

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

Universities and Research Institutes

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Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers (max 500 words)

At the University of Strathclyde, we believe that creating and embedding a positive research culture is essential for fostering high-quality research and researchers. As such, research culture forms a key element within our Strathclyde 2030 Strategy which recognises and prioritises our rich, inclusive and distinctive culture. It commits to “actively nurture [researchers and others involved in leading, conducting and enabling research] at all stages of their careers through support, development and collaborative opportunities in which they can grow their research and build their careers”. A new Key Performance Indicator will measure key dimensions of research culture for Strathclyde.

Research culture at Strathclyde is underpinned and implemented through a range of drivers and practical initiatives that allow us as an institution to put our staff first:

- Strathclyde's **Values** are people-orientated, collaborative, innovative, bold and ambitious – these shape work at Strathclyde both at an institutional and individual level to enable staff to develop a positive and inclusive environment.
- The University's **People Strategy** is being updated and a **Wellbeing Strategy** developed. Both will underpin how staff work together through a strong commitment to stable contracts, fair and equal pay and a safe and secure working environment.
- Strathclyde has been a member of the **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)** since 2022 as one of the first UK universities. Through our institutional action plan (2025-28), the University aims to review our research assessment practices and ensure that diverse research outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research are recognised and rewarded.
- A strong and inclusive **governance structure** supports all work around research culture and researcher development. The University's Research Development & Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC) is a key decision-making body in this space and offers a place for important, rigorous discussion involving a wide range of units and groups with interests and remits around culture. Linked with other research committees and faculty bodies, this structure ensures that research culture activities are integrated with wider research strategies and well embedded within research work.

- A new institutional Wellcome-funded project on '**Cultures of Collaborative Research in a Socially Progressive Technological University**', which started in May 2024, allows Strathclyde to explore how collaborative research and innovation is accessed, rewarded and recognised in greater depth.
- A **grassroots stream of positive culture activities** is driven by Faculties and Departments within the University. These range from events, workshops and seminars to mentoring schemes, wellbeing initiatives and testing of new systems and practices – thus supporting staff in their day-to-day of conducting research. Good research practice and culture within Departments is further underpinned through an annual **Research Quality Review** process that supports units to develop responsible processes to assess their culture and research activities.
- Last but not least, the University's **commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat and other concordats and agreements** further supports our research culture in a range of practical ways. Work on these initiatives is carried out in a collaborative and connected manner, thus ensuring that staff are supported effectively across different dimensions of their research environment.

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*)

During Strathclyde's first signatory year of the revised Concordat (2020/2021), a comprehensive Gap Analysis against the Researcher Development Concordat obligations was undertaken consulting Researchers, their Managers, Faculties and Professional Services. This demonstrated that provision to support the development and employment of Researchers at the University was well established, and in line with the requirements of the original 2008 Concordat. Additional opportunities for new and enhanced activities were identified within areas of expanded scope and strengthened expectations of the revised Concordat.

Implementation of the Concordat focused on five **Key Themes** with aligned **Strategic Objectives**. The implementation of these objectives is underpinned by a multi-year **Action Plan** that is overseen by a robust governance structure, evaluated regularly and revised in line with the EU HR Excellence in Research Award which Strathclyde has held for the past 12 years.

Key Themes and Strategic Objectives

I) Implementation and Governance: *Embed the Concordat implementation and progress across the Institution through effective governance, communication, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.*

II) Research Culture: *Champion and embed a positive Research Culture across the Institution through bold, innovative, ambitious and collaborative approaches.*

III) Researcher Career Development and Progression: *Embed time and recognition for Professional and Career Development activities as integral to the Strathclyde Researcher experience to support Researcher progression into successful, fulfilling careers across a range of employment sectors.*

IV) Managers of Researchers Training and Development: *Support Managers of Researchers to be excellent, effective Leaders and Managers.*

V) Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making: *Effectively engage Researchers and their Managers with Policy and Decision-Making to develop a thriving and inclusive research environment.*

Cross-cutting all three stakeholder groups of Institution, Researchers and Managers of Researchers at Strathclyde, these objectives touch on the three Concordat pillars through a wide range of activities, including:

Environment and culture:

- Collecting and monitoring of data relating to research culture, including through piloting new approaches for gathering evidence
- Raising awareness, understanding and engagement of Researchers with research culture concepts
- Providing robust support mechanisms for staff experiencing misconduct and inappropriate behaviours
- Expanding support for wellbeing and mental health for Researchers
- Enhancing training & development for Managers of Researchers
- Enhancing engagement opportunities with institutional policy and decision-making at Faculty and University level for Researchers and Managers

Employment:

- Raising awareness and understanding of rights, responsibilities and expectations for Researchers

- Recognition of contributions beyond research delivery
- Increasing job security for Researchers

Professional development of researchers:

- Embedding development time into research roles through policy and support
- Creating access to professional careers advice and career conversations for Researchers
- Enhancing training & development resources to support roles inside and outside academia
- Expanding networking opportunities for Researchers

A multi-year Business Case is in progress with Phase One having allowed increased resourcing to target Researcher actions and Phase Two to focus on Managers of Researchers.

Governance

A strong governance structure ensures input from diverse perspectives and alignment of activities across departments. This includes Professor Tim Bedford (Associate Principal Research and Innovation) as