

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

### Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	University of Worcester
Reporting period	7 <sup>th</sup> February 2025 – 6 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
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Web address of annual report	<a href="https://www.worcester.ac.uk/research/hr-excellence-in-research.aspx">https://www.worcester.ac.uk/research/hr-excellence-in-research.aspx</a>
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	<a href="https://www.worcester.ac.uk/research/hr-excellence-in-research.aspx">https://www.worcester.ac.uk/research/hr-excellence-in-research.aspx</a>
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Professor Lynn Nichol, Director of Researcher Development and Doctoral Education, <a href="mailto:l.nichol@worc.ac.uk">l.nichol@worc.ac.uk</a>
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via <a href="mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk">CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk</a>	TBC

## **University of Worcester's RKE Strategy**

The University of Worcester's RKE Strategy set out our vision for research from 2020 – 2025 focusing on five key components:

- People
- Infrastructure
- Culture
- Collaboration
- Engagement

Three of these components, People, Infrastructure and Culture are central to our commitment to ensuring that there is a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at the University of Worcester. Over the past 5 years we have aimed to:

- 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.
- Develop and mentor researchers across their research careers (from PGR to Professor).
- Extend our professional support structures at the University to further enhance the quality of our RKE and enrich the research culture.
- 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 committed formally to the Concordat in February 2023 and developed an action plan identifying the steps that it would take 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 received 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.

In 2025 the HREIR Action Plan 2023-2026 continues to be at the forefront of driving forward our ambitions in developing and maintaining an inclusive and positive

research culture and environment. Our next review for the HREIR Action Plan is scheduled for June 2026 alongside the development of a new University RKE Strategy and we are in the process of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders from the internal research environment about the future direction of research at the University and we therefore expect this consultation to feed into the formation of a new HREIR Action Plan for 2026-2029 and underpin our ongoing commitment to the Concordat.

We have also restructured the Research Executive and replaced a lead for Staff Researcher Development with a new role of Director of Researcher Development and Doctoral Education with responsibility for both staff and student researcher development.

### **Concordat Implementation Group**

The Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) is a university wide group that meets at least four times a year and is chaired by the Director for Researcher Development and Doctoral Education. Its purpose is to inform and implement the actions outlined in the institutional action plans and to support the HR Excellence in Research Award process. Specifically, it:

- advises on the achievement of the Principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- reviews and advises on the documentation developed in support of the ongoing achievement of the 'HR Excellence Award' and reports to the University Research Committee on progress.
- works with the Doctoral School to ensure that, where appropriate, the principles of the Concordat are echoed in activities to support postgraduate research students.

To ensure that the group hears the voice of all stakeholders and serve 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

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*)

Our HREIR Action Plan, 2023-2026 reflects our approach to delivering out strategic priorities and objectives. Our priorities in this period 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**

In 2025 we have continued to apply a 'researcher employee life cycle' approach reviewing current institutional policies designed for all staff to ensure they meet the specific needs of researchers. To monitor progress, we constantly draw on a range of wider HR institutional metrics. We have taken undertaken a range of initiatives to raise the profile of the Concordat with all researchers, for example engaging with the staff researcher network, PGR and staff induction. We have ensured that researchers are actively represented on all relevant University Committees. We continue to see the staff researcher network as a key forum for engagement with researchers in the context of development of policy and have seen growth in the number of researchers engaging with the network.

### **1b. Wellbeing and Mental Health**

We have reviewed our institutional training in key areas for example appraisal, to ensure that the specific needs of researchers are represented in course materials and delivery. We continue to draw on and highlight to researchers university wide initiatives to support all staff and students. Through our monitoring of PGR

programmes, we identified a need to understand further the wellbeing needs of PGR students and developed a bespoke workshop.

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

The University requires all staff including researchers to undertake equality, diversity and inclusion training bi-annually. We monitor uptake for all staff including researchers. We are committed to taking a dispute resolution approach and have developed a pool of Resolution Support Officers including researchers.

### **1.d Research Integrity**

We have continued to develop researchers by developing enhanced training in research integrity and ethics available mainly through online provision.

## **2. Employment**

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

Our priority remains to ensure that our policy and practice enable the university to attract, retain and reward excellent researchers to support our priorities and aspirations in RKE. To this end in 2025 to inform the next stage in our development we completed our work on the Researcher Development Career Stage Project. By conducting focus groups with researchers in all career stages this project aimed to develop more in depth understanding of the needs of researchers at the university and the environment they work in. In the context of retaining and recognising researchers, we have reviewed our approach to induction for researchers and in 2025/6 will introduce further bespoke induction training focused on researchers joining the university and are taking forward a proposal to launch an Annual Research Award for Researchers in 2025/6.

### **2b. People Management**

In 2024 we identified our priority was 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. This system has now been implemented and will provide enhanced capability to monitor engagement in development long term.

<p><b>3. Professional Development of Researchers</b></p> <p>The Researcher Development Career Stage Project identified above has been central to develop our standing of the perception of our researchers across a range of areas. It has provided in depth understanding of the experiences and needs our researchers. We have used the findings from this project to begin to reposition our staff researcher development programme around the needs of each identified career stage and will continue this work into the development of our new HREIR Action Plan for 2026-2029.</p>	
<p><b>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]</b></p>	
<p><b>Environment and Culture (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p>We have continued to review and monitor the actions implemented in 2024. In the period from February 2025, we have undertaken the following actions.</p> <p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructured the Research Executive and appointed a Director of Researcher Development and Doctoral Education.</li> <li>• Continued to promote the Concordat to all Researchers.</li> <li>• Included reference to the Concordat in all university inductions with 100% researchers engaging with university induction.</li> <li>• Promoted the Concordat in PGR Induction with 94% of new PGR students attending induction.</li> <li>• Discussed and promoted relevant institution policies to researchers through the Staff Researcher Network by engagement through the Head of Organisational Development and Director of Researcher Development and Doctoral Education.</li> <li>• Implemented a cycle of gathering feedback on Concordat relevant topics with the Staff Researcher Network.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a new SharePoint Resource as a repository for researcher development Material including Research Integrity and Ethics Training.</li> <li>• Reviewed through a university wide Staff Survey the confidence of staff to report bullying and harassment.</li> <li>• Started a process of staff and PGR consultation on a new University RKE Strategy.</li> </ul> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaged in gathering feedback and then redeveloped Managers of Researchers Resources.</li> <li>• Promoted the needs of researchers through increased visibility of the needs of researchers in institutional HR training, for example appraisal.</li> <li>• Monitored attendance at University RKE Committee for Managers of Researchers and achieved more than 75% attendance.</li> </ul> <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitored the take up of formal mentoring and the Research Compact through School annual RKE Reports.</li> <li>• Monitored attendance at Staff Researcher Network with identified year on year growth.</li> <li>• Promoted the Employee Assistance Programme to Researchers</li> <li>• Required all researchers to attend training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) with more than 90% attending.</li> <li>• Monitored attendance at University RKE Committee for Researchers and achieved 100% attendance in 2024/5.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</b></p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concluded Researcher Development Career Stage Project including focus groups with staff from all career stages to provide in depth understanding about the experiences and needs of researchers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realigned Staff Researcher Development Programme 2025/2026 to the needs of specific career stages.</li> <li>• Developed central resources to support the induction of new researchers employed by the University.</li> <li>• Engaged with Staff Researcher Network to discuss issues focused on employment.</li> <li>• Introduced the monitoring of the implementation of appraisal and research compact through School Annual RKE Reports.</li> </ul> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued to review Staff Appraisal Training to ensure it meets the needs of researchers and introduced specific case studies relevant to researchers.</li> </ul> <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitored engagement and usefulness of appraisal for researchers via the staff researcher network.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional development (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p>Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed 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.</li> <li>• Redesigned 2025/6 Researcher Development Programme to align with findings of career stages project.</li> <li>• Evaluated the provision of wider school and research group development through Annual RKE Reports.</li> <li>• Implemented a process to evaluate the long-term impact of the staff researcher development programme.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated a new project to explore the viability of an Annual Research Award scheme based on career stages.</li> </ul> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented the use of the Research Compact in all schools and monitored uptake.</li> <li>• Established a network for Professorial Staff.</li> </ul> <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued to provide the opportunity for research mentoring to all researchers.</li> <li>• Encouraged all researchers to engage with opportunities for feedback including through the Researcher Development Career Stage Project.</li> </ul>
<p><b>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)</b></p>	
<p>Our 4 priorities remained constant during 2025 and express our commitment to the principles of the Concordat. Over the last 12 months much of our work has been to continue with streams of work identified and initiated during 2024/5 and documented in the HREIR Action Plan.</p> <p>We have completed the Researcher Development Career Stage Project started in 2024/5 and through the voice given to researchers during this project we now have a much stronger understanding of researcher experiences and needs to inform the development. It has also given us great insight into the implications of the project outcomes to developing the managers of researchers. Currently we are in the process of consulting with researchers about the new University RKE Strategy. Both these initiatives will give us a firm base to develop a new action plan to take forward our commitment to the Concordat.</p> <p>Increasingly we have become aware of the plethora of development opportunities that take place within the practice of research groups and academic disciplines, and we have begun in 2025 to develop wider approaches to identifying and monitoring development beyond centralised initiatives. Through accessing wider</p>	

reporting mechanisms, we have begun to understand take up of key initiatives such as the Research Compact and Mentoring.

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

**Priorities - progress and next steps**

- 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.

A and B - Through the 'researcher lifecycle' approach we have used to review wider University policies we are now confident that we have made good progress in ensuring the needs of researchers are visible within wider career development processes and practices. We are equally confident through engagement with the Staff Researcher Network and Researcher Development Career Stage Project that we have developed approaches to hearing the voice of researchers. Our objective going forward is therefore to maintain this approach.

C - We have continued to make progress against the obligations set out in our HREIR Action Plan 2023-2026 and therefore delivering our commitment to the principles of the Concordat. We have made good progress in the context of Environment and Culture and Employment generally particularly through our review of HR policy through the lens of the needs of researchers. Although we have introduced further support for managers the findings of the Researcher Development Career Stage Project indicate there is further work to do here.

D - We now have much great insight in terms of the needs of researchers in terms of professional development and reward and recognition and therefore our key objectives going forward, and in the development of a new HREIR Action Plan will be to extend the work started in 2025 and develop further nuanced approaches to

the recognition and reward of researchers and bespoke development, including a reconsideration of the approach to research mentoring.

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

The CIG reports to the University RKE Committee, chaired by the Professor John-Paul Wilson, Pro-vice Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange and Academic Board.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries:

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](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

[www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk)