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

Universities and Research Institutes

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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)*

Research and people are at the core of the University's mission, forming two of the four pillars in Strategy 2030[1]. We recognise that the ability to deliver excellent research is crucially dependent on our research culture: the values, expectations and behaviours that shape how we support, deliver, and communicate research. Strategy 2030 makes the following commitment under the people pillar, 'We will value the contribution of every individual, regardless of whether they are students, staff, alumni or other contributors. We will support each other's development and career progress'.

In August 2023, the University published a Research Cultures Delivery Plan to support the implementation of the institutional Research Cultures Action Plan (RCAP), finalised and published in February 2023. The RCAP has 5 underpinning values: Citizenship; Wellbeing; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI); Ethics and integrity; and Learning with 5 drivers for change: Career pathways and progression; Targeted support; Responsible research; Communication & engagement; and Governance & data. Both plans are available on a new 'Research Cultures'[2] section on the University's Research Staff Hub[3].

A new Head of Research Cultures was appointed and started in post March 2024. This post provides strategic direction and informs positive initiatives to improve research cultures within our university community, leading and overseeing the delivery of the action plan. They will also convene the Research Cultures Delivery Group and support the Research Cultures Forum (RCF), which includes a broad representation of colleagues involved in research cultures work. The RCF has bi-annual meetings and monthly drop-in sessions. The first meeting took place in August 2023. The RCF is a critical and confidential space to discuss ongoing activities related to research cultures at the University. It shares and discusses practice and ongoing challenges, and reports into the University's strategic research committee, Research Strategy Group (RSG). The University's commitment to improving research cultures and environment is further evidenced by the investment in new posts within the Institute for Academic Development (IAD). These include the new Head of Research Cultures role (mentioned above), an

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[1] https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030
[2] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/research-cultures
[3] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/

Academic Developer to build training and support for PIs and research managers and a Careers Consultant post for research staff. These posts are now all filled, and work is underway in these areas.

The University launched a Research and Innovation Strategy[4] in February 2024. This sets out the University's ambitions and priorities for research, engagement, and our research environment over the next six years. The strategy is informed by three main areas: Research, Engagement and Environment. Under Environment, there is a commitment to, 'ensure a collegial and inclusive environment for our whole research community' and to, 'enhance career development and stability, addressing inequalities through targeted research support'.

The University is also a partner, with the Universities of Glasgow and St Andrews, on a £3m Wellcome Trust Culture Change project focused on good research leadership. The 'InFrame[5]' project will aim to identify what collegial leadership looks like, widen access to funding and provide support for funded projects.

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)*

Environment and culture
Work is ongoing to ensure that our Research Cultures, Athena Swan and Concordat action plans all align in the areas focused on Environment and Culture. Our Research Cultures delivery plan was published in Summer 2023, following a short-life working group. The group were tasked with creating specific measures, identifying timeframes and owners for each deliverable in the Research Cultures Action Plan.

The Concordat Implementation Group meets bi-annually, and a standing agenda item is a 'Spotlight On', an update from a School or Support Service on the work they are doing to support researchers, and the Concordat. This practice sharing item demonstrates progress at local and central University levels in implementation of the Concordat Principles.

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4 https://edin.ac/3HXSCkb
5 https://sway.cloud.microsoft/2puEnGlT7s7O9KXG

New posts in the IAD will also support and strengthen our work in this area. These include the Head of Research Cultures, a post focused on leading the training and support for PIs and a post to support Ethics and Integrity training and support.

Several University level conferences and initiatives, such as the Research Support Services Conference and Open Research Conference, are now established as annual events. These bring staff together to share practice and hear about new developments and initiatives from senior colleagues and peers.

The IAD provided support to our research staff societies during Postdoc Appreciation Week, by creating a webpage, publicising events in our newsletter and developing a blog series - #PostdocResearcherRealities[6] - under our Researcher Realities initiative.

A new webpage focused on Narrative CVs[7] was developed in June 2023, which brings together information and guidance on Narrative CVs, along with steps researchers could take to develop their own. The University was represented on the UKRI Alternative Uses Group for Narrative CVs, from December 2021 to September 2023. We incorporated knowledge and learning from this group into developing the University web page.

Employment
The University's Fixed Term Working Group formed in 2022 with a remit to develop guidance on the management of fixed term contracts. A report containing recommendations was presented to the University Executive Committee in September 2023. The report requested support for 10 principles / areas of action. Several proposals received immediate agreement and others require further work.

The University is committed to a review of academic promotions and a steering group has been set up. This will be supported by a series of work strands. The work will aim to improve consistency and fairness across the University and to ensure that academic promotions criteria and guidance reflect the importance of a range of contributions.

Professional Development of Researchers
In June 2023 the appointment of a Research Staff Careers Consultant strengthened the University's careers support with two dedicated consultants now delivering 1:1

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[6] https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/category/postdoc-appreciation-week/
[7] https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/research-roles/research-only-staff/career-management/narrative-cvs

career consultations and career workshops to our population of around 2000 research staff. The two posts work together to deliver careers support at campus specific events and develop resources, support and initiatives, including plans for a 'Careers Month' in June 2024. Both are involved with AGCAS[8] and one is represented on AGCAS Research Students and Research Staff Task Group[9].

A Short Life Working Group (SLWG) was convened in 2023 to focus on supporting the 10 days professional development entitlement. The SLWG was established from our Concordat Implementation Group (CIG). The remit of the SLWG was to explore and develop recommendations around the 10 days entitlement, focusing on improving knowledge and understanding, particularly at local levels. The group had representation from all three Colleges and relevant Support Services and included both professional services and academic colleagues. It met three times between May 2023 and January 2024.

Researcher Realities[10] is a new initiative that was launched in 2023 to invite conversations among and across the research community. The initiative encourages open, transparent, and inclusive research cultures by promoting opportunities for best practice sharing and inspiration.

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 our researcher demographics was completed in August 2023, in consultation with our HR EDI team. Updated demographic information has been added to the Research Staff Hub[11]. To support our researcher communities, the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) run networking events for our Postdoc Champions and Research Staff Societies twice a year, providing the opportunity for researchers and champions to get together, share practice and discuss projects[12]. This is also achieved

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8 https://www.agcas.org.uk/
9 https://www.agcas.org.uk/Task-Groups/research-students-and-research-staff-task-group/137610
10 https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/researcherrealities/
11 https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/about-the-research-staff-hub/demographics
12 https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/2023/04/18/supporting-our-networks-and-communities/

through our 'Concordat Best Practice[13]' webpage, allowing different Schools/Colleges to update on projects and developments and share experiences. The UoE is also a consortium member of the BA ECR Network, promoting and supporting the network at the institution[14] and plans are in place to collaborate with Heriot-Watt University on an AI workshop for the researchers' part of this network. The University Library team run a 'Research Cafe[15]' for all researchers to share research and innovative ideas in an informal space with each cafe having a different theme e.g., Open research and science. The Research Staff Hub (RSH) continues to be the main University resource for research staff, bringing all initiatives together into one space. The RSH is updated regularly and a 'News' section, now available on the site's homepage, aims to make it easier for researchers to identify new developments across the University. Case studies on Research Networks from across the institution are being added to the RSH, to allow researchers to find out more about these networks and how to get involved, promoting and showcasing their work[16] The IAD also actively promotes the Concordat at society events and committees.

Academic Managers of Researchers
A new Academic Developer is now in post and will lead on the design, development, and embedding of high-quality training to support Principal Investigators and research managers across the institution. The plans are to provide targeted and relevant training that aims to enhance training and support provision for PIs across the institution, improve navigation and access to support, bring a sense of belonging and community for PIs, enhance management and career development of researchers and increase retention and diversity of research staff and PIs. This is currently in proposal and consultation stage.

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[13] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/concordat/concordat-best-practice
[14] https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/2022/09/27/the-british-academys-early-career-research-network-a-network-by-ecrs-for-ecrs/
[15] https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/academic-support-librarians/research-cafe
[16] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/getting-started/community-networking/research-networks

	Researchers On 30 May 2023 the IAD hosted the inaugural Researcher Realities event. The event featured four sessions about researcher career journeys, navigating funding applications, how to approach interdisciplinary collaborations, and the challenges of being a Principal Investigator. 20 video recordings are available from the event[17]. Since this event, smaller events and initiatives have run under the Researcher Realities banner such as 'Researcher Realities: Writing a Trade Book' conversation and Q&A event, an event focused on 'Unsuccessful Grants[18]' and a curated blog series' around Researchers' Journeys. More information can be found on our Researcher Realities page[19]. A new Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW) webpage was created in September 2023 which showcased the breadth of events and initiatives run by our research staff societies at Edinburgh during PAW. A guest blog explains how UoE were also involved in the Postdocs Future group responsible for organising the NPAW 2023 flagship event.[20] The IAD also ran a curated blog series #PostdocResearcherRealities with daily profiles that aimed to showcase the various realities of postdoc life at Edinburgh, it was an opportunity to share positive experiences, highlight the values of mentoring and peer support, while also listening to the challenges[21]
Employment *(max 600 words)*	Institution A collaborative project between IAD and HR ensures that all new staff can meet and make connections. The 'New Staff Meet-Ups' are now part of our core programme, running between October and July[22]. Three events have run between October 2023 and January 2024, with 90 participants attending.

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[17] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/researcher-realities
[18] https://edin.ac/494seR6
[19] https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/researcherrealities/
[20] https://edin.ac/49wQBbl
[21] https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/category/postdoc-appreciation-week/
[22] https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/2023/12/06/support-for-new-staff/

A working group has focused on the fixed term contract project since 2022. Membership was drawn from across the University, including colleagues representing UCU, Unison and Unite. The remit was to develop guidance on the management of FTC with the requirement that the guidance addressed the joint statement of March 2019[23] and the Collective Agreement[24] and actions contained in our Concordat Action Plan. In September 2023, a report containing recommendations was presented to the University Executive Committee, with a request for support around 10 principles / areas of action. The report was received positively with several proposals receiving immediate agreement.

Academic Managers of Researchers

A new Academic Developer post, focusing on support for PIs/Managers of Researchers, will be developing training, resources and support for managers recruiting and managing a team.

The Research Staff Hub will be developed further to include more support for PIs/Managers of researchers, as the post develops relevant support.

Researchers

New Staff Meet-Ups are now part of our core programme and support new staff integrating into the University after starting in post. This continues to be a collaboration between IAD and HR.

The Research Staff Hub has developed best practice materials and links to information that support researchers on their rights and responsibilities, being a researcher at Edinburgh, and international researchers and much more[25].

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[23] https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/ue_ucu_joint_statement_agreed_26_march_2019.pdf
[24] https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/ue_ucu_collective_agreement_re_gh_ftcs_26_march_2019.pdf
[25] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/getting-started/induction

	Demographic information is updated on the Research Staff Hub, providing a picture of our researcher community.
Professional development *(max 600 words)*	**Institution** The IAD and HR are collaborating on a review of mentoring provision. In November 2023 a survey was distributed across the University to gain an understanding of staff awareness and access to 1:1 support and if this is locally, centrally or both. Work is ongoing and recommendations and progress will be presented to the CIG on ways to support this professional development opportunity across the University. **Academic Managers of Researchers** The University has invested in outstanding early career researchers and has recruited two recent intakes of Chancellor's Fellows (5-year fellowships aimed at fostering cutting-edge interdisciplinary research and innovation). The IAD are providing central level training and support to the Fellows, including a Welcome Event, support for preparing funding bids, Research Leadership and social events. The University is also recruiting Innovation Fellows, who will have a track record of innovative research or translation[26]. A new 360 feedback process has now been designed to promote and embed the values and behaviours charter, both of which underpin Strategy 2030. The 360-feedback process involves self-assessment combined with 'observers' rating the participant against a set of leadership behaviour statements. HR led a 360 Feedback Pilot from March – April 2023 and the process is now live, with information sessions available to provide more information. Edinburgh Research Office and IAD support the annual running of the Strategic Leadership in Research Programme. This six-month programme is aimed at experienced investigators and research leaders with a clear trajectory toward running a major grant, centre or network within the next few years. In 2023/24 two further leadership

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[26] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-career-development-scheme-ecds

programmes are running. Elevate is a senior leadership programme for women of colour, which was successfully piloted in 2021. Edinburgh climate research leaders is a programme for women in climate research. Both are open to academic and professional services staff.

The IAD run a Research Leader Programme for new and aspiring PIs. Running as 4 standalone sessions covering Introduction to Research Leadership, Leading Teams effectively and Developing a Research Strategy. Participants can attend all workshops or only workshops that are relevant or of interest.

Researchers

The outputs from the 10 Days Professional Development short life working group focused on ensuring the 10 days entitlement is clear and understandable to all researchers. The main outcomes included creating standardised information to be used across the University and in University processes/systems and bringing the 10 days to life at Edinburgh through examples and experiences[27].

The IAD4Researchers blog[28] provides updates on projects, events and work at the University and is run by the Researcher Development team at the IAD. Our Research Staff Career Consultants have also blogged recently in the Times Higher Education[29]. The team have created a webpage to provide information on publications and outputs, relevant to researchers[30]. Part of the new IAD careers consultant post is a focus on building effective partnerships and connections with employers to facilitate support and events for research staff. Work is already underway with a survey distributed to our researchers, a comprehensive Diverse Career Paths blog series[31] providing careers information on roles and sectors beyond academia, and a new webpage with advice to help

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[27] https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/career-development/10-days-professional-development
[28] https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/
[29] https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/prepare-promotion-how-develop-strategy-success
[30] https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/research-roles/team-publications-outputs
[31] https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/iad4researchers/diverse-career-paths/

researchers gain experience and insights into new careers areas[32]. A Careers in Data Science and IT consultancy event also ran at the end of February, which included 3 people who successfully changed their careers.

The IAD Researcher Development Team reviewed our provision for research staff in Summer 2023. We particularly focused on workshops, looking at descriptions, aims, feedback and engagement, whilst also reviewing new workshops recently piloted. This allowed us to refresh what we offer, ensure it is aligned to Concordat principles and resulted in a restructure of the workshop programme into new categories, to support researchers with their career planning and research strategy.

The IAD developed a set of online leadership resources for research staff and students in representative roles at the University. To complement these resources, a small coaching Programme ran from June – Oct 2023 for those in specific representative roles. 4 PGRs and 4 Research Staff attended with positive feedback and all saying they would recommend the programme to their colleagues.

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)*

Collaborative working with researchers, Schools, Colleges and professional services across the University, and being involved in key institutional and sector initiatives, have been instrumental to the work of implementing the Concordat during this reporting period. Projects undertaken over the last year have involved working closely with other departments and support services e.g., induction events, the mentoring scoping project and working groups. Working with and communicating regularly with our researchers has been beneficial to our work with the Concordat and to their local initiatives. The Researcher Realities event has brought researchers together to discuss different topics, networking events have led to collaborations and sharing of practice, especially during Postdoc Appreciation Week, and career panel sessions are being introduced to allow researchers to hear

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[32] https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/research-roles/research-only-staff/career-management/work-experience

from relevant speakers. We have also seen the value of working across the University to ensure alignment of action plans and value the connections with groups and committees such as the Research Cultures Forum, SLWG on the 10 Days and our Concordat Implementation Group. This has allowed us to draw on a wide range of knowledge and expertise. However, it should also be recognised that this work relies on a great deal of input and time from staff, which is often hidden.

Over the last few months, we have focused on strategies to increase engagement in professional development support, which can often be challenging, and found that working with key contacts in Schools and our Communication and Marketing team has proven critical. New posts have provided an opportunity to engage and interact with other departments and engagement in external committees and conferences has allowed us to keep up with sector developments. An ongoing collaboration with HR has proven fruitful and has supported a University wide approach to projects, with plans in place to ensure supporting information for researchers around Annual Reviews consider the 10 days professional development entitlement. Working in this collegial and collaborative way all links back to our Strategy 2030 and our 'people' commitment, valuing everyone's contribution and development.

We will continue to develop the Research Staff Hub, particularly the Research Cultures and Resources for Managers area, and continue to communicate and collaborate with relevant stakeholders, committees and groups.

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

The basis for the successful delivery of our action plan is the work we do in partnership with the Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) and we will continue to strengthen this through the coming year. The CIG acts as a check on the implementation of our actions and is an important mechanism for sharing of practice, identification of additional challenges and outputs and communication of the Concordat principles to a wider audience. The approach we took through our recent 10 days professional development short-life working group allowed us to effectively and efficiently bring together expertise and knowledge from a range of colleagues to work towards an outcome we are now able to implement across the University. This is a model we will consider using for other areas of Concordat delivery. We will continue to convene the CIG bi-annually, and update members via our Teams channel.

The publication of the Research Cultures Action Plan, the appointment of the new Head of Research Cultures and the creation of the Research Cultures Forum demonstrate a significant investment by the University to the improvement of research environments and cultures and give us a structure to further promote and implement our Concordat action plan. We will continue to use our connections and collaborations across the University to ensure alignment of this work. The Head of Research Cultures is based in researcher development team at the IAD and several colleagues sit on both the CIG and RCF.

The IAD and HR will continue to collaborate on strategic projects related to the Concordat. Examples include a scoping project, started in November 2023, to work on and develop recommendations on supporting mentoring across the University. This is one of our Concordat actions. We will also work closely with HR on ensuring that supporting information and guidance around annual reviews is relevant for researchers and PIs and incorporates Concordat developments e.g., 10 days professional development.

We will continue to focus on strengthening communication and promotion of our work to support researchers and their managers. A 'news' section of the Research Staff Hub will highlight recent news and developments and our IAD4researchers blog will become our main resource to update on projects and support. We will continue to work closely with colleagues in Schools/Colleges to disseminate information about developments, and especially through the network of our Postdoc Champions.

Over the coming year, we expect to see significant progress in the expansion of support and training for PIs and research managers, and in careers support for researchers, particularly in terms of employer engagement. This will be driven by the new posts in IAD.

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 period, the report goes to our Research Strategy Group for review and final sign off, before being published on our Research Staff Hub. The Concordat's senior manager champion is based within the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and the IAD lead on the Concordat work. The IAD 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. The IAD and CIG agreed priorities for the

institutional action plan, with the CIG providing feedback and comments based on local initiatives and priorities. Our Research Staff Societies and Postdoc Champions are also represented on our CIG.

Signature on behalf of governing body: Research Strategy Group (RSG)

Contact for queries: Fiona Philippi (Fiona.philippi@ed.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