

HR EiRA Six Year Progress Report (2022)

Institutional context and the internal evaluation process

University of Westminster have held the European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award (HR EiRA) since February 2016. The award was internally reviewed in 2018 and externally reaccredited in August 2020. This report sets out progress made since the publishing of our [2020-24 action plan](#), informing a six-year internal review of the award. To review progress of our last action plan, we have updated it on [our website](#), carrying over actions still in progress to a new action plan for 2022-25. Shaped by Westminster's values as a progressive, compassionate, and responsible community with a strategic commitment to developing a unified, interdisciplinary community of researchers, we are confident that this new plan will further grow the research culture at UoW.

University of Westminster (UoW) is a post-92 institution based on four campuses across London, it is organised into three colleges of four schools in each. The University currently employs 68 colleagues on research-only contracts as part of a broader academic body of 924 and our research strengths fall into [four key areas](#) – sustainable living, healthy society, inclusive society and creative communities. Research and Knowledge Exchange is supported across the institution by the Research & Knowledge Exchange Office (RKEO), who have expanded from 9 to 20 colleagues in the last three years.

Since December 2019, Westminster's commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat and work around the HR EiRA has been managed by the Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG), which reports into Research Committee, in turn reporting into Research & Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee and Academic Council, the University's highest decision-making body. The RDWG is chaired by a senior professor nominated by the PVC for Research (UoW's "Concordat champion") and its membership reflects the positive changes to R&KE at UoW. The group comprises two College R&KE directors, elected ECR reps, nominated reps from the research-only constituency in each college and a rep from each of the University's BME, Q+ (LGBTQI+), Women of Westminster and Disability networks, as well as representation from HR and the University's Researcher Development Officer.

This internal evaluation, which feeds into the 2022-25 action plan, is informed by feedback from our cross-disciplinary Research Communities, from researcher development [workshops](#), from responses to CEDARS, dialogue between research leaders in the University and the RKEO, through feedback from surveys of our newly formed E/M-CR network, and from our Readers and Professors constituency.

Progress since our 2020 action plan

The research **environment and culture at UoW** has expanded and developed in its scope over the last two years. Through the R&KE Office **newsletter**, started in 2020, colleagues are updated on a range of news and opportunities related to R&KE at UoW on a monthly basis. The newsletter is sent to our 1100+ subscribers, with a more specific **list of early/mid-career researchers** (120 subscribers), managed by our E/M-CR representatives. These representatives have, this year, formed an **E/M-CR network**, which seeks to engage this constituency within our R&KE community. **Westminster's Researcher Development Award** scheme (RDA), started in September 2021, provides funding and targeted support to E/M-CRs across the institution. Awardees meet with their cohort throughout the year to discuss and address barriers to research and receive specific support from the R&KE Office

and work with a mentor in their field. Our research **mentoring circles** initiative has continued for the last two years and combined with school-level initiatives as well as the RDA programme also strengthens our support in this area. The University has established a new **Report and Support** platform this year, which makes it straightforward for colleagues to anonymously (or non-anonymously) report incidents of bullying, harassment, or misconduct.

Achievements around **employment** support have included a revision of our academic Professional Development Review form to **be more inclusive** of research-only staff concerns, and **more accessible** to the constituency. Active communications around emerging opportunities to support career progression internally are another highlight, for instance via new **school-level Research & KE leadership roles**. Consultation workshops have provided a platform for **conversation** around employment terms with maps to actions. A **new Organisational Development Team** have become operational in the last two years and are collaborating with the RKEO on a development framework, progression support and processes, appraisals, and mentoring.

Our **Researcher Development Programme** launched in 2020 has since expanded and the support offered is visible to all via our [Researcher Development Hub](#), which hosts our calendar of workshops and a growing bank of self-paced learning resources. 228 colleagues have attended at least one of the 29 workshops offered by the R&KE Office between September 2021 and June 2022. Engagement with **“hybrid” ways of learning, researching and engaging** have become increasingly important to UoW during, and in the aftermath of, the COVID-19 pandemic. 2022 saw a **self-paced hybrid training programme** in grant and paper writing consisting of online tasks and videos, culminating in a workshop led by our open access UW Press, attended by 26 participants. Since the publication of our 2020 action plan, UoW has run its first **workshops in knowledge exchange and collaboration with business**, its first programme of workshops on **bid writing**, and offered specific, interactive research impact workshops to each of our schools for the first time.

Next steps and 2022-4 focus

Continuing to improve our **communication channels** and engagement is a priority moving forward. Our newsletters and refreshed networks support this growth, and actions such as better targeting specific groups with relevant opportunities and information (ECI2, ER4, PCDR1) will pay dividends in terms of greater **trust in R&KE communications**. This has been evidenced by an aspirational 50% increase in engagement with our newsletter over the next two years. Improved engagement will be supported by our growing E/M-CR and Reader/Prof **networks** (ECI6, EI6, PCDI5) who the RKEO will continue to work with over the next two years to better bring together colleagues from across the university, more regularly hearing and **acting upon the voices of research engaged colleagues**. These networks will support our drive towards holding more **consultation workshops with researchers** (ECM5, EI7) across the university, providing more platforms for researchers' voices to be heard and to feed into high level conversations. Our **new Researcher Development Awards** (ECI1, PCDM2) are a prominent part of our forward planning, which will continue to support a cohort of E/M-CRs each year with mentoring, **funding and strategic CPD planning**. The success of this new initiative will eventually be marked by an increase in external funding success from cohort members. These awards feed into a collaboration with the OD team to better **support mentoring** (PCDR2), which will be evidenced by an increased number of mentoring relationships and feed into a focus on **school-level CPD support** (ECI2, EI4, PCDR3, PCDM4). A renewed focus on local researcher development support will demonstrate success through a growth in attendance at locally offered workshops.