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

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| Name of Institution | University of Worcester |
| Reporting period | 7th February 2023 – 6th February 2025 |
| Date approved by governing body | 13th February 2025 |
| Date published online | 17th March 2025 |
| Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage | https://www.worcester.ac.uk/research/hr-excellence-in-research.aspx |
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| Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk | 21st March 2025 |

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

We believe that Higher Education should have a transformative impact on individuals and on society as a whole and our approach to RKE, articulated in the University of Worcester's RKE Strategy 2020-2025 sets out a vision to deliver research which addresses fundamental problems and issues facing the world today in five identified Areas of Challenge:

- Human Health & Wellbeing;

- Sustainable Futures;
- Digital Innovation;
- Culture, Identity & Social Exclusion;
- Professional Education.

Delivery of our strategy is built on five key components: People, Infrastructure, Culture, Collaboration and Engagement. The following core objectives from three components, People, Infrastructure and Culture drive our approach to developing a positive and inclusive environment:

- We will seek to recruit and retain excellent researchers at all career stages but with a particular focus on attracting the next generation of researchers and research leaders to the University.
- We will develop and mentor researchers across their research careers (from PGR to Professor).
- We will extend our professional support structures at the University to further enhance the quality of our RKE and enrich the research culture.
- We will develop and support Research Groups and Networks within and across academic Schools, recognising these as the principal context in which research is discussed, produced and valued.

## Commitment to the Concordat

The University of Worcester made its formal commitment to the Concordat on 7th February 2023 and committed itself to developing an action plan identifying the steps to meet the Concordat's obligations. This action plan discussed below was developed as the submission for our 6-year review of the HR Excellence in Research Award during 2023/4. We submitted the plan and underwent external review in 2023 receiving confirmation that we had retained the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award in February 2024. Our feedback highlighted the progress made and identified an 'overall culture shift' in support for the development of researchers at the University.

As we near the end the period for the RKE Strategic Plan the people, infrastructure and culture components continue to shape our approach to delivering oour obligations of the Concordat. Given the staffing base of our university, and our tradition in learning and teaching although the Concordat Action Plan is focused on the core beneficiaries of staff on research contracts we continue to aspire for the Concordat work to provide development to a much wider group of staff, and

specifically those employed on teaching and research staff from ECR to Professor level.

## Concordat Implementation Group

Central to the development of the Concordat Action Plan is the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG).  The group meets at least four time in the academic year and met more regularly when developing the action plan.  It is chaired by a member of the professorial staff who is also the Staff Researcher Development Lead and reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee which in turn updates the University's Academic Board on progress against the action plan.

The group consists of representatives from groups who are key beneficiaries of the Concordat and those charged with responsibility for its development. To ensure that the group hears the voice of all stakeholders and serves their needs the following groups are represented on the CIG :

- Research Staff
- Managers of Researchers
- Postgraduate Research Students
- Research Leaders
- Researcher Development team
- Human Resources
- Academic staff with significant responsibility for research

Our Concordat Action Plan, 2023-2026 reflects our approach to delivering out strategic priorities and objectives. Our priorities are to:

a. Give voice to the researcher community as key stakeholders in the development of policy and practice.
b. Using a 'researcher employee life cycle' approach review, develop and enact institutional policy that addresses the specific needs of researchers and creates an inclusive and supportive environment.
c. Recognise the centrality of managers in creating a supportive and inclusive environment for researchers and create approaches to management development that enable managers to deliver the principles of the Concordat.
d. Develop an approach to professional development that enables all researchers to thrive in an inclusive environment.

## 1.  Environment and culture

### 1a. Awareness , Engagement and Policy Development

We have applied an 'researcher employee life cycle' approach reviewing current institutional policies designed for all staff to ensure they meet the specific needs of researchers.   We have committed to raising the profile of the Concordat in engagement with researchers throughout their careers.

Our priority is to engage with and work with the researcher community as key stakeholders.  We have establhed a Staff Researcher Peer Network, and we see this as key forum for engagement with researchers and the development and evaluation of policy and the Concordat work.

### 1b. Wellbeing and Mental Health

We have prioritized the upskilling and development of the managers of researchers to enable them to support researchers well being.  We have created a Guide for Managers of Researchers which brings together resources to enable managers to support researchers effectively including resources to support wellbeing.

In the context of our 'researcher employee life cycle' approach and reviewing existing policies to ensure they support the specific needs of researchers we have committed to reviewing University appraisal training to ensure approaches to appraisal capture the needs of researchers and further developing our well-being programme, including mental health first aid and suicide prevention.

### 1c. Bullying, harassment, equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to creating an environment that is free from bullying and harassment for all staff, including researchers and require all researchers to undertake mandatory training in awareness of bullying and harassment through equality, diversity and inclusion training. We have developed multiple sources of support for staff and managers.  We prioritise dispute resolution and we have prioritised training staff to act as Resolution Support Officers (RSO).  We are committed to ensuring that at least one RSO is drawn from the researcher community.

### 1.d Research Integrity

We are committed to developing researchers and their managers through developing enhanced training in research integrity and ethics.

2. Employment

2a. Recruitment, Induction, Reward and Recognition, Responsibilities and Reporting

Our priority is to ensure that our policy and practice enables the university to attract, retain and reward excellent researchers to support our priorities and aspirations in RKE.   Specifically we aim to develop induction at institutional and school level meets the needs of new members of the research community and review existing Reward and Recognition Schemes to ensure that they are inclusive and relevant to researcher careers.

2b. People Management

We aim to enhance people management across the institution.  Our priority is to implement a new HR System with enhanced data capture and to utilise the results of an all Staff Survey to inform the next steps to develop people management.

3. Professional Development of Researchers

Our priority is to review and evaluate our approach to professional development and develop a tailored approach to professional development that matches the career stages followed by researchers.  To fulfil this priority, we are concentrating on working with researchers to better understand their needs and reviewing existing approaches including research mentoring.

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:

| Environment and Culture | We formally committed to the Concordat in February 2023, Through our HREIR award we already had in place a Concordat Action Plan 2023-26 against which we are working. |
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| | In this period we have undertaken the following actions. |
| | Institution |
| | <ul><li>Ran an internal survey (UWIS) for research staff based on the national CEDARS Survey.</li><li>In UWIS 75% of researchers demonstrated awareness of the Concordat and associated Action Plan.</li></ul> |

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| | • Worked with the Staff Researcher Peer Network to initiate a series of opportunities to discuss issues core to the Concordat and regularly report the 'researcher voice' to University Research and KE Committee.<br>• Reviewed bullying, harassment and disciplinary and grievance procedures to ensure they met the needs of researchers.<br>• In UWIS 75% of researchers were aware of relevant policies.<br>• In 2023 there was no case work associated with bullying, harassment and disciplinary issues involving researchers.<br><br>Academic Managers of Researchers<br><br>• Included in 'Guide for Managers of Researchers' sections on well-being and research integrity.<br>• Gathered feedback from managers on the utility of the 'Guide for Managers of Researchers' to inform review and development.<br>• Reviewed the approach to gathering feedback from managers of researchers and established an annual cycle of feedback gathering from managers.<br>• Promoted and delivered well being training to managers of researchers.<br>• Reviewed and promoted the Researcher Well-being Guide to managers of researchers.<br>• Provided training to Heads of School on RKE Strategy and Priorities.<br><br>Researchers<br><br>• Supported the ongoing development of a Staff Researcher Peer Network and worked with its leaders to establish a vibrant programme.<br>• Promoted well-being training and support to researchers with 30% of researchers attending at least one form of training.<br>• In UWIS 100% researchers reported that they had not experienced discrimination, bullying or harassment. |

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| | • In UWIS 100% of researchers reported that they take positive action to protect their own mental health and well-being. |
| | • Require all researchers to attend training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). |
| | • More than 90% of staff have attended EDI training. |
| | • IN UWIS 100% of researchers agreed that the University of Worcester was committed to EDI. |
| | • Appoint and train a Researcher as a Resolution Support Officer. |
| | • Promote a suite of online Research Integrity Training Packages. |
| | • Research Integrity training is embedded in mandatory modules for PGR student in 2023/4. |
| | • In UWIS 100% of researchers agreed that the University promotes the highest standards of research integrity and conduct. |
| | • Appointed Researchers to University RKE Committee. |
| | • Attendance by researchers at University RKE Committee is more than 75%. |
| Employment | Institution |
| | • Conducted an All-staff employee engagement survey to inform our future policy and practice in people management. |
| | • Implemented a new HR Information System with enhanced capacity for data capture and reporting. |
| | • Monitored the impact of the refocused university induction. |
| | • In UWIS 100% researchers cited university induction as useful with 65% indicating department level induction was useful. |
| | • Reviewed University Staff Development Theme Leading and Managing to ensure it meets the need of researchers. |
| | • In response to feedback indicating that 75% of researchers felt that there was a lack of support for career development and they did not understand the promotion and reward scheme we developed a career |

