

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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	University of Hull
Reporting period	January 2024 – January 2025
Date approved by governing body	27 th February 2025
Date published online	28 th February 2025
Web address of annual report	www.hull.ac.uk/work-with-us/research/governance
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	www.hull.ac.uk/work-with-us/research/governance
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Professor Liz Walker e.walker@hull.ac.uk
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	28 th February 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 (*max 500 words*)

2025 will see the advance of a strategic approach to enhancement of the research culture and the environment for the career development of researchers at the University of Hull. This follows a period of strategic development and a recalibration of research support at the university. 2024 saw the launch of a new Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy (2025-2030) (RKE Strategy) at the University, at the centre of which lies the ambition to improve the research environment, providing opportunities for the development of all researchers. The RKE Strategy has three priority areas:

- Strengthening our research and innovation environment
- Supporting and developing interdisciplinary excellence
- Developing regional, national and international influence

2024 also saw the launch of a five-year Research Culture Action Plan (RCAP) which maps out a more granular framework for delivering a shift in institutional research culture. The RCAP identifies four strategic objectives:

- To strengthen support for researcher and career development
- To facilitate time for research
- To enable collaboration and new ways of working
- To enhance and recognise inclusive and responsible research practices

These objectives are underpinned by four principles by which our research culture will be defined: collegiality, transparency, equity and engagement.

Implementation of this strategy and action plan is being enabled through a centralisation of research support, coordinated through 2023 and 2024 alongside enhanced cross-institutional collaboration. Operational coordination of the Research Culture Action Plan and reporting on the Concordat sits with the Research Culture and Researcher Development team, located within the Research, Knowledge Exchange and Commercialisation (RKEC) directorate. Strategic leadership in the domain of research culture is provided by the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Culture) Professor Liz Walker. Professor Walker also chairs the Concordat Steering Group which provides oversight of the full range of research-related concordats and agreements to which the university is a signatory. The Concordat Steering Group feeds into a newly integrated University Research

and Knowledge Exchange Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) Professor Fiona Matthews.

Our research community upholds principles of openness, integrity, ethics and inclusivity. Professor Iain Brennan is our institutional Open Research Lead and drives the delivery of an institutional Open Research Action Plan. Each of our four faculties has an ethics committee, and we are increasingly integrating processes between these, as part of a wider rationalisation of research support. Research integrity is supported alongside wider research governance priorities by the Research Excellence and Governance team, within the RKEC directorate. A central EDI in Research & Enterprise subcommittee coordinates institutional work to enhance the inclusivity, diversity and equity of our research culture.

Our work to enhancing our research culture and our approach to supporting the development of researcher aligns with our wider institutional values. We are an active participant in the Advance HE's Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charters, and are also a Disability Confident employer, having a number of initiatives to support family-friendly employment practices designed to enable a good work-life balance. We are also Stonewall Diversity Champions and play an active role in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities supporting local and regional activities.

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*)

There is broad continuity in our strategic objectives and implementation plans as compared to our 2024 annual plan, with some significant adaptations and additions.

Environment and culture

1. Raise awareness of the Concordat

We continue to work to raise awareness of the concordat and our commitments as an institution to support the professional development of researchers within our academic community. As well as embedding reference to the concordat into our institutional HR process and development frameworks, we will create a suite of pre-recorded resources describing the Concordat, alongside other research concordats and agreements, with which to drive engagement and build awareness.

2. Long-term approach: R&KE Strategy and Research Culture Action Plan

The implementation of the Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy and the Research Culture Action Plan will coordinate work to enhance the career development of researchers at the university. We will maintain recent momentum and a strategic approach through regular strategy implementation meetings and mid-point progress reviews.

3. Reviewing, and involving researchers in shaping, the research environment

As we deliver strategic initiatives and adaptations, we will evaluate and review their effectiveness in dialogue with researchers. Networks of early career researchers and directors of research, as well as research engagement in policy development, will act as consultative fora to align our strategy and implemented actions with needs. We will evaluate interventions and initiatives, survey our research community as often as is appropriate, and adapt our work accordingly.

4. Mental health and wellbeing

Our People Strategy places a strong emphasis on health and wellbeing across the University, and this extends to the academic and research communities focused on in the Concordat. We have recently established a new health and wellbeing team, and an associated stream of work, to review and then enhance health and wellbeing provision across the University, including of researchers.

5. Equality, diversity and inclusion

An EDI Governance Board provides oversight in the enabling of equality, diversity and inclusion at the university, and the establishment of both faculty-based and a central 'EDI in Research & Enterprise' subcommittees, interfacing with the RCAP, will embed EDI values and best practice in our research community.

6. Research Integrity and Open Research

Research integrity, openness and transparency are foundational to our research culture and the experience of our research community. Guidance for both is enabled through focused training as well as faculty and central frameworks of support.

Employment

1. Revising our Academic Careers Framework

To enhance our support for the development of researchers the University recently completed a full review of the Academic Careers Framework (ACF). This addresses areas which include promotion, professional career progression, role allocation (research/education) and remuneration. The process and documentation of appraisal and development will be revised in accordance with the new ACF. Part of the reform of the ACF is a foregrounding of citizenship and leadership within academic staff appraisal, and with this, values of equity, inclusivity and diversity.

2. Adapting policies to support researchers

We will continue to review iteratively our policies, in concert with senior research managers and members of our research community, to enhance recruitment and selection, induction and appraisal. A Policy Review Network is due to be relaunched in 2025 and will include members of the research community

3. Career support and employment pathways

We will further review our redeployment policy and assess means to support researchers on fixed term contracts, as well as the career development guidance we provide researchers at all stages.

4. Strengthening leadership at all levels.

Leadership at all levels of the organisation is recognised as crucial for delivering a supportive and inclusive research environment. We are currently delivering the

second cohort of a Brilliant Leaders programme to develop leadership skills and competencies among the entire university community at junior level (bands 6-8). An evaluation and review of this programme is underway, which it is anticipated will inform the development and delivery of targeted cohort-based support for academic and research leaders.

Professional Development of Researchers

1. Enabling continuing professional development for researchers.

We developed a CPD guide and accompanying video for researchers. This has been circulated to all researchers and their line managers. It outlines the full scope of CPD and raises awareness of minimum requirement 10 days professional development pro rata per year. Recognising the low levels of awareness of the 10 days of CPD available for researchers, we will pursue a more targeted approach going forwards.

2. Integrating researcher training and development

Integration all researcher training and development opportunities will be progressed through the establishment of the Hull Academy for Research and Knowledge Exchange (ARKE). The ARKE will provide a single point of contact for researchers seeking support and development, streamlining initiatives across Research & Innovation, Knowledge Exchange, HR, Library skills teams, and faculty research offices. This will deliver more targeted support for researchers in Schools, thematic skills training suites, and cohort-based development programmes. Within the ARKE we will enhance evaluation processes to establish and deliver 'what works'.

3. Expanding and streamlining mentoring for researchers

We will underscore the importance of mentoring for our research community, and better join up existing mentoring provision, thus creating and enhanced and expanded service for researchers. This will consider the utilisation and mainstreaming of digital tools for supporting mentoring, such as the PushFar programme, and maximise the benefits of a more integrated approach to mentoring to improve training, support and peer-to-peer networking for mentors.

4. Individual research plans

<p>Career development of researchers is to be supported through the creation of individual research plans for all academic staff on research contracts, through dialogue between researchers and research leaders within their schools. These individual research plans will feed into School- and Faculty- research plans, while also creating a space for forward looking conversations about career growth and development needs adjacent to the formal appraisal process.</p>	
<p>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]</p>	
<p>Environment and Culture (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Between Jan 2024 and Jan 2025, we enhanced our research environment and culture by:</p> <p>at the level of the Institution</p> <p>Co-creating, launching and beginning implementation of a Hull Research Culture Action Plan. This built upon extensive consultation, to ensure that the contents of the action plan are reflecting of priorities within the research community.</p> <p>Foregrounding research environment and culture in the university’s new Research and Knowledge Exchange strategy, identifying “strengthening our research & innovation environment” as the first of three priority areas in the coming five years.</p> <p>Coordinating a Research Culture Week in June 2024 and a Research Celebration Week in October 2024 to coincide with the respective launches of the RCAP and RKE Strategy. These each staged a week of activity celebrating and exploring research and knowledge exchange at the University of Hull, with activities engaged with by 421 and 506 academics respectively. We also ran an annual series of ‘Research</p>

Forums' exploring topical issues in the wider research ecosystem: these were engaged with by circa 200 academics.

Enhancing internal research communications at the University, foregrounding research and knowledge exchange activity and achievement within central communication channels, and piloting individual research profiles being embedded within central communications. We also reviewed and communicated with staff the findings from our Research Culture Survey (conducted December 2023) and ran and communicated widely a report from a Staff Survey.

Driving work through the EDI in Research & Enterprise Subcommittee, including a review of distribution of internal funding opportunities and selection for external opportunities. This has led to the drafting of a set of principles, and adaptation of process to ensure equity and inclusivity.

Progression of the university's Open Research Action Plan led by the university's Open Research Lead. This has led to the appointment of a group of Open Research champions to advocate and advise on embedding open research practices at the local and disciplinary level. Institutionally we have delivered training and orientation in open research to research staff and research students, as well as innovated by integrating an open research statement into doctoral dissertations.

The University has engaged an external specialist to conduct a full review of Health & Wellbeing provision across the institution including an Occupational Stress Audit. This review was completed in Autumn 2024 resulting in the publication of the first organisational wide Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy. In addition, an update of the Health and Wellbeing SharePoint site is also complete, allowing all staff better access to health and wellbeing resources and information when they need them. An action plan which underpins the strategy and will impact on all staff including researchers, has been developed and will set the priority

actions for the Health and Wellbeing Team over the coming year.

at the level of **Academic Managers of Researchers**

We continue to drive high levels of EDI training across institution (94.45% in December 2024, compared with 83.25% in February 2023), thus better enabling research managers to support diverse teams.

Co-designed and launched an 'inclusive supervision toolkit' to support supervisors to effectively supervise and manage doctoral researchers – aspects of this resource could be adapted for use by PIs to support early career researchers.

Formalised a Directors of Research network to meet semesterly, to foster two-way dialogue between institutional administration and academic managers of researchers.

at the level of **Researchers**

Formalised an ECR network to meet semesterly, enabling ECRs to share experiences, best practice and voice their experiences and concerns. We coordinated the appointment of ECRs by their peers, and empowered these appointed ECRs to lead the network, including advocating for ECRs on academic committees.

Established a new central 'induction for research' introducing new starters to the university as a research organisation, familiarising them with core research support teams, and the longer-term research vision of the university. This will complement, where they exist, local induction processes.

Initiated co-creation and design of a career development network exclusively for postdoctoral researchers based on the virtual resources developed through Prosper. This development network will be piloted through the first half of 2025 and launched in full from September 2025.

	<p>Extended, evaluated and delivered a second cohort of THRIVE (The Hull ECR Integrated Development Programme) to support development and socialising of early career researchers, including postdoctoral research associates, alongside training.</p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Between Jan 2024 and Jan 2025, we, at the level of:</p> <p>Institution</p> <p>Technical reviews of HR policies including appraisal, induction and recruitment. Following appointment of a new Director of Organisational Development a full review of all performance management across the institution is planned over the course of 2025</p> <p>Extended work to deliver a comprehensive review of the Academic Careers Framework and associated academic promotions processes. This will recalibrate policies and processes around promotion, career development and remuneration, as well as role allocation. A review of the appraisal process will flow from this.</p> <p>Launched a bullying and harassment working group to co-develop a dedicated bullying and harassment action plan. This will respond to the indicators in staff surveys of low but persistent levels of reported bullying and harassment (4.6% of staff reporting being subject to bullying and harassment (2024 Staff Survey))</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>Enhanced engagement with mandatory ‘managing stress’ training and supported managers to understand apply ‘flexible working policy’ effectively.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>The development of an early career researcher support framework, including THRIVE, an ECR network, an ECR</p>

	<p>mentoring programme, and the development of a Prosper cohort at Hull, has strengthened career navigation within that group.</p>
<p>Professional development (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Between Jan 2024 and Jan 2025 we, at the level of:</p> <p>Institution</p> <p>Designed, initiated development of, and soft-launched the Hull Academy for Research and Knowledge Exchange (ARKE). The ARKE will be a single point of contact for all researcher training and development needs and will be a platform for new initiatives designed to enhance the career development of researchers. The ARKE is co-designed through consultation with the research community, as are specific initiatives within it.</p> <p>Work to embed self-evaluation of CPD into HR digital systems is under way as part of a wider multi-million-pound digital transformation.</p> <p>We are currently delivering the second cohort of a Brilliant Leaders programme to develop leadership skills and competencies among the entire university community at junior level (bands 6-8). An evaluation and review of this programme is underway, which it is anticipated will inform the development and delivery of targeted cohort-based support for academic and research leaders.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>Refined delivery of a senior leader’s forum in the University bringing leaders and managers together on a 2 weekly basis to discuss strategic issues of important to the University. This is led by the Vice-Chancellor. It also functions as a CPD forum for senior leaders.</p> <p>Enabled the delivery of focused support and training for REF leaders at Unit of Assessment level.</p>

	<p>Researchers</p> <p>Completed delivery of the first cohort of THRIVE, within which we delivered training and development activities for ECRs within a cohort environment; evaluated, adapted and extended into a second cohort.</p> <p>Maintained and adapted bespoke skills training for researchers across the University, including in grant-writing, project development, narrative CVs, engaging with policymakers, communicating your research through social media, with circa 600 attending (a 50% increase on the previous reporting period)</p> <p>Designed a bespoke Development Needs Analysis tool, initially for PGRs but to be made available more widely and targeted, in adapted form, at ECRs.</p> <p>Integrated delivery of a Knowledge Exchange skills framework to enable researchers to better translate knowledge to non-academic partners into the ARKE.</p>
<p>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)</p>	
<p>The reporting period has seen significant operational challenge at the university. This has affected the size of our research community, with academic colleagues leaving through voluntary and compulsory redundancy processes and restrictions placed on hiring of new academic staff. It has also affected levels of engagement between the institution and the research community.</p> <p>Despite these challenges, we have made significant progress in the reporting period in enhancing the culture, environment, support and development opportunities for researchers. Importantly, this reporting period has seen continuity in strategic planning to enhance research culture and researcher development at the University. The importance of this continuity, meaning</p>	

modifications to our strategies, action plans and measures of success can be incremental rather than wholesale, is itself a key lesson learned.

This reporting period has underscored the need to embed work to enhance the career development of researchers into multiple parts of the institution.

Transforming the research culture and environment at the university needs to be everybody's business, and the strategies and operational work plans of multiple teams need to adapt to reflect this. While we have made some progress in this space, there is significant work still left to do, in particular strengthening collaboration between sub-teams within Research & Innovation, with Knowledge Exchange teams, with Organisational Development, with the Library Services, and with other teams supporting academic development. The establishment of the ARKE is designed to provide a coherent single point of contact streamlining researchers' engagement with support provided across these teams.

Beyond being more joined up behind the scenes, institutional transformation has clarified the importance of strengthened collaborative relationships between teams in the 'centre' and academic units – and strengthening these relationships will be a priority in the coming reporting period.

Work has begun to broaden out provision and support for researchers beyond postgraduate researchers and early career researchers. But specific unmet needs persist around career development for mid-career researchers as well as research leaders, as reflected in this report. These will become focal points for new initiatives in 2025 – and there is a need to strike a balance between extending support for these researchers and maintain and enhancing support for early career and postdoctoral researchers. We have a real deficit in support for and recognition of the needs of managers of researchers and PIs, and we will look to address this deficit in the coming reporting period.

A final lesson learned relates to scale. The modest scale of our researcher community, especially when postdoctoral research associates (fixed-term research-only staff) are prioritised, enables us to provide more tailored, bespoke support for individuals and groups. This should influence how institutional strategies and action plans are implemented, where the need is less for large scale roll-out and more for adaptive delivery which is sensitive to local needs, as well as supporting individuals and groups to identify and meet their own needs locally.

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

In the coming reporting period, we will:

1. Maintain continuity of strategy and delivery against long-term plans, in spite of institutional transformation and disruption.
2. Ensure persistence and effectiveness of feedback loops, co-evaluating and co-designing streams of work and initiatives intended to enhance the career development of researchers.
3. Administer individual research plans for all academic staff, including postdoctoral research associates, to support plans for research strategy and development
4. Expand ARKE resources for all researchers, and drive engagement with the ARKE platform, as a one-stop-shop for researcher development, training, orientation and support.
5. Pilot new policy engagement and commercialisation development programmes for researchers, and deliver a virtual Prosper cohort for postdoctoral researchers, through the ARKE platform.
6. Strengthen collaboration and two-way dialogue between central teams providing support and development opportunities for researchers and academic Schools, to ensure that support and those opportunities are responsive to need.
7. Enhance support for research/academic leaders and PIs, through a targeted intervention co-designed by Organisational Development, research support teams and academics.
8. Explore signature of a sectoral framework underscoring our commitment to the responsible use of metrics in research assessment (COARA/DORA) and, if pursued, develop a corresponding action plan.
9. Reshape doctoral training, with a wholesale refresh of the Doctoral College's support in September 2025. This will include renewed advice and support for supervisors, as well as a new Development Needs Analysis tool for PGRs, and an overhauled PGR training programme. Benefits of aligning this refresh of doctoral training with training and support for early career researchers will be realised through closer collaboration between the

Doctoral College and the Research Culture and Researcher Development team.

10. Pilot and adapt internal seed-funding schemes for policy engagement and research culture respectively, providing opportunities for project development and ideation by researchers.
11. Extend delivery of the institutional Open Research Action Plan, raising awareness and understanding within the research community.
12. Improve data gathering and reporting across research culture, researcher development and researcher employment, responding to indicators within both institutional strategies and REF People Culture and Environment reporting requirements. We have requested to Vitae that we deliver CEDARs in 2025, as well as run an institutional research culture survey.
13. Integrate researcher appraisal and review, as well as engagement in CDP and researcher development, into a single HR system (workday).
14. Design and initiate delivery of a bullying and harassment action plan, ensuring it is tailored to support researchers.
15. An extensive Health & Wellbeing action plan which underpins the strategy and will impact on all staff including researchers, has been developed and will set the priority actions for the Health and Wellbeing Team over the coming

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*)

This report is prepared by the Research Culture and Researcher Development team, with advice and guidance from other teams across the University. It is presented for review and approval to the University Concordat Steering Group and the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Enterprise).

This report has been reviewed and approved by the

- HREiR delivery team
- Concordat Steering Group
- PVC Research and Enterprise

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Professor Fiona Matthews, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research & Enterprise)

Contact for queries: Professor Liz Walker

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