing student training provision, with a panel comprising faculty, research degree students, Registry and Learning and Organisational Development (L&OD). The postdoc training working group – comprising two reps from the postdoc association and four members of faculty – reviewed postdoc actions and report annually to Academic Board. Remaining actions are monitored by the Athena SWAN steering group (ASSG) and Equality Steering Group (ESG).

As a result of the ICR becoming a signatory of the Technician Commitment (TC) in 2017, the Technician Commitment working group now oversee actions pertaining to scientific officer grades. The working group has two Scientific Officer (SO) reps and one member of the L&OD team. The reps sit on the Scientific Officer Association (SOA) and have played a leading role in the all SO consultations and in developing the ICR’s Technician Commitment action plan. As a result of job family reclassifications at the ICR in 2019, Scientific Officers now come under the wider job group of Scientific Professionals which also includes Analytical Scientists, Trials Management and the Biological Services Unit. The TC working group will be looking to expand representation on their working group to reflect this broader remit, as well as appointing a TC faculty champion in the coming year.

In August 2020 the ICR’s Research Leadership Board agreed to ICR becoming a signatory of the new 2019 Researcher Concordat and appointed Prof Jyoti Choudhary as the faculty champion to lead on the gap analysis and action plan formation required from all signatories. Prof Choudhary will lead a working group including representatives from HR, Researcher Support, L&OD to present the ICR’s Researcher Concordat gap analysis, action plan and annual report to Research Leadership Board annually in June for approval ahead of publication.

This new Researcher Concordat action plan will build on our 10 years of HR Excellence in Research work, but as a result of the introduction of the Technician Commitment covering Scientific Professional roles, will be specifically aimed at students, postdocs, fellows, career development faculty and staff scientists and faculty. Both action plans will be expected to have a degree of overlap as a result of shared organisation-wide initiatives including Athena Swan. The ASSG is co-chaired by the CEO and a member of faculty, with reps from all the research divisions and meets quarterly. Having both Researcher Concordat and TC frameworks in place means that is all ICR staff will have a designated working group and action plan to reflect their career development priorities and the expectation of our funders.

The ICR runs a triennial all staff survey to gather the views of all its researchers and corporate staff. In 2019/20 we introduced a new, shorter 19 question pulse survey to better track trends and hot spots requiring attention in the survey-off years. Attitude survey data together with HR data (turnover, exit data, complaints and grievances) are reviewed quarterly by the Bullying & Harassment task group formed in 2018 to include the HR Director and the Deputy Dean for biomedical sciences. In 2019/20 the ICR also restarted its Services and Support survey of research team leaders and key divisional staff to measure and be able to monitor the quality of support offered to them by colleagues in Corporate Services (HR, Finance, IT, Enterprise, Registry, Facilities) and Core Scientific Services. Actions emerging from the survey results are monitored by Corporate Leadership Board and the survey will be repeated every 18 months.

1. *detail key achievements and the progress against the strategy, indicators and actions identified in the original action plan*

Support for CDF and fellows

Following a period of significant recruitment of new CDF and fellows, a staff network for this cohort (n=24) was launched. A needs analysis was conducted at the CDF and fellows 2019 and 2020 away days resulting in a number of new initiative including:

* ICR’s Academic Dean has remit expanded to include oversight of CDF and fellows
* Introduction of a new Finance & Research Support induction session which received excellent feedback and now offered to all new joiners with resources made available for ongoing reference
* Support and guidance provided for all in this cohort to identify a faculty mentor outside of their own research division. 85% of the group have now identified a mentor and training on making the most of these meetings will be provided for mentees and mentors as well as being a key discussion point at annual away days
* HR-led workshop on managing the performance of others provided at the cohort’s annual away 2020 day and very well received
* Creation of a CDF and fellows Slack group in Oct 2020 to enable the cohort to be in touch with each other more informally and seek advice or information easily – particularly given the current social distancing measures and many working off site and setting up their new labs remotely. It has also been a portal through which to share useful documents, policies and upcoming opportunities.

Steps to fellowship success

Launched in August 2020 as a partnership with the Biomedical Research Centre at The Royal Marsden and NIHR by surveying all ICR/RMH postdoctoral and clinical researchers to establish interest in and support required for a future fellowship application (via NIHR or another funder). 35 completed the survey and 1:1 follow up meetings were held to discuss suitability for the programme and develop individual action plans with 12 people within funder-remit accepted onto the NIHR programme. Those not within the remit are being supported via regular fellow-up sessions (timings of these are set by the individual) and will be offered academic mentors in early 2021 as part of the existing postdoc mentoring scheme. Fellowships training was an area where Athena SWAN data previously identified a decrease in female attendees, so we are pleased to note that for both the Steps to Fellowship Success and our existing Introduction to Fellowships session we attracted 50:50 female:male participants. The pilot programme will be evaluated in summer 2021 to establish how many of the cohort were enabled to submit a fellowship proposal within 12 months.

