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

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Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Chris Atkinson – c.atkinson1@lancaster.ac.uk
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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)*

The development of Lancaster's Research excellence Culture Action Plan (ReCAP) has been key to **creating** a positive and inclusive environment. In January 2023, a Research Culture Working Group was formed with representation from across the University.This identified the need for a research culture action plan and to engage widely with the research community in its formulation. Workshops with research and research-enabling staff were held in 2023. These, together with the results from the Vitae CEDAR and All-Staff Experience surveys, provided rich researcher feedback to inform the ReCAP.

The development of the ReCAP also considered good practice and draws on initiatives outside the institution. For example, Lancaster's membership of the N8 Research Partnership has positioned it as an active member of the N8 Research Culture and Environment working group. Further engagement examples include with Vitae and its research culture framework and the Research Culture Enablers Network.

The ReCAP acknowledges and aligns with other institutional initiatives contributing to enhancing research culture. This includes the HR Excellence in Research and Technicians Commitment action plans and those associated with the EDI Chartermarks - Athena Swan (AS) and the Race Equality Charter (REC).

The deliverables from the Wellcome Trust £1M project, 'Reimagining research practices: towards a sustainable, ethical and inclusive future', will enhance research culture at Lancaster and across the sector and are also reflected in the ReCAP.

The ReCAP represents a dynamic commitment, **maintained** through ongoing engagement and feedback from Lancaster communities - such as the Faculty Researcher Career and Development Groups, formed by and for researchers - and focused events such as the Research Culture Day held at Lancaster in October 2024.

Current activities that are being **embedded** across Lancaster University that reach out to researchers across career stages include:

- **Progression from grade-6 Research Associate to grade-7 Senior Research Associate** – the process for progression has been standardised and

simplified and recommendations made by which future research grants can accommodate the cost of progression to grade 7.

- **British Academy Early Career Network- Northwest/ North Wales Cluster** – development, networking and seed funding for SHAPE researchers across the region. Lancaster's role as lead partner makes a key contribution institutionally and across the region.
- **Researcher Career Development (Bridging) Scheme** – an innovative scheme providing time-limited funding to researchers after their contract end date where there is demonstrable likelihood of being retained at Lancaster. Contributions to research culture initiatives at Lancaster and a career development plan are required.
- **Peer Review College** – to enhance the quality of research grant proposals, increase success rates and build up the expertise of the Lancaster research community in writing successful proposals.
- **Researcher-related criteria in wider promotions pathways** - i.e., supervisory practice and engagement with researcher communities.
- **Professoriate Development Sessions** on the Concordat itself and enhancing research culture.
- **Researcher representation on relevant committees** e.g. Research Committee, Research Culture Working Group and the Concordat Implementation Group etc.

To support all these activities, roles have been established including an Associate Director for Research Culture, a Research Culture Manager and a Researcher Training and Skills Developer.

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)*

In pursuit of its Vision (to be a globally significant university) and in keeping with its Purpose (to advance knowledge, wisdom, and understanding through the excellence of its teaching and research), Lancaster works to uphold its Values:

- We **respect each other** by being open and fair and promoting diversity
- We **build strong communities** by working effectively together in a supportive way
- We **create positive change** by being ambitious in our learning, expertise and action

From the <u>Strategic Plan</u>, **Priorities for Research** are to:

- Support and increase our inter- and multi-disciplinary working: Lancaster has nearly 50 research institutes and centres that aim to encourage interdisciplinary research, culture and research-led teaching, as well as influencing policy and practices to create positive change
- Increase the volume and quality of our research income
- Support the Royal Society's Resume for Researchers
- Increase the variety and value of our research
- Sustain our commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and further develop our Doctoral Academy as a key element of our enhancement of the postgraduate research student experience.

Implementation plans and how progress is measured

Lancaster's commitment to the Concordat is demonstrated through holding the <u>HR Excellence in Research award</u>, first awarded in 2011. The **HR Excellence in Research Action Plan** (HR EiR) has actions against each of the three pillars of the Concordat. All activity towards the action plan is coordinated by the **Concordat Implementation Group (CIG)**. This is a sub-group of the Research Committee, chaired by the Pro-VC for Research and Enterprise.

In addition, there are other plans that have related themes and support the delivery of the three pillars of the Concordat. This includes the:

- Research excellence Culture Action Plan (ReCAP)
- <u>Athena Swan (AS) Bronze action plan</u>
- <u>Race Equality Charter action plan</u>
- Technician's Commitment action plan

The ReCAP is currently at the development stage, although many activities are already underway. The Research Culture Strategic Working Group will hold responsibility for monitoring progress against the actions in the plan.

In a similar way the AS Implementation Group (ASIG) and the Technicians Steering Group provide oversight, support and challenge to their respective action plans. It is expected that similar monitoring will take place against the Race Equality Charter action plan as implementation is rolled out.

Evaluation and success measures

The evaluation and success in fulfilling the three pillars of the Concordat can be established through both qualitative and quantitative methodologies including:

- **CEDARS survey** – the last survey was conducted in 2023, and the results can be compared with previous studies, so that the direction of travel can be established.
- **Staff Experience Survey** – this was conducted in May/June 2024, results can be disaggregated to researcher level.
- **New Starter Survey** – new starters are invited to complete the survey 3 months after their start date.
- **Researcher Culture Workshops –** held in 2023 these provided extensive feedback from the research community that informed the development of the ReCAP.
- **Faculty Researcher Career and Development Groups (RCADS)** - are formed by and for the researchers within the faculty and provide valuable on-going feedback.
- **Research Culture Day** – this provided both feedback on the day itself and wider insight into research culture at Lancaster.

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)*	**Concordat awareness** Concordat awareness for researchers and research managers is raised at induction and through development events including the Researcher and Academic Induction,

| | the PI/Co-I Development programme and Professoriate Sessions. All research staff are highly encouraged to attend these programmes, with targeted promotion ensuring good uptake.

Measurement is through the CEDARS survey and the new starter survey, both of which ask about awareness of the Concordat. The last CEDARs survey in 2023 indicated that 78% of research staff had, at the least, awareness of the Concordat.

Institutional policies and practices

To support our researcher community a suite of policies and procedures have been developed and implemented:

- Research Ethics: The Code of Practice sets out our commitment to research integrity and our expectations from our researchers.
- Safeguarding: The University's commitment to safeguarding research includes a Safeguarding in Research Framework designed to promote good practice and protect those with whom we interact. It applies to all individuals involved with our research and innovation activities. In tandem with introducing this commitment, specific training 'Safeguarding at Lancaster University' is available to all staff including our researcher community to highlight responsibilities and raise awareness.
- Open Research: The University's Charter states that its objects "shall be to advance knowledge, wisdom and understanding by teaching and research and by the example and influence of its corporate life". There is a dedicated team in the Library working with colleagues across all disciplines to promote Open Research, and a role leading on Open Monographs and Research Culture.
- Trusted Research: We work with UK government and other organisations to promote and support our |

	researchers to understand and manage the risks in international research collaborations.
	• Misconduct in Research: The University has a comprehensive procedure for the investigation of misconduct in research and ensures that allegations raised are investigated in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, accuracy and fairness.
	Promotion of good mental health and wellbeing
	The Anti-Harassment and Bullying Team (AHBT) was established in December 2023, aiming to prevent and bring about cessation of any indication of there being harassment and bullying behaviours. It provides an informal source of support through AHBT volunteers, including researchers.
	A Research Culture Day was held in October 2024, targeted at the research community. This had a range of workshops and information giving sessions. This included sessions to support researcher wellbeing.
	EDI and Mental Health online training is mandatory for all staff, including research managers and researchers. 92% and 90% of all staff are currently compliant with the EDI and MH training, respectively.
	Organisational Development has a manager Induction programme, targeted at new managers at Lancaster, that includes a number of workshops:
	• EDI in Practice • Promoting Staff Wellbeing
	Highest standards of research integrity
	The University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (UREIC) has responsibility to foster a culture of ethical research and research integrity in the research community. Delegated ethics review arrangements are in place via Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECS).

	The University Executive Board agreed in June 2024 to training in research integrity and ethical research being a requirement for research staff and PGRs. A range of measures have been taken to implement this requirement and compliance rates are to be monitored once the requirements are more embedded. **Review and report on the quality of the research environment and culture** The Research Culture Working Group and the Faculty Researcher Career and Development Groups, together with survey feedback as mentioned in the previous section ensure that feedback from researchers is regularly received, considered and acted on.
Employment *(max 600 words)*	**Recruitment** An institutional Recruitment and Selection Review is underway to ensure an open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment approach. Recruitment and selection are key areas of focus in the ReCAP and HR EIR action plans. Researchers and research managers have been involved in focus groups to feedback on the recruitment process, informing the project design. To date project outcomes, relevant to research managers include: - Coaching support for job design - Revised job materials and tailored job descriptions and person specifications to present roles accurately and inclusively - Enhanced advertising strategies to broaden visibility. - Promoting open and accessible information on the selection process, e.g. sending interview questions in advance All interview panel chairs and members are required to complete Recruiting the Best training, with a strong focus on fair and inclusive recruitment.

The University is supporting the use of narrative CVs to recognise and reward the varied contributions researchers make and is using the Resume for Researchers from the Royal Society. A senior university leader is on the UKRI's Alternative Users Group.

