

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

Universities and Research Institutes

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Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Dr Angela Midgley, Researcher Development Manager a.midgley1@salford.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 University's strategy is currently undergoing consultation and review. There will be a strong focus on how our research and innovation can enrich lives and promote connected communities within the University that create collaborative advantage enabling our researchers to flourish and contribute to society.

The new strategy will build on our commitment to provide a vibrant, inclusive and supportive research environment where we nurture talent at all career stages.

The university provides a community structure for our researchers through our discipline-based Research & Knowledge Exchange Centres, where there are opportunities for peer support and mentoring. All researchers are welcomed into the university through our induction programme, which is now an extensive programme of activities run over 6 weeks, including engaging with professional services colleagues from library services, funding development, impact and engagement and governance. Personalised support is also provided to enable researchers to plan future research activities and identify areas where they may require training. Our annual Celebration of Innovation event brings together our researcher community for networking and discussion of relevant issues to researchers, and also recognises their achievements and successes through the awards ceremony.

The university is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion and supports a range of initiatives to ensure researchers from all backgrounds and with diverse needs experience an inclusive environment. In 2023 we launched our EDI Statement of Ambition, which sets out our ambition to be a university where inclusivity is deliberately designed and embedded into all that we do and where every student and colleague feels like they matter and belong. Our priority areas for advancing equity cover the student experience and success, the diversity of our staff body, our culture, and our research workforce and environment. Actions in support of this statement advance our support for EDI and build upon other, long-standing commitments.

The University currently holds an Athena SWAN bronze institutional award, recognising the successful work we have done to embed effective governance for monitoring and evaluating our policies and practices around gender equality. We are a member of the Race Equality Charter, a long-standing member of Stonewall

and a Stonewall Diversity Champion, and have been accredited as a 'Disability Confident' employer for our actions around the recruitment and retention of disabled job seekers.

Wellbeing is a priority for the university. Since March 2021 a *Report it* service is in place for staff where any colleague (or student) can report an experience they have had or witnessed that is unacceptable and provides a safe and confidential way of highlighting where the university needs to take action. A Mental Health First Aid Network, with over 60 members of staff trained across the university as Wellbeing Champions is also available to researchers to provide an understanding ear for others and signpost to relevant support, for example, our Employee Assistance Programme. As a signatory to DORA, the university prioritises both responsible researcher assessment and responsible use of metrics during the development and implementation of assessment processes.

The university regularly seeks feedback from researchers, which drives improvements in the staff experience. Our 2022 Research & Enterprise Culture review resulted in a number of changes to policies and processes to reduce burden and remove barriers to research. Our most recent staff survey (March 2024) led to the creation of a task group for reducing research bureaucracy, which is streamlining processes to support researchers and reduce workload pressures.

Our Research Staff Network remains the primary support mechanism for colleagues on fixed-term, research-only contracts. This was created to connect researchers and to communicate relevant University policies and initiatives and to advertise and promote development opportunities and training. Over the last year, our priority has been to collaborate externally with other universities in our region so that we collectively address support needs for ECRs, which are often common across organisations. With the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University we have created the Greater Manchester Res Dev (GMResDev) partnership (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13025448/>), which, alongside our internal programme of activities, provides development opportunities for our ECRs and peer support and connections with researchers across the different institutions. The success of our collaboration was showcased at a workshop we facilitated at the annual International Vitae Conference in Sept 2024.

In addition to our specialist support for the career development of fixed-term contract researchers, we ensure excellent support for ECRs and early career academics more widely through our Fellowships and Grants Academy. This has been established in recognition of the challenges early career academics face in

obtaining research funding and establishing their research independence. There are also dedicated university funding schemes that prioritise supporting more junior researchers including those on fixed-term contracts, for example, the Reignite Your Research and EDI in Research schemes.

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

Our Research and Knowledge Exchange Directorate continues to build on its successful and innovative postgraduate development programme to support all researchers that work at the University. A training programme **Academic Skills Programme for Innovation in Research and knowledge Exchange** has been developed and will be rolled out over the next academic year (2024-2025). It will involve induction sessions, communication skills, mentoring and leadership development. We aim to sustain and grow our research staff network so that researchers feel supported and have access to resources and training as required.

A measure of success will be ECRs directly contributing to initiatives, engaging in activities and shaping future development opportunities **(ECR1)**.

Employment

Our People Plan 2020+ has enabled us to deliver a number of initiatives aligned to the Environment and Culture and Employment areas, therefore, with our new Innovation Strategy in place and a restructured central research support directorate we are focussing on the Environment and Culture and Professional and Career Development priorities.

Continuous professional development sessions for managers of researchers are being developed, and tailored dedicated resources from the PROSPER portal are signposted to PIs which include **case studies from fellow PIs and best practice examples on how to have career conversations** with postdocs. (EM2).

Professional Development of Researchers

Regular targeted opportunities for ECRs are communicated via a monthly researcher development e-bulletin and a dedicated University SharePoint hub page. All fixed term contract researchers are offered group and 1:1 meetings with the Researcher Development Manager to support their professional development.

A measure of success will be increased and continued engagement of ECRs across the development programme and all providing positive feedback of their experiences (PCDI6).

A researcher development community of practice has been created which brings together colleagues across the University which includes, funding development, the library, employment services and research and knowledge exchange colleagues to share best practice and discuss ways in which we can work together more closely to provide our researchers with a comprehensive and innovative training programme.

Through this community we have developed principles for development and training that can be adopted when training and development sessions are designed and delivered to ensure they are engaging, inclusive, accessible and relevant.

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

The HREiR Award was achieved in April 2023 for the 12th year running. The Action Plan for 2022-2025 reflects our ambitions for researcher development at Salford paying particular focus on building communities and tailoring development opportunities for researchers at difference career stages.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Associate Deans of Research and Innovation across all Schools have been consulted and updated on the revised

	<p>researcher development programme and given the opportunity to provide input on the provision needed.</p> <p>Academic Skills Programme for Innovation in Research and knowledge Exchange has been developed and will be rolled out over the next academic year (2024-2025) Training will include leadership skills of those that manage researchers, particularly those on fixed term contracts.</p> <p>All managers of researchers are encouraged to engage with the resources available via the <u>PROSPER</u> portal and the <u>Prosper PI network</u>, where Principal Investigators and managers of researchers come together to share and evolve best practice in postdoc career development.</p> <p>All new managers of researchers are also invited to attend the new Research and Knowledge Exchange induction programme (EM2)</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Postdocs and Early Career Researchers were actively encouraged to submit an expression of interest to be part of the University's Celebration of Innovation event that took place in 2024. Two of which were successful in presenting their research in the main showcase session. This event was attended by researchers across the University and feedback complimented the diverse range of speakers and the opportunity it provided to network with colleagues.</p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>As part of the 2020-2022 action plan, employment was a major focus, and many processes were put in place with regards to recruitment, promotion and appraisal. In our action plan for 2022-2025 whilst maintaining (and enhancing) the areas we have delivered on for Employment we have turned out attention to support the Environment and Culture and Professional Development pillars.</p>

	<p>A colleague from HR has been recruited to be part of our Researcher Development working group to support the development of future actions within the employment pillar.</p> <p>Institution</p> <p>The first cohort of early career researchers with little or no experience of applying for research funding have completed a 5 month programme with the Fellowships and First grant academy to support their transition toward research independence.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>Actions within this area will be implemented during 2023-25. Managers of researchers have been identified and a leadership programme is being developed.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Monthly online career conversations sessions continue to be delivered. The topics covered include careers with data, research communication, project management and working for a start-up. (PCDI3).</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>A researcher development community of practice has been created which brings together colleagues across the University which includes, funding development, the library, employment services and research and knowledge exchange colleagues to share best practice and discuss ways in which we can work together more closely to provide our researchers with a comprehensive and innovative training programme. (PCDI1).</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>We are actively participating in the <u>Next Generation Research SuperVision Project</u> (RSVP). Currently we are feeding into supervisor CPD development and will be cascading resources to our supervisors as they become</p>

available. **(EM2)**. A mentoring in research workshop has been designed and delivered to mentors of early career researchers, the session reflected on what mentoring actually is and provided frameworks and models for mentoring conversations.

Researchers

Training and development opportunities continue to be offered that focus on the needs of ECR's. Power Hour of Reading sessions have been developed to complement our Power Hour of Writing sessions that provide researchers with protected time which allows participants to focus on a project of their choice, strengthened by accountability and supported by a community of peers.

1:1 coaching session on career progression tailored specifically for ECR's was delivered in Feb 2024 to provide attendees with the tools to help them take responsibility for their own career development **(ECR3)**. Feedback was very positive and therefore we hope to run a combination of group sessions and 1:1 sessions in the near future.

Our Pathways to Teaching and Learning programme provides a structured overview of pedagogic theory and support to complete an application for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). This continues to be promoted to ECR's to engage with and a further 2 ECR's are participating in the current cohort **(ECI2)**.

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)

We have found great benefit and success from working collaboratively as part of the Greater Manchester Res Dev partnership. Sharing expertise, resources and opportunities has increased the different training sessions we have been able to offer our researchers and we hope in time will also provide and help maintain rich collaborations and networks.

We want to continue to build on the rich and valuable information we receive from regularly and directly interacting with our research staff network and to involve them more in informal consultations to identify any areas of concern /gaps in our development programmes.

Measures of success will be increased engagement in our training and development programme and positive feedback.

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

During 2024/2025 academic year we plan to build on and enhance our collaboration with University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University as part of the Great Manchester Res Dev partnership. Providing our research staff particularly our postdocs and ECR's with access to a broader range of development opportunities as well as networking and peer support across the three institutions.

We want to ensure that the voices of research only staff are championed not only within our own institution but across the region. A Research Staff Conference will be taking place in January 2025 that is being organised by the Greater Manchester Res Dev partnership and will include representation from all 3 Universities in the panel sessions and workshops. As well as feeding into the programme content, postdoc and early career researchers from each institution are being encouraged to actively participate in the programme by Chairing sessions.

Continue to foster a community of researchers that support each other and provide research only staff the opportunity to meet new colleagues and expand their networks. We plan to launch a cross institutional buddy scheme for research only staff at the Research Staff Conference in January 2025.

Organise focus groups with our Research Staff Network to gain further insights into the gaps in our training provision as well as the areas of strength that we can build on. Deliver leadership training for both managers of researchers and research 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)

Our action plan is overseen by the Research, Enterprise, and Innovation Committee (REIC), which is a subcommittee of University Senate and chaired by the PVC Research and Enterprise. This report has been shared with the committee.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Cook', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Prof Penny Cook

Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation

Contact for queries: Dr Angela Midgley, Researcher Development Manager
(a.midgley1@salford.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