

Annual Report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

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Universities and Research Institutes

Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers (*max 500 words*)

The University is committed to fostering a positive, inclusive, and ambitious research culture through its [Research and Innovation Strategy 2030](#), which places people, ideas, and collaboration at the heart of research excellence. The Strategy

supports researchers at every career stage, aims to create an environment in which diverse talent can thrive, and strengthens the conditions for interdisciplinary research and innovation. In doing so, it aligns with the University's wider Strategy 2030, recognising that excellent research depends not only on academic achievement, but also on a culture that values wellbeing, inclusion, partnership, and opportunity. As part of this commitment, in 2025, the University launched the Innovation Career Pathway, which provides structure and support for researchers undertaking innovative and entrepreneurial activities.

Governance of research cultures at the University is led by the Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation, alongside the three College Deans of Research Cultures and the Head of Research Cultures (HoRC). The Research Strategy Group (RSG) serves as the principal governance group, providing strategic oversight and direction for research culture activity across the University. A dedicated delivery group oversees progress against the action plan, ensuring that priorities are implemented and monitored effectively. Supporting this structure, the Research Cultures Forum (RCF) helps to inform, connect, and embed University-wide approaches that strengthen research culture across the institution.

Research Cultures Action Plan:

The Research Cultures Action Plan 2026-2028 was approved by the Research Strategy Group in November 2025. The HoRC led its development, consulting widely with academic and professional services staff. The plan includes challenging, yet attainable objectives suited to the current environment. It succeeds the 2023-25 action plan, which, by the end of 2025, achieved significant progress with 80% of actions completed and incorporated into routine operations. 15% of actions remain ongoing, facilitating their inclusion in the new plan.

Research Cultures Forum:

Established in 2023, the Research Cultures Forum (RCF) supports the sharing of practice and helps build a more connected and supportive research environment. It is led by co-chairs appointed through an application process. Since January 2026, meetings have been open to the entire University community. Held three to four times a year, they provide opportunities to share learning, highlight effective approaches, and invite feedback on activities across the institution.

InFrame:

InFrame is a Wellcome-funded collaboration between the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St Andrews, supported by £3 million over two years (2024–26). The project aims to develop a new framework for inclusive research leadership across the three institutions. Through the catalyst fund, the project has supported a range of different initiatives and smaller projects. The outcomes from these will be embedded, where possible, into ongoing work.

Alongside this, *Seek, Find, Celebrate* recognises and thanks those who contribute positively to research culture. It provides an informal platform to highlight effective research leadership and celebrate contributions from supervisors, students, technicians, research staff, principal investigators, and management teams.

College-Level Research Culture Plans and Resources:

At College level, objectives and action plans have been developed and are tailored to each College's structure, environment, and disciplinary context, while also contributing to cross-College initiatives such as the Leadership Academy Programme for mid-career academics. Each College has developed a Research Cultures action plan, led by College Research Culture teams and linked through the University Research Cultures website, alongside a catalogue of ongoing activity to support transparency and the sharing of effective practice. Together, this College-led approach helps embed a positive, inclusive, and supportive research environment across the University, ensuring researchers have the conditions to develop and thrive. Each College has a structure to support implementation of initiatives to support researchers. One example of this is the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM) Research Staff Committee, which has a full breadth of representation from researcher and researcher support roles working on initiatives to support researchers, including but not limited to postdoc appreciation week, CMVM postdoc symposium, research staff champions, welcome letters to new early career researcher. These are all tracked via an action plan of initiatives.

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success (max 600 words)

The strategic objectives for delivery of the three pillars of the Concordat are set out in our current Action Plan (2025-2028) and implementation is overseen by the Researcher Development team (since February 2026 based in the Edinburgh Research Office), supported by the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG).

Environment and culture

The University's strategic objectives for the environment and culture pillar of the Concordat are reflected in the new Research Cultures Action Plan (2026–2028). The plan is grounded in six core values: Citizenship, Wellbeing, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Ethics and Integrity, and Learning and Reflecting. Together, these values support the development of an inclusive, positive research environment.

To monitor progress, a research cultures survey dashboard was developed in 2025 sharing the data from the 2020, 2022 and 2024 Research Cultures surveys. This, in addition to our regular staff survey and PRES survey results, provide an evidence base for tracking change, trends, and identifying priorities. We are refreshing the question set in our research cultures survey in 2026 to ensure they are more inclusive to non-biomedical research areas, and monitor work and investments we've made since the survey commenced in 2020. Our Research Cultures Survey Steering Group including survey methodological expertise, will agree a revised question set for the 2026 deployment.