| | | development stream in the Staff Researcher Development Programme and delivered sessions on applying for the promotion and reward scheme.<br>• In UWIS 40% of researchers reported that there was support for career development.<br>• Developed and delivered a career development session to the Staff Researcher Peer Network.<br><br>Academic Managers of Researchers<br><br>• Held focus groups with managers of researchers to understand their needs in supporting researchers and subsequently developed a  'Guide for Managers of Researchers'.<br>• Reviewed Staff Appraisal Training to ensure it meets the needs of researchers.<br>• Promoted Recruitment and Selection Training to all managers of researchers with 100% take up.<br><br>Researchers<br><br>• Monitored engagement and usefulness of appraisal for researchers.<br>• In UWIS 75% of researchers cited the career development aspect of appraisal as useful. |
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| | Professional development | Institution<br><br>• Launched Researcher Development Career Stage Project and engaged with ECRs, Mid-Career, New Research Leaders, Senior Research Leaders to understand and inform the development needs and the redesign of researcher development programmes.<br>• Evaluated the staff researcher workshop programme<br>• In UWIS 100% of researchers reported they were supported to develop their researcher identity and 40% their leadership skills.<br><br>Academic Managers of Researchers |

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| | • Encouraged managers of researcher to engage with development to enhance their capacity to managers of researchers.<br>• More than 70 managers of researchers/potentially managers of researchers have engaged with at least one element of the Leadership and Management Programme.<br><br>Researchers<br><br>• Provided the opportunity for a research mentor to all researchers.<br>• Developed an enhanced career development stream to the staff researcher development programme<br>• Continued to champion and embed the research compact to all researchers as a tool to review and articulate personal and professional development plans.<br>• Continued to provide the opportunity for research mentoring to all researchers.<br>• We encouraged researchers to develop career development plans in line with university processes.<br>• In UWIS 40% of researchers had developed a career development plan, an increase from the previous survey. |

**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.**

We expect our 4 priorities identified above to continue to drive forward our actions over the next reporting period.

We have conducted the initial stages of the Researcher Development Career Stage Project.  This engagement with the researcher community in conjunction with input from other forums, eg the peer led Staff Researcher Network has given greater us insight into the challenges of being a researcher at each career stage and an evidence  base to inform the next stages of professional development for researchers and their managers.

We are conscious that we are at the end of the current period of our RKE Strategic Plan and extensive work is being carried out developing a new strategic plan for RKE for the next 5 years.  Therefore, we would expect over the next reporting period for our work in the context of the Concordat to both inform our future direction and be informed by it.

**Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period**

We have made progress against giving voice to our researcher community, generic career development and reviewing University of Worcester HR Policy and Process to ensure alignment with researchers' needs. Going forward we aim to maintain and monitor this approach to ensure that researchers are seen as a visible and valued group of staff within the University.

In terms of career and professional development our objective now is towards a more nuanced way of working to enhance development and support recruitment and retention. We see articulating and offering a clear and scaffolded approach for individuals to develop their careers including research leaderships skills, regardless of their point of entry to the university and access development that is bespoke to their career stage as central to achieving this aim.

To achieve these objectives our key actions going forward are to implement the findings of the Researcher Development Career Stage Project (RDCSP) to identify, develop and deliver a series of training and development pathways to enable researchers at each career stage develop and progress

Review the format, scope and reach of the University research mentoring scheme to ensure it meets the needs of researchers at each career stage

Support managers of researchers through training development to use the RDCSP outcomes when reviewing career development with researchers.

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

As discussed above, the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring our Concordat Action Plan and ensure that we meet out commitments to the Concordat.

The CIG reports to the University RKE Committee, chaired by the Professor John-Paul Wilson, Pro-vice Chancellor Research. The report is presented to RKE Committee and referred to our Academic Board for initial approval before being taken to the Board of Governors for final approval.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries: researcherdevelopment@worc.ac.uk

This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, 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 at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk