

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

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Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	https://www.southampton.ac.uk/waar/concordat/index.page
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Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	November 2020 Uni of Soton- NewConcordatCommitmentLetterNov2020.pdf

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 of Southampton (UoS) is a research-intensive, founding member of the Russell Group. We are a community of 5,980 staff (17th largest in UK) supporting 23,795 students (38th largest in the UK). We are top 20 in all three major UK league tables published in 2024 and 81st in the QS World Rankings 2024. The 2021 REF placed us in the top 10% of institutions, and 92% of our research has been classed as 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent'.

The UoS takes pride in its research culture that prioritises providing researchers with the environment and resources needed to achieve their goals. Through a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, researchers from different disciplines come together to tackle complex problems and find innovative solutions with real-world impact. Launched in 2022, our University Strategy introduced our Triple Helix of Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Education. The Triple Helix articulates our approach to delivering excellence in education, research, knowledge exchange and enterprise, with people placed at the heart of our work. Research is distinctly intertwined with people at the core of our delivery. Our Strategy is underpinned by a suite of 10 strategic plans with our People, Research and Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategic plans creating positive change and impact for our research community.

Our Research strategic plan has an explicit objective to "attract, support, and retain the next generation of research leaders from across the world, from different backgrounds and experiences". This is also reflected within our People strategic plan which hosts major projects such as Reducing Casualisation, Workload Principles, and Career Pathways.

The Researcher Development Concordat (RDC) is pivotal to informing strategic investments in research culture. Since becoming a signatory in 2009, our commitment to improving research culture and understanding the barriers to positive research culture has been at the forefront of our efforts to uphold our commitment to the RDC and maintain our HR Excellence in Research (HREIR) award. The UoS has a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and has invested in a programme of equality charters which includes the RDC. The UoS is also signatory to the Technicians Commitment, Student Minds University

Mental Health Charter, silver award holders of Athena Swan, bronze award holders of the Race Equality Charter and Disability Confident Leaders. There are multiple themes that intersect across the charters and taking a more holistic approach to action planning and delivery has enabled us to maximise their impact. The consistent delivery and progression of our equality charters continues to enhance the inclusive culture and environment described in our university strategy.

The five UoS Faculties play a key role in delivering our strategic plans. Each Faculty has an appointed RDC Champion, working within and across Faculties, ensuring researcher involvement and engagement.

Further resource which supports our work on research culture includes:

- RDC Advisory Group (CAG), Chair: Associate Vice-President (Interdisciplinary Research); funded 0.2FTE professorial Co-Chair
- Research Culture Steering Group
- Doctoral College research culture team
- Allocated Equality Charter Project Manager
- Communications manager (Wellbeing communications and Engagement)

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*)

Establishing our strategic objectives and implementation plan for the RDC from 2021- 2023 followed a 3-phase approach. In 2021-22 Phase 1 focused on understanding more deeply the experiences of researchers at UoS to build clear actions to improve research culture, informed by sector best practice. Our RDC gap analysis (2020-21) and action planning involved consultations, data gathering, and meetings and workshops with key stakeholders, including researchers at various career stages, research leaders and professional services colleagues.

After completing a strategic review in 2021-22, a wider engagement exercise took place, and recommendations were developed in consultation with the wider University community. We identified five key challenges: (1) researcher development and communications; (2) reducing the use of fixed-term contracts

(FTCs); (3) developing career support; (4) wellbeing and family policy; and (5) researcher manager development. Recommendations to tackle the identified challenges were incorporated into an updated action plan in November 2022 (Phase 2).

Our strategic RDC objective for 2022-2023 (Phase 3) has focused on developing and implementing the proposals for improvement for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat as identified in [the Researcher Development Concordat Annual Report 2022](#) and the [HR Excellence in Research Award – 10-year review](#) (July 2022).

Environment and culture

1. To ensure the researcher community voice is included in the University strategic plans and strategic projects during 2023-2027 (Appraisals; Future Ways of Working; and Workload Principles). **Success measure:** Utilise the RDC Working Group findings to inform the relevant University strategic plans to feed into major strategic projects and policy review during 2021-2022.
2. To continue actively engaging with the research community utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods via the CEDARS survey, PULSE surveys, workshop sessions, and Focus Groups and utilise the insights gained to inform future RDC strategic priorities and action. **Success measure:** Action plans that capture the voice of researchers based on these methods.
3. Identify ways to ensure the researcher community voice is included and embedded in university and faculty-level activity, policy review and decision making. **Success measure:** Establishment of a research staff-led structure with representation in all Faculties/Schools.
4. Achieve the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award. **Success measure:** Bronze Award achieved in November 2022.

Employment

1. Modernise our Governance processes, Ordinances and Statutes, to provide greater clarity, transparency, and accountability for decision-making structures and processes. **Success measure:** Necessary structure and systems in place to enable support the delivery of major strategic projects (Reducing Casualisation, Workload Principles, Career Pathway Reviews).
2. Establish provision for specialist career support to research staff. **Success measure:** Appointment of a Level 5 Researcher Careers Development

Officer to identify (co-design) what support is needed for a diverse range of careers from day one.

Professional Development of Researchers

1. Improve and enhance our learning and development offer through increased investment in the Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP) and expand Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise (KEE) provision. **Success measure:** Funded roles within CHEP and KEE to lead a programme of activities for the career development of researchers and researcher managers and the establishment of KEE Community of Practice (CoP).
2. Increase awareness of and access to the 10 days professional development, alongside improved data collection. **Success measure:** Development of induction materials to signpost information more effectively, including to enhanced training provision for researchers and promoting the ten days entitlement of CPD.

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)

39% of our action plan is targeted at Environment and Culture. Our progress shows 33% actions complete, 55% in progress 12% yet to start.

Institution

Awareness of the Concordat. We actively engage with the research community utilising qualitative and quantitative methods via the CEDARS and PULSE surveys, Vision Sessions, Focus Groups, and workshops. 2023 CEDARS data are being analysed, but our response rate was down to 19% from 32% in 2021.

Inclusive institutional practices. In addition to the RDC, we are implementing the Race Equality Charter, Athena Swan, Technician Commitment, the Disability Confident Leader, and the Mental Health Charter. We have targeted investment at strategically important roles to support RDC implementation, and interconnected areas extending beyond the RDC,

including a Research Culture Manager (April 2023), Careers Consultant for researchers (autumn 2023), and the Co-Chair of the RDC Advisory Group (CAG; March 2023). In recognising the importance of the pipeline of support needed which starts with PGRs, we have appointed a new Research Culture team in our Doctoral College (Spring 2023), including a Head of Research Culture, and leads for EDI, and Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Mental health and wellbeing promotion. Underpinning our implementation of the charters is a whole University approach to Health and Wellbeing with oversight from our Health, Safety and Risk Directorate. Our approach includes clear signposting to support and resources for all staff, and the creation of Safe Listening Spaces for Race, Menopause, and Neurodiversity. Since February 2023 a total of 12 listening spaces have been held, attended by 132 people.

Qualitative comments from CEDARS in 2021 revealed experiences for researchers of bullying and harassment. In response, we have established training opportunities for research leaders on compassionate and inclusive leadership and continued to offer Active Bystander training for all staff groups. We have also implemented the 'Report and Support' system for online, including anonymised reporting of incidents.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Contribute to policy development and positive research culture. The Deputy Heads of School for Research (DHoSR) Network was launched in January 2023 offering the opportunity to meet bi-monthly and providing an open forum for DHoSRs from all Faculties to share and cascade expertise and opportunities.