Induction

A review and report on researcher induction was taken to the Concordat Implementation Group in June 24. The findings revealed areas of good practice, but that experience of induction can be variable. A series of recommendations were made. The next phase of this project will establish a small working group to take forward the recommendations.

Recognition, reward and promotion

As highlighted above, the process for progression from grade-6 Research Associate to grade-7 Senior Research Associate has been standardised and simplified and recommendations made by which future research grants can accommodate the cost of progression to grade 7 and by which new researchers can be recruited.

The annual event on Preparing for Promotion – targeted at academic, teaching and research staff - was held in September 2024. The sessions were well attended. Promotion data is scrutinised annually against EDI characteristics to ensure the process is fair and inclusive.

Line management and project management training

The Organisational Development team offer a range of management and leadership opportunities:

- Head of Department development programme
- Principal/Co-Investigator development programme
- Research Leadership development
- Project management for researchers

	These opportunities are widely promoted through various channels, and whilst attendance is not mandated it is strongly encouraged when relevant. **Excellent People Management** All research staff are expected to have an annual Performance and Development Review (PDR), including those on indefinite contingent contracts. In the CEDARs survey 2023, 69% of staff recorded that they had participated in a staff appraisal/review in the last two years, but 31% of staff had not. The importance of PDR is highlighted to all staff and training and workshops are provided. Monitoring and reminders to complete PDRs are sent out to departments, however the data is retrieved from the online PDR system, and not all departments currently use this. Transition to the online system is actively promoted. **Improving Job Security** Existing and new researchers are employed on indefinite contingent contracts. In the staff experience survey in 2024, the average score on a scale of 1-10 for the question 'I feel I have good job security' was 6.7 for all staff and 4.1 for research staff. To help address this issue some Enhancing Research Culture funding allocation has been used for a Research Career Development Bridging scheme, again, as mentioned above. This sustains funding and support for researchers across gaps between contracts and focuses on using the time to pursue career development opportunities as well as making a positive contribution to research culture initiatives. The scheme is running for the second time in 24/25, with the criteria slightly modified to reflect feedback from its operation in 23/24.
Professional development *(max 600 words)*	**Engagement of researchers in development** Researchers can apply to use their 10 development days through the University's HR system. Guidance recognises that development needs vary depending on a researcher's

career stage and are categorised in line with the Royal Society's Resume for Researchers.

A wide range of development sessions for research managers and researchers are offered by Organisational Development. Other opportunities are from the research support office, e.g. pre-award training, and in departments, faculties, library. Such opportunities are widely promoted and uptake is consistently high.

The Faculty of Health and Medicine has run a successful Researcher Career and Development (RCAD) Group for many years with good engagement. A recent decision has been to establish these in each faculty rather than having an institutional Research Staff Association. The RCADs organise training and networking events responsive to the needs of researchers in their faculty. The RCAD Chairs receive an honorarium payment funded through the Enhancing Research Culture fund.

Lancaster has been chosen as the lead partner for the British Academy Early Career Research Network for the Northwest and North Wales Cluster. This will provide development and networking opportunities for SHAPE researchers at Lancaster and across the region.

In the staff experience survey 2024 the average score on a scale of 1-10 for the question, 'My manager/supervisor encourages me to keep learning' was 7.5 for all staff and 8.4 for research staff.

Career Development Reviews/ professional advice on career management

The annual Professional Development Review (PDR) includes a conversation about development goals and career aspirations. Organisational Development runs workshops that support career development and was a lead partner in the development of Prosper, a career development portal that highlights opportunities and skills development for researchers to pursue multiple career pathways. In addition,

there are tailored careers workshops and one to one coaching support for all researchers and academics.

At induction, all researchers are expected to be allocated a mentor, and this is actively encouraged at all career stages. Guidance and workshops on mentoring to ensure mentors and mentees get the best out of these relationships are available. A successful cross institutional mentoring scheme has been running in partnership with other Northern institutions (e.g. Liverpool, Manchester, MMU, SHU, Salford and Huddersfield) for some time, and it is hoped that through its membership of the N8 group of universities a similar scheme will operate across the whole group in the near future, extending opportunities for researchers at Lancaster.

In the staff experience survey 2024 the average score on a scale of 1-10 for questions on careers were positive and certainly so compared to the all-staff results:

	All staff	Research Staff
I believe there are opportunities for me to develop my career	6.3	7.1
My manager/supervisor supports my career development	7.4	8.3

Moving between, and working across, employment sectors

Prosper, mentioned above, acknowledges that the skills of researchers are sought beyond academia and helps researchers to realise the potential of working within different employment sectors. It provides skills development and insights to help researchers make a transition out of HEI, if this is something of interest to pursue.

Each faculty has a Partnership Development Team that actively supports researchers to partner with external organisations including businesses, local government, and charities. These partnerships have multiple benefits to the researchers, to the research and the partnering organisations.

Awareness and experience of the wider research system

A fixed term post was established in 2023 to create an Engagement Portal, encouraging researchers to get involved in aspects of engagement such as policy development, public engagement, and commercialisation. This has been widely promoted to the researcher community and uptake has been monitored through web analysis and video views.

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)*

Monitor and report on the engagement of researchers and their managers with professional and career development activities: Central recording, through the HR system should allow the institution to determine if researchers are engaging in a minimum of 10 development days. However, not all researchers routinely use the HR management system and therefore monitoring of this commitment needs to take place alongside other evidence such as from the CEDARs survey and feedback via the Faculty Researcher Career and Development (RCAD) Groups.

Success Measure: To get a holistic view of researcher engagement with professional and career development activities in order to identify and overcome any barriers.

Provision of professional and career development opportunities: There is a current trial of proprietary software that acts as a portal for career and professional development. On accessing the app, users are required to complete a Development Needs Analysis (DNA) that is mapped against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework. Opportunities are highlighted to each user, based on the feedback of the DNA. This provides the opportunity for rich data reporting of development activities, together with an app for end users that helps to keep track of professional development throughout the users' career. The trial is

currently limited to postgraduate researchers, but consideration will be given to extending this to staff researchers in the future.

Success Measure: The number of researchers engaging with the software (if the decision is made to extend the pilot).

Support for researchers: It anticipated that the establishment of the Faculty Researcher Career and Development (RCAD) Groups will allow better engagement of researchers, and an evaluation of their activities will take place on an annual basis.

Success Measure: A broad range of researchers engaged with their faculty RCAD, development opportunities offered by each RCAD are well attended.

Thematic approach to the HR EiR action plan: The Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) meets at least termly to review progress against the HR EiR actions. The action plan is written against the three Concordat principles, subdivided by the stakeholder groups. By their nature this leads to areas of overlap in the plan and it can be challenging to keep abreast of the actions. More manageable and successful has been the prioritisation of actions for each CIG meeting, taking on a thematic approach that crosses several actions.

Success Measure: An increase in the number of actions in the HR EiR action plan completed.

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

The Research excellence Culture Action Plan (ReCAP) will be finalised in the 24/25 academic year, following which actions will be prioritised for completion in the current and subsequent years. Specific actions to be undertaken that are relevant to both the Concordat Action Plan and the ReCAP are:

Academic Workload Project: This project aims to improve workload planning and allocation for academic staff and in doing so to increase the transparency of working practices to promote efficiency and ensure fairness. This will contribute to promoting good mental health and wellbeing, helping to reduce the administrative burden and protecting time for research.

Assuring the Highest Standards of Research Integrity: The University's senior management committee has agreed on the requirements for staff and PGRs to

complete Research Integrity and Ethics training. These requirements have been communicated to all those in scope and a range of measures taken, e.g. sending out automated emails, to ensure compliance with the requirements. Monitoring and evaluation will take place to ensure the training is impactful and compliance rates are high.

Improving Job Security for Researchers/Retaining Talent: A bridging scheme was piloted in 2023/24. This will run again, but with modifications to make it more flexible and inclusive. The bridging scheme recognises the fixed-term nature of many research contracts and provides a continued salary for those with a new research contract but with a gap between contracts, subject to conditions.

Recruitment and Selection Review: This on-going review includes mechanisms to gather feedback from candidates. This enables managers to measure progress and refine the process based on satisfaction, quality of applications, and time to hire, further ensuring a rigorous and fair recruitment process.

Effective Induction: building on the identified good practice from the review of induction practices, standardised induction packs for researchers will be created and disseminated. This aims to ensure consistent good practice in induction for all researchers and their integration into the University and their department/faculty.

Researcher engagement and communication: As mentioned above, the Faculty Researcher Career and Development (RCAD) Group has been set up to improve engagement with researchers and be more responsive to their needs. The success of these groups will be monitored during this reporting period.

Develop research identity: As well as the comprehensive training programmes/workshops for researchers in areas such as project management and research leadership, a schedule of regular sessions including on Open Access, Research Data Management is being developed by the library.

Diverse careers: It is hoped to expand on the good practice borne out of the cross institutional mentoring programme, exploring the possibility of extending this to the N8 group of universities and so enhancing opportunities for Lancaster staff.

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)*
An initial draft of the report was compiled by staff in Organisational Development and the Research Culture team. The draft was received by the Concordat Implementation Group at the meeting of the group in November 2024. Following further drafting of the report it was circulated to members again for feedback and final sign off was by the Pro-VC for Research (Interim).

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Professor Malcolm Joyce, Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise

Contact for queries: Chris Atkinson – c.atkinson1@lancaster.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