HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH Award:

Four-year Review - September 2015

A. **The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) launched its Concordat implementation plan** in 2011. In 2013, it successfully retained its award following the required two-year internal audit. Achievement and retention of the European Commissions' HR Excellence in Research is a vital, but singular indicator of the University's commitment to the development of mobile career researchers, whatever stage of the research journey they are at.

Equally important is the achievement of the Athena Swan Bronze award which the University was successful in achieving in April 2014. Furthermore, three Colleges are pursuing their Silver Award, one already submitted, one due November 2015 – and more are in the development stages. Additionally, the University continues to pursue its goal of achieving the Race Equality Charter Mark. As one of the 30 Universities involved in the Pilot, regrettably we were one of the 22 that were unsuccessful in the spring of 2015. Nonetheless, there have been valuable lessons learned and the RECM Self Assessment Team (SAT) continues to work on our re-submission and delivery of the action plan.

UCLan supports the career development of its research staff in a co-ordinated collaboration between College and the Research Development and Support Office. A recent re-organisation within the University has seen five Colleges emerge, all of which have Directors of Research and Innovation, and Research and Innovation Committees (RICs) which monitor and report on research initiatives and developments. The Research Development and Support Office is overseen by the Executive Director of Research, and this centre:college relationship ensures that strategic direction is maintained whilst allowing for flexible interpretation depending upon the individual needs of specific academic areas.

UCLan currently has around 160 training events per annum for its Post Graduate Research population, with many of these having been extended to Early Career Researchers post–doc, or as refreshers to established researchers. In addition, the **University has recently launched its new professional development resource for researchers – the RIO Development Framework** (rioframework.org.uk) which highlights all available training for research staff, and maps each session to the Vitae Research Development Framework. The website was launched recently, and has been profiled as a Special Interest Session (SIS) at the Vitae conference, and elicited interest from other Universities who wish to do the same. **Most popular courses currently** are those for New Supervisors, which has seen around 170 staff undertake the programme in the last two year period; the entire suite of Funding provision courses, which has enabled the University in securing higher percentages of external funding; and the courses around Open Access and research data in the context of new research guidelines.

The Head of Research Development and Support is currently the Regional Representative for the Northwest for Vitae – and working with Universities in this area to articulate and develop further initiatives to support career researchers. There are also strong relationships with ARMA (Association for Researchers Managers and Administrators) and AfRE (Association for Research Ethics) with collaborative activities having taken place within and beyond the conference arena. This engagement with a wide network around the context of PPD for researchers is vital to the continuing enrichment of the training environment.

B. **The process for 2015 internal review** in advance of submission of the audit document was multi-faceted. The University has a central **Research and Innovation Committee** (RIC) chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (whose portfolio contains strategic research responsibility); supplemented by the five College RICs each chaired by their corresponding Executive Dean. Each RIC has research training as a standing item on its agenda, with scheduled reports and updates received throughout the year.

Additionally, and to ensure full involvement, staff from each of these in addition to all staff with a research supervisor role, were invited to participate in a **BOS (Bristol On-line Survey)** around training and the objectives of the previous action-plan update, to inform the submission document.

Furthermore, a **World Café event on the theme of research**, including Research development, was convened by the PVC for Student Experience, and bespoke focus groups for Research Degree Tutors (RDTs) were convened to capture the views of Schools and subject areas.

Student focus groups (2) were also convened, in addition to meetings with the University PhD society – to gain the perspective of that key user group – and all of the above were considered against the evaluations that are undertaken by every participant of every training session run throughout the year.

Trainers too were invited to give their feedback, and contribute to the conversation on how agendas should be shaped moving forward from 2015-2018.

C. **Key achievements by Concordat Principle** are recorded below and can be correlated with the updated column in the 2013-15 Action Plan:

1   Recruitment and Selection

The University continues to have clear and transparent advertisement and recruitment processes with guidance provided for all applicants, and those shortlisted on the process, and training for all internal staff who will be involved in recruitment and selection panels. The Athena Swan Bronze award feedback report contained a strong commendation for the University's focus on diversity in the selection of recruitment panels, and the statistic of 100% training completed for all Panel chairs on E&D issues.

2   Recognition and Value

UCLan believes strongly in its research staff, and the need for their recognition and development in order to acknowledge this belief, and continue the University's tradition of strong, and sometime world-leading research. The University Appraisal scheme includes a commitment to develop researchers beyond the life of their current contract, and where contracts are fixed term, these are now being reviewed annually by HR with a view to conversion to permanent posts. A paper has been submitted to the Executive at the time of writing this submission, and by the point of audit in December, the outcome will be known on systems proposed with regard to fixed-term to permanent conversion henceforth. As part of the restructure, the University has developed five college research leads, Directors of Research and Innovation, who will be responsible for the oversight of and accountability for the growth and development of research staff within their area. Research training for all – from PGR to Professoriate has been expanded, and a bespoke area – the RIO Development Framework (rioframework.org.uk) established to enable ease of access and clarify opportunity. Criteria for professoriate status have been further clarified with the introduction of a three tier model, with clear detail on progression and an annual opportunity to apply. Finally, accreditation is being sought from the Institute of Leadership Management (ILM) for the RIO Development Framework, and this is anticipated during 2015/16.

3-5   Support and Career Development/Importance of researchers' personal learning/responsibilities-
the University has wide and expanding programme of support and development opportunities for all its researchers:

(i) for PGRs, a full suite of free, face to face training advertised annually via the PGR Training programme, with over 160 events covering every aspect of the research experience. This training is kick-started with a compulsory induction day for all new research students, and for full time students, followed by a one week Graduate Skills programme that is an intensive introduction to such concepts as method, academic writing, team-working, database access and open-access publication. Additionally, students are encouraged to contribute to teaching, and are invited to participate in the SD1 and 2 accredited Teaching Toolkit opportunities, depending on their previous level of experience, to equip them for entry into the classroom. All PGR courses are mapped to the Vitae Research Development Framework;

(ii) maximising on training by extending each of the PGR opportunities to all academic staff. Certain sessions e.g. Academic Writing and Getting Published have content that some ECRs were not privy to during their own student experience, as do training sessions in RefWorks, NViVo and EndNote – as examples. As a result of demand, all training is open to them, though priority is given to PGRs, and extra sessions run if demand exceeds supply;

(iii) the development of the RIO Development Framework (rioframework.org.uk) which is a one-stop-shop for research staff, cataloguing all the research development available in the areas of REF, Open Access, Public Engagement, Supervision, Funding, Innovation and Entrepreneurship and more – all mapped to the Vitae Research Development Framework;

(iv) the availability of a full suite of on-line modules for staff and PGRs via the purchase of three separate licenses for Epigeum products – the Research Masters Programme, the Research Integrity programme and the Statistics Package. These are in fact available to all staff and students with a UCLan ID, as unlimited licenses have been purchased with a view to supporting undergraduate through to postgrad via access to appropriate resources;

(v) the provision of further and additional programmes, outside of Research Development and Support, via Human Resources (HR). Such provision has included the support of female staff with Aurora and Springboard; equally, Navigator men's development programme has run twice at UCLan, and would do again on demand; and has also included Lego Serious Play master class sessions in addition a developing initiative "The Mobile Researcher", which will offer group and 1:1 sessions with researchers reviewing how their skill set is transferable, and how it could be capitalised upon; easy access online support for personal and professional development via 'Performance Assistant' is available to all staff, as is 'Lynda.com' for personal learning as well as for supervisors of students to help construct learning materials;

(vi) a robust and effective appraisal process for all staff, with a 98.2% participation rate last year, consistently high levels of staff report 'my appraisal was useful to me', and the development of bespoke appraisal forms for research members of staff are in use this appraisal season;

(viii) a new programme due for launch November 2016 – "Careers Conversations for Researchers" – focusing on 1:1 confidential careers advisory sessions for staff looking to develop their careers both within and outside of the University;

(ix) the continuation of the UCLan Mentoring Scheme, and the addition of dedicated "Women In Science" sessions for those women in STEMM subject areas on communicating their work to a public audience;

(x) the PGR forum as a regular event where PGR students air their views, recommend enhancements and request support – Chaired by the Head of the Graduate School.

(xi) the development of a specific Induction programme – Research Induction for Academics – for all academic staff to highlight the services and initiatives in place to support them;

6   **Diversity and Equality –** UCLan now holds the institutional Athena Swan Bronze award and as at November 2015 will have submitted two applications for Silver at College level – within the Colleges of Clinical and Biomedical Sciences, and Health and Wellbeing**.** It also continues to work toward the Race Equality Charter Mark and hopes to achieve this during the next round of submissions.

7   **Implementation and Review -** whilst the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) has now been disbanded as part of the institutional restructure, there is centralised responsibility for managing the overview and evaluation of progress through the Head of the Research Development and Support Team. In order to ensure the most inclusive process, the following groups are those from which views are sought:

a) PGR Forum – Research Students

b) Research Degree Tutor Group

c) Research Degrees Board

d) Research and Innovation Committee – Central and college levels

e) REF Unit of Assessment Academic Leads

f) Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team (Athena Swan SAT)

g) Bespoke staff and/or student focus groups – "on-task" i.e. convened on specific topics

h) Evaluations from each and every training event

i) CROS and PIRLS results

D.   **Next Steps and Future Strategy** - the University over the period 2015-19 will seek to ensure consolidation of and enhancement upon its existing strategies supporting research and research professionals. In the immediate, there are some very clear objectives with tangible success measures that will enable us to judge our achievement. (Note - each of those listed have tangible and self-evident measures of success which have therefore not been listed separately though timescales for completion have):

a) achievement of Silver level awards from Athena Swan on an academic college submission basis; All colleges working towards Silver (as humanities are now included in AS)

b) maintain Bronze or gain Silver at our next institutional AS submission in 2017

c) achievement of the Race Equality Charter Mark at next submission;

d) accreditation by ILM of the RIO Development Framework during 2016;

e) publication of transparent conversion criteria for staff on fixed term-contracts in 2016;

f) establishment of a peer-to-peer Mentoring Scheme for PGRs by April 2016;

g) co-ordination of Research Skills Development Grants – to support individuals in their career development -2016;

h) continuation of the University Sabbatical Scheme – ongoing;

i) co-ordination of 2016 Research Staff Annual Research Conference;

j) achievement of the JUNO award 2016.