Promote a healthy working environment. As part of our commitment to being a Mindful Employer, we offer regular training opportunities for line managers on Stress Risk Assessment to help manage wellbeing within teams. 40

	<p>research managers completed the risk assessments in 2022 and 2023.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Contribute to a supportive and inclusive research culture. Targeted funding from our Research England allocation has enabled each Faculty to pump-prime development opportunities for ECRs. For example, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities has provided unconscious bias and culture change training to address issues around citizenship and collegiality, and the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) have offered career development coaching for under-represented groups. In addition to funded activities, the Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences (FELS), has developed guidance for researchers on FTCs to support their grant applications as Principal or Co-Investigators, and Fellowship champions have been appointed in each School to encourage and promote Fellowship applications.</p> <p>Take positive action towards maintaining wellbeing. CHEP run regular two-day writing retreats and weekly writing Power Hours for all academic staff, including researchers. The Power Hours have supported over 180 staff members in progressing their writing goals since January 2022. The retreats are very popular, supporting 105 research staff members in 2022-23, 18% of whom were postgraduate or post-doctoral researchers. Another example is the ‘Supporting Parents in Academia’ workshops held in May 2023 within FELS that attracted a wide demographic of 39 staff including researchers, technicians and PGRs.</p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>23% of the action plan is targeted at Employment. Our progress shows 28% actions complete, 64% in progress and 8% yet to start.</p> <p>Institution</p> <p>Open and transparent governance practices. Modernising the Governance achieved a major milestone, with a new dedicated Employment Procedures SharePoint site going live</p>

in August 2023 covering: Overarching Principles, Probation, Managing Sickness Absence & Ill Health, Grievance, Managing Performance, Disciplinary, Dismissal on Other Grounds, Redundancy, Appeals.

Seek to ensure job security for researchers. The Reducing Casualisation major strategic project (commencing autumn 2023) has the overarching aim of reducing reliance on casual contracts (including FTCs) across all staff groups. Reducing Casualisation (2023-28) aims to ensure that the only staff who are employed on FTCs are those whose contract length is for less than two years or where a FTC can be fully justified using agreed criteria. Progress towards reducing the number of staff on FTCs of more than 2yrs or where it cannot be fully justified, is one of our main measures for evaluating progress and improving job security. Our maternity policy has also been updated in July 2022 to increase flexibility and access to the policy for staff on FTCs.

Clear reward, recognition and promotion pathways. Academic Career Development Committees (ACDC) have been established in all Schools to address the known gender disparities in promotion applications, and to encourage applications from under-represented groups. Their remit explicitly includes all research staff including those on FTCs. We have completed a review of 2021/22 and 2022/23 cohorts and are updating the guidance.

Other major strands of work include the Workload Principles Project, which commenced in February 2023 to implement University-wide workload principles from 1st August 2024. The project aims to improve the management of workload across the University, wellbeing, and staff engagement. Focus groups with 197 staff are running from July to October 2023, with a second phase planned for February and April 2024.

Effective induction. Faculties are leading on the development of clear induction information for researchers. For example,

FoM resources highlight the 10 days CPD entitlement, and signpost to comprehensive information and support. FELS has collated a comprehensive set of links to information and resources for all research staff that can also be used in inductions.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Undertake relevant training. A mandated programme of line manager development training has been implemented for all academic staff including those managing researchers. At August 31st 2023, 38% of eligible line managers on the Academic Balanced pathway and 55% of eligible line managers on the Research pathway had accessed the training. Targeted information for Researcher Managers has also been developed and shared, for example via a 'Guide on a Page' that highlights key activities and opportunities through the pipeline of researcher career development.

Contribute to policy development. Colleagues in CHEP are currently leading a Research England funded study investigating the work-life balance of research-active staff. This project will obtain qualitative insights into barriers and enablers of healthy and productive work-life balance for staff who undertake research. The project is aiming for completion by July 2024, and will provide a better understanding of researchers' needs and experiences that can inform future RDC actions and planning.

Researchers

Career ownership. We have invested in the Anniversary Fellowship programme since 2022, which has so far appointed across all Faculties a diverse cohort of 22 researchers in interdisciplinary research to 3-year funded Fellowships to nurture excellence and innovation. Researchers in both the academic balanced and research pathway were selected to participate on the RISE Empowered Women's Development Programme pilot in

	<p>2023, supporting both individual and institutional progress in gender equality.</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>39% of the action plan is targeted at Professional Development. Our progress shows 42% actions complete, 42% in progress and 16% yet to start.</p> <p>Institution</p> <p>Opportunities for structured support. UoS has invested in funded roles within CHEP to lead activities for the career development of researchers and researcher managers, including the development of induction materials, signposting to enhanced training provision for researchers, and promoting the ten days CPD entitlement. The annual budget invested in permanent staff to support research has increased by £535k in the last 18 months and by £635k since August 2021. Specifically, new appointments include: 8 academic developers (2 research staff focused, 4 PGR focused and 2 KEE staff focused); 1 strategic lead for Research & KEE; 1 co-chair for the RDC Advisory Group; and increasing the FTE of the PGR training development lead. We have also appointed a Careers Consultant to focus specifically on opportunities for researchers.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>Allow time for researchers' professional development activities. Information about the RDC obligation for enabling researchers to undertake 10 days CPD has been added to the guidance documents on making a grant application to prompt PIs to include this in their bids.</p> <p>Positive attitude to professional development. CHEP's strategic lead for Research & KEE organised a best practice workshop in June 2023 to showcase examples of successful mentoring schemes at UoS and catalyse the cascading of information across Faculties. Examples include the mentoring scheme established in 2017 in the School of Electronics and</p>

Computer Science (ECS), which includes 43 Mentors across 16 categories of expertise. Another example is the Academic Intersectionality Mentoring in Medical Schools (AIMMS) programme in FoM, which was established in 2020 and run by the UoS on behalf of eleven institutions. It is the first national medical schools' scheme to connect women from ethnic minority backgrounds to support their career development in academic medicine and health sciences.

Researchers

Engagement with opportunities to develop research identity.

The KEE CoP was launched in October 2022 and has 308 members from academic and professional services pathways across all faculties and levels. The aims and programme of activities of the KEE CoP were co-produced with members and includes monthly workshops and events as well as 3 working groups focusing on the KEE Strategic Plan. KEE CoP activities will be iterated in November 2023 for the 23-24 year.

Career development ownership. The Researcher Development Hub (RD Hub) is a major UoS resource for signposting professional development opportunities and resources related to research and KEE. The RD Hub was launched on 31 March 2022, with monthly data capture commencing 13 May 2022. Average unique viewers per month is 336; total numbers of unique views since launching 2200. Engagement data is regularly collected and shows good uptake from research staff. For example, 332 places were taken-up by researchers on research-focused contracts on a range of career development opportunities provided through CHEP in 2022-23. Courses included bid writing, building EDI into projects, writing a narrative CV, academic publishing, building and sustaining communities of practice, open access publishing, and KEE. A further example is the pilot Research Funding Summer Intensive, which was a four-week programme in June-July 2023 for two cohorts of early- and mid-career researchers (total 43). Feedback was very positive with 100% of 14 respondents stating that the

	<p>structure of the programme and its presentation or delivery was good or excellent. Additionally, 19% of researchers accessed our central training offer, including a wide range of internally delivered workshops, eLearning and self-directed resources to develop interpersonal skills such as communication, working with change, team work, time management and personal leadership.</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>Action plan complexity While we have made significant progress over the past year (35% of actions completed overall), 51% of our actions are still in progress with a 13% of actions planned /yet to start. We recognise that the action plan lacks a robust set of SMART objectives, resulting in a lengthy and complex action plan lacking clarity in some places. In our plan for the next period, we will establish a concise set of priorities supported by SMART objectives and well-defined success measures. Open and planned actions not yet started will be revised during our next reporting period to continue to capture feedback from researchers and better alignment with UoS strategic plans in term of time frames. Alignment between HREIR and the RDC reporting processes will facilitate action plan management.</p> <p>Granularity of the data and evaluation mechanisms Our systems do not provide sufficient granularity for monitoring relevant actions. For example, data on specific groups (via career pathway) undertaking training courses, or engaging with specific activities, is not always collated or available and so it is not possible to know if the main beneficiaries of activities are researchers. Additionally, compliance with GDPR does not allow us to access some of the more granulated data.</p> <p>We have also yet to embed evaluation and feedback mechanisms across all our RDC activities. We are aware that overreliance on single, infrequent, and general data sources, such as CEDARS, is not best practice. We need to implement and embed a range of more localised activity or project-specific feedback mechanisms.</p>	

The alignment of, and overlap between, the six main charter marks that the UoS is implementing will be helpful for addressing some of these issues since meaningful data collection is vital for demonstrating progress on all charters.

Engagement and communication

While we have engaged in targeted and in-depth engagement with researchers during our RDC gap analysis and consultation, we recognise the need to strengthen our processes and opportunities for sustained engagement with researchers at School and Faculty levels across all major practice and policy initiatives. We need to ensure that the voices of researchers continue to inform activities and planning in meaningful ways to improve awareness and uptake of training. Relatedly, we have not yet engaged as fully as necessary with Principal and Co-Investigators to understand more about their experiences and their information and resource needs relating to supporting the careers of researchers; addressing this will be one of our key objectives for the next period.

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

Our priorities for the next period have been informed by a Vision session carried out with key stakeholders in June 2023 and the progress review of our current action plan. We will incorporate the lessons learned outlined in the section above, and focus on enablers i.e., key priorities that will facilitate the implementation of other activities.

Priority 1. To strengthen governance at Faculty and School levels to ensure we systematically and regularly gather the views of researchers to inform and improve the university's approach to implementing the RDC by:

- Establishing researcher representation through the University structure, including at School and Faculty committees / meetings;
- Working closely with Faculty RDC Champions to develop and embed implementation plans for the RDC at Faculty and School levels;
- Improving communication pathways by establishing a regular cross-Faculty RDC Champions group to discuss, plan and share progress and good practice and feedback to Faculties and the CAG.

Priority 2. To enhance the leadership and line management capability of managers of researchers and Principal Investigators, to ensure a high quality, supportive research environment through:

- Scoping and agreeing a plan for implementing professional development resources or programmes for the line managers of researchers, and research leaders;
- Identifying effective methods of sharing good practice and management tools and resources at a local level;
- Identifying opportunities for embedding and recognising actions and responsibilities in line with RDC obligations in appraisal and promotion processes.

Priority 3. To maximise the outputs from, and impact of, our RDC action plan, by ensuring alignment with University Strategic plans, major strategic projects, and EDI charters by:

- Using Theory of Change/Systems Thinking to evaluate action plans to measure the scope, progress, and impact of actions;
- Identifying a data collection process that enables the analysis of activities and uptake of resources by research career pathways level (i.e., balanced cf. research-only) to better understand research-only staff engagement;
- Strengthening actions that are aligned with UoS strategic plans and other EDI initiatives that support a social model approach, such as reviewing redeployment systems and practices as part of the Reducing Casualisation project;
- Analysing and reflecting on CEDARS 2023 data and its implications (including the lower response rate);
- Meeting the implementation milestone of Workload Principles project in August 2024.

Priority 4. To enhance career management opportunities for ECRs by:

- Identifying a university-wide process for reporting and monitoring the uptake of 10 days of CPD for research staff drawing on examples of good practice in the sector (e.g., PROSPER);
- Implementing a university-wide process for reporting and monitoring the uptake of 10 days of CPD;

- Reviewing the appraisal and ACDC data over the next year to understand how many researchers have been appraised supported through promotion, and whether / what objectives have been included for CPD;
- Reviewing the outcomes and impact of the Researcher Career consultant in terms of nature and uptake of opportunities and resources.

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*)

The RDC sits within our UoS programme of Equality Charters. As such, an allocated Project Manager coordinates the planning, progression, and evaluation of impact of the RDC. The Project Manager supports the development and structure of The Concordat Advisory Group (CAG), which is chaired by the Associate Vice-President (Interdisciplinary Research) and co-chaired by a member of our research community who is at professorial level. The CAG has overall responsibility for the UoS's commitment to the Concordat and HREiR.

The UoS governance process is as follows:

- HR Senior Leadership Team (HRSLT), 05th October 2023, *Endorsement*
- Research and Enterprise Executive Group (REEG), 7th November 2023, *Endorsement*
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC), 16th November 2023, *Endorsement*
- University Executive Board (UEB), 21st November 2023, *Endorsement*
- University Council, 22nd November 2023, *Noting*

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Philip Greenish
Chair of Council

Contact for queries: diverse@soton.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