In September 2025, the University launched Report + Support, a platform that enables staff to report concerns about bullying, harassment and discrimination.

The University also continues to host annual events that support staff engagement and development, including the Research Support Services Conference and Impact Festival (since 2024), and the UoE Open Research Conference (since 2022). These events provide opportunities to share practice, build networks, and promote a culture of open and impactful research.

Employment

The University remains committed to reviewing academic promotions, supported by a steering group and a series of workstreams. This work is intended to improve consistency and fairness across the University, while ensuring that promotions criteria and guidance properly recognise the full range of academic contributions.

At present the review has been paused whilst the University reshapes. In the meantime, improvements continue to be made to the promotions and regrading schemes, including simplifying processes and introducing automation where possible.

A new reporting system has been introduced to identify staff who have been employed on a series of fixed-term contracts for four or more years. This enables employing departments to take appropriate action to move eligible employees to an open-ended contract, or an open-ended contract with a review date.

Improvements have also been made to the Redeployment Register, making it easier for recruiters to identify and contact suitable candidates.

A new Neuroinclusion Hub was launched in 2025. This evolving resource offers employees and students information and support to build a better understanding of how to create inclusive environments in which everyone can fully engage, contribute and feel genuinely valued.

In line with UoE values of being "diverse inclusive and accessible to all" key guidance on diversity in recruitment , reasonable adjustments and inclusive

design supports equitable access and enables everyone to participate in everyday activities with confidence and independence.

Professional Development of Researchers

The Research Staff Hub (RSH) remains a key resource, regularly updated with news, opportunities, and support available across the University, ensuring that researchers can easily access relevant and current information.

The central Researcher Development team delivers a comprehensive professional development programme for researchers and PIs, designed to support career development, progression and success at all stages. As part of this broader commitment, mentoring, coaching and careers support are central elements of the offer. This includes personalised coaching, coordination of a University-wide postdoc group mentoring programme, support for Schools to run local mentoring initiatives, an annual Careers Month each June, and a programme of 1:1 career consultations and support.

As part of the University reshaping, the Researcher Development team moved into the Edinburgh Research Office in February 2026. This transition has not changed the support available, and the existing offer continues in full. Dedicated webpages will be relaunched for the next academic year.

This provision is continually monitored, evaluated and reviewed annually, with changes made in response to participant feedback and comprehensive evaluation.

Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/PIs); Researchers]

Environment and Culture (*max 600 words*)

Institution

An annual review of researcher demographics was completed and updated on the RSH in March 2026, in consultation with HR.

Action 1.1: The Researcher Development Manager compiled a report, shared with the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) and added to the Concordat SharePoint, showing how the Concordat aligns with Research Cultures initiatives. This strategic alignment is crucial to advancing initiatives that positively impact research staff.

The Researcher Development team has also worked to raise the visibility of the Concordat action plan. In June 2025, the Researcher Development Manager introduced the new Concordat Action Plan at an open Research Cultures Forum

(RCF) attended by 50 participants, and at a CMVM College event during Postdoc Appreciation Week.

Microsoft Teams spaces for research staff societies, postdoc and research staff champions, the CIG and the RCF continue to support engagement with Concordat initiatives. Managed by the Researcher Development team, these spaces enable communication, peer connection, and the sharing of updates and opportunities.

Action 1.2: University-wide projects relevant to researchers are promoted through the [Research Staff Hub](#) and the [IAD4Researchers blog](#). These platforms update researchers on initiatives from [funding](#), [equality](#), [diversity & inclusion](#), [innovation](#), and [sustainability services](#).

Action 1.4: Standard materials and text have been developed for the CIG, to help representatives share Concordat information consistently at events.

The launch of the Researcher Development Concordat Hub on SharePoint in April 2025 provides a dynamic space with reports and a live action- plan tracker, helping researchers and staff stay informed about progress.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Action 1.3: The central Researcher Development team provides [training and support for University of Edinburgh staff who act as Principal Investigators \(PIs\)](#) and research leaders. The programme focuses on key areas including self-management, careers, leading people and teams, leading research collaborations, and building positive research environments. The programme framework and offer were developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and scoping work in AY23/24.