Evaluation of the ICR Dean’s award

In 2013 the ICR introduced a Dean’s Award where high potential postdocs invited to apply for a £5000 award to either conduct pilot research or set up an external collaboration to support them in achieving academic independence. In 2019 we conducted an evaluation into the success of the initiative so far. All past recipients of the award were contacted to establish the impact that gaining the funding had on their individual careers. This evaluation was shared at the Vitae’s 2019 International Researcher Development Conference. 85% of the 20 past recipients (10F, 10M) of the award responded to the survey with half indicating they had spent the funds on laboratory consumables and half spending the funds on establishing a collaboration with another lab. 88% of the respondents said that as a direct result of the funding they had been able to submit a publication or funding application that they would not otherwise have been able to. The three most important aspects of receiving the award were deemed to be 1) being able to show evidence of securing funding 2) growing their professional network of external collaborators and 3) enhancing their CV. Individual comments included:

“The award gave me the confidence I could pursue a career as a PI”

“The award had a very positive and important impact on my career as it allowed be to build a strong network of collaborators and partners that helped my transition to leading drug discovery programmes”

“The award enabled me to start a new project which indirectly led me to contacts at another institution and developing skills that helped me secure my current position”

“The Dean’s award hugely helped me to develop an idea that gave me something solid to work on in my own lab”

Respondents were asked how this award could be further improved for future recipients. These included to better showcase those who had been awarded the prize internally via internal news features, this was done following the 2019 round. Another suggestion was to make these awards available to earlier career postdocs which was implemented from 2019 in the form of two additional, smaller travel awards of £2500 towards academic independence.

Leadership training programme for senior leaders

The ICR launched a senior leadership programme to help leaders deliver a supportive, high performing culture – in contrast to the toxic workplace culture as highlighted by the Wellcome Trust *What Researchers Think About The Research Culture They Work In* [report](https://wellcome.org/sites/default/files/what-researchers-think-about-the-culture-they-work-in.pdf). The CEO and his senior leadership team (Research Division Heads and Professional Service Directors) are the first cohort to undertake this. The programme aims to support leaders in embedding the ICR Values delivering a high performing supportive workplace and strengthening teamwork and collaboration within and across teams. It also considers the challenges of leading teams remotely under COVID restrictions and includes 360 feedback. The programme will be cascaded throughout the organisation in 2021, with the next cohort consisting of deputy heads, heads of centres and deputy directors, and then remaining faculty.

1. *Outline next steps and the focus of the strategy for the next two years, including success measures.*

Becoming signatories of the new Concordat means our first priority will be to identify the gaps we have in our current HREiR action plan and agree actions to address and monitor these. Early priorities identified include: extending support to those coming to the end of fixed term contracts and making researchers and their managers aware of the importance of taking up dedicated training and development time to the equivalent of 10 days per annum and identify ways to capture this information.

Temporary but significant lab shut downs due to Covid-19, together with most of our clinical researchers being recalled into front line medicine in spring/summer, means we are extending the careers support offered to all leavers for up to 12 months post contract end date giving access to: career 1:1s, careers workshops, CV reviews and interview practice. In addition findings of the [Wellcome trust researcher survey](https://wellcome.org/sites/default/files/what-researchers-think-about-the-culture-they-work-in.pdf) and the [Nature postdoc survey](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02548-2) have meant that a key Researcher Concordat priority for us will be equipping our postdocs for leadership roles within and beyond the ICR. Such a programme will bring together sessions on people management, learning to lead remotely and self-leadership. We will measure the impact of these in our next destination reporting and in survey data from the upcoming attitude and pulse surveys.

More broadly our priorities for the next two years will centre on enhancing equality diversity and inclusion in our action plans with the aim of improving the research culture at the ICR in line with the priorities of our funders. Examples include launching the all ICR Race Equality Survey and working closely with the BAME forum and CEO to communicate findings and develop a targeted action plan. In parallel we will work with the BAME forum to explore local and national Early Career Researcher networks and mentoring opportunities. We are also looking to enhance our attitude survey questions on the topic of bullying and harassment from Feb 2021 to try to delineate between perceptions and experiences to give more useful insight into any action needed in these areas.