An evaluation of the AY24/25 programme was completed in July 2025 and shared with Deans of Research Culture, Research College Managers, and on the Concordat SharePoint. The report summarised evaluation findings and participant feedback. In total, 353 participants engaged with different elements of the programme, with strongly positive feedback. Participants valued the opportunity to reflect on research leadership more holistically and reported that

coaching helped them develop confidence and an authentic leadership style as new PIs.

The College of Science and Engineering (CSE) has developed PDRA Champion guidance outlining the role, expectations and responsibilities for all champions in the College with links to essential resources and contacts. Additionally, PDRA Champion posters with information and contact details have been created and displayed throughout the College to help postdocs feel more connected and supported.

Since early 2025, the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) has established a network of early career researcher representatives and champions who meet regularly to share insights, develop joint initiatives, and advocate for ECRs at School and College level. In June 2026, the network will host a half-day event for all College ECRs on collaborative thinking across disciplines.

Researchers

Action 1.5: To support and promote Postdoc Appreciation Week, a central webpage on the RSH highlights activities and awards at School/College levels, and a blog post promoted the week and the role of research staff societies. Colleges are discussing collaboration on 2026 activities, to encourage wider participation and strengthen community.

In 2025, the Researcher Development team held two networking events for research staff societies and postdoc champions. These joint events promote interaction and practice sharing across societies, Schools/Colleges and researchers.

In June 2025, the membership of the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) was reviewed and expanded through a targeted call to champions and societies, allowing for diverse representation and fresh perspectives.

The University participated in Scotland's Research Integrity & Culture Week in March 2026, with departments across the University offering short training sessions. The Researcher Development Manager and Head of Researcher Development gave presentations at the Edinburgh Showcase event and online on embedding Concordat principles

	<p>through specific actions (mentoring circles and postdoc induction support).</p> <p>The three Colleges co-organised a Connect2Collaborate event (Feb 2026) for developing interdisciplinary collaborations, with one new collaboration already having led to a small grant application. CSE has since developed a 'how to guide' for colleagues to run similar events, and one will be run in June 2026 by ECR champions.</p>
<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>Action 2.1: The <u>Annual Reviews webpage on the Research Staff Hub</u> has been updated with specific information from Colleges around annual review expectations and support available. This information is also on the local College webpages. These updates were developed in collaboration with HR departments to ensure tailored guidance. A blog, published in July, promoted these resources, encouraging research staff to prepare for the <u>annual reviews</u>. The central UoE Conversations Hub also has these documents and information.</p> <p>The Head of Research Cultures and a UoE researcher representative are participating in the "UK Researchers Visa Network." This group, led by King's and Bristol, addresses the challenges of high visa fees for international research staff, representing UoE's commitment to supporting its diverse workforce.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>Action 2.2: The College of Science and Engineering has developed PI induction guidance that sets out key information and responsibilities in the induction of new research staff for line managers, principally the PI. The guidance is structured into pre-arrival, on arrival, first week, first month and ongoing information with links to useful information from around the University.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Action 2.2: The Researcher Development team launched a <u>new online induction/onboarding course designed specifically for all new postdoctoral researchers at the University of Edinburgh</u>. "Getting Started as a Postdoctoral Researcher at Edinburgh" provides a comprehensive</p>

	<p>introduction to the University's expectations, responsibilities, and opportunities available to postdoctoral researchers. It is divided into three modules, aligned with the three principles of the Concordat. The course uses case studies and reflective activities. It is designed to complement local-level induction meetings and activities, not replace them. The team also presented this new course at a Good Research Practice Week session, sharing the process and impact with colleagues across Scotland. Since its launch in January 2026, 60 researchers have enrolled on the course.</p> <p>Action 2.5: The University has introduced the '<u>Report + Support</u>' platform. This initiative aims to provide staff with a straightforward means to report concerns about bullying, harassment, or discrimination, thereby fostering a safe and respectful environment.</p>
<p>Professional development (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>Action 3.1: The Mentoring Circles group mentoring pilot in AY24/25 had 52 registrations, with 34 participants matched into 8 groups. Evaluation showed that 76% of mentees felt the programme met their goals. Participants particularly valued the group format, cross-disciplinary connections, and strategic career insight, while mentors reported development in mentoring skills and reflective practice. A report was compiled and added to the Concordat Hub and a <u>blog post</u> was used to encourage mentors to sign up to the programme.</p> <p>Through 2025-26, the Researcher Development team has supported a number of local mentoring schemes across the University. This has included providing advice on setting up local schemes, drawing on the mentoring circles programme as a model, sharing resources such as the guide for developing local mentoring provision, and offering internal consultation to Schools, Institutes and other groups looking to establish mentoring initiatives. The Head of Researcher Development has also delivered sessions to train both mentors and mentees, equipping participants with the skills needed to engage effectively in mentoring.</p> <p>The annual <u>Researcher Realities</u> event, held in March 2026, provided a platform to discuss researchers' lived experiences and the complexities of research and career navigation. It</p>

featured panels on *Unsuccessful funding applications: What next?*, *Rescue Supervision*, and *Navigating implicit knowledge*. Across the three panels, 65 people attended and feedback was positive.

As a consortium member of the BA ECRN network, the University attended the Scotland Celebration Event in Dundee in November 2025. The event provided updates on support programmes and development funds and included panel discussions that enhanced networking opportunities and access to resources for early career researchers.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Action 1.3: The University of Edinburgh is a co-lead and founding partner of the Scottish Research Leaders Network (through the Senior Researcher Developer in the central Researcher Development team). The network launched in January 2026. This collaborative initiative aims to make research leadership training accessible across Scottish Higher Education Institutions and to build a community of research leaders. This work strengthens Scotland's research culture, as evidenced by positive engagement and participation metrics. In the first two months, 16 Scottish HEIs and 195 individuals engaged in the programme.

In 2025, the University launched the Leadership Academy Programme, led by the CSE in partnership with CAHSS, CMVM and the Institute for Academic Development, to support the development of mid-career academic research leaders. The first cohort comprised 30 participants and has maintained strong attendance and high approval scores for session content. The programme focuses on strengthening leadership capability in areas including major funding applications, interdisciplinary collaboration and inclusive leadership.

Our Chancellor's Fellows benefit from 1:1 coaching to navigate their fellowship roles. In AY24/25, 13 fellows engaged in coaching, 11 in AY25/26, and 6 had a follow-up session. Feedback highlights the value of discussing challenges with an external perspective, aiding in deeper understanding and strategy development.

Action 1.3: The Researcher Development team ran the Research Leader Programme for new and aspiring Principal Investigators. In AY 2025/26, the programme ran twice, offering a two-day on campus course or a series of four half-day online sessions. The programme demonstrates strong interest from all three Colleges. Overall, 64 researchers engaged with the programme this academic year. These efforts reflect significant progress in supporting managers of researchers by increasing capacity on programmes and enhancing their leadership skills and fostering a supportive network.

Researchers

Action 3.3: In June 2025, Careers Month featured weekly briefings, quick career queries, and career-focused and guest blog posts, effectively supporting research staff. A briefing session by the Prosper team introduced University of Edinburgh staff to the platform and support. New initiatives introduced over AY25/26 included a Career Pivots workshop and panel events on life sciences and academic-adjacent careers, attracting 32 and 25 attendees, respectively. Quick queries and participation in College symposium events in CMVM and CSE enhanced outreach.

‘Leadership Development Conversations’ are now available, led by the Senior Researcher Developer, to guide professional development planning and highlight available support. Researchers are offered personalized advice to develop their leadership and professional practice. These sessions are complementary to other 1:1 support, such as Research Profile consultations offered by the Research Strategy team in the Research Office. A blog post outlines the differences between the available 1:1 support options, to help researchers access the support most relevant to their needs.

Action 3.3: The Researcher Development team launched new Narrative CV webpages. They offer resources and guidance for writing Narrative CVs and support for delivering narrative CV briefing sessions and writing retreats locally, with train-the-trainer support available for School/Colleges and Societies. The team also run NCV briefing sessions and writing retreats. The new pages

	<p>consolidate sector-wide information, aiding researchers in effectively presenting their achievements.</p> <p>Action 3.5: The Role of Profiles project, conducted by the University's UX Service, ran from January to July 2025 and evaluated staff needs for online profiles. This initiative produced 10 strategic recommendations to enhance staff profile presentation, aiming for a more attractive and user-centered experience that reflects the diverse staff community. Blog posts were written to reflect the progress of the project.</p>
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Comment on any lessons learned from the activities undertaken over this period and any modifications you propose to make to your action plan and measures of success as a result. (max 500 words)

To date, our work has highlighted the importance of maintaining strategic alignment between Concordat implementation and wider institutional activity relating to research cultures, researcher development and staff support. This has become even more important over the current reporting period, which has seen significant institutional change, including a major University reshaping, the closure of the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), and the move of the Researcher Development team into the Edinburgh Research Office (ERO) in February 2026. Alongside this, the wider sector context of financial challenges has reinforced the need to work efficiently, collaboratively and with clear priorities.

While these changes have created some challenges around structures, communications and visibility, they have also highlighted the value of strong cross-University relationships and of embedding Concordat work within broader institutional priorities. No changes have been made to the support offer, and continuity of provision has been an important priority throughout.

A further lesson has been that implementation in a large, devolved institution takes sustained engagement over time. Progress continues to be made through local activity, including mentoring schemes, School and College level initiatives, local forums and events, and stronger links between central and local support. This demonstrates that the Concordat is increasingly being embedded within local structures and processes, but also confirms that ongoing partnership with Schools, Colleges and local research communities remains essential to ensure impact across the institution.

The Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) continues to be a key mechanism for this work. Regular review of membership and representation has remained important in ensuring the Group includes colleagues with the appropriate

roles, experience and local reach, while also maintaining researcher voice across different career stages. We have learned that this collegial structure is particularly valuable during periods of institutional change, helping to maintain momentum, share practice and support communication across the University.

We have learned that communication requires a more strategic and evidence-informed approach. Support is available across the University, but it is not always visible or easy to navigate. In response, we have placed greater emphasis on understanding which communication methods are most effective, strengthening coordination across services, and improving the clarity and accessibility of information for researchers, PIs and managers. The relaunch and development of researcher development focused webpages and communication channels for academic year 26/27 will support this.

We have also focused on strengthening our external collaborations with other institutions, using our membership of relevant committees and networks to share practice and identify opportunities for impactful collaborative initiatives. This has helped us benchmark our work, learn from sector developments, and contribute to wider activity that supports researchers across the sector.

Taken together, these lessons have reinforced the importance of alignment, collaboration, visibility and evaluation in ensuring that Concordat activity remains effective, responsive and sustainable.

**Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period
(max 500 words)**

- In the upcoming reporting period, we will continue to actively align the Concordat with the broader University Research Cultures action plans.
- Continued collaboration with the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) will be integral, particularly on actions that require deeper School or College-level involvement, such as Career Destinations. We will ensure regular updates via meetings and our Teams space to keep the committee informed about Concordat developments and progress. Moreover, we'll support the CIG in highlighting the Concordat's initiatives and impact in various meetings, promoting broader awareness.
- A key objective is to continue improving communication about the support available to researchers by taking a more strategic approach across services. This includes developing a better understanding of what communication methods are most effective and enhancing messaging and channels accordingly, in order to showcase the comprehensive support available across the University.

- Enhancing the Research Staff Hub webpages is another priority. These pages will be expanded to provide more information for Principal Investigators and Managers of Researchers. Simultaneously, we will develop the Researcher Development Concordat Hub, adding detailed information on initiatives and outputs, and continually updating it with reports linked to Concordat actions.
- A sustained focus on the Concordat's implementation across the University is crucial. We will support Schools and Colleges with initiatives related to careers and mentoring, and contribute to events centred on these topics. Building on existing initiatives, such as Careers Month, Postdoc Appreciation Week, society events, and networking opportunities, we aim to create a supportive and engaging environment for all researchers.
- We will continue to evaluate specific initiatives to better understand levels of engagement, relevance and impact. This will help ensure that professional development provision remains responsive to researchers' needs and supports ongoing enhancement and continuous improvement.

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (*max 200 words*)

Similar to our last reporting periods, the report goes to our Research Strategy Group and Vice-Principal for Research and Innovation for review and approval, before being published on our Research Staff Hub. The Concordat's senior manager champion (Head of Researcher Development) and the lead on the Concordat work (Researcher Development Manager) are based within the Researcher Development team, who work closely on the action plan with the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG). The CIG includes a broad representation from across the University, with colleagues who support the writing of our action plan and implementation throughout the action plan period.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries:

This annual report will be analysed by the secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat via the email address listed on the RDC website: www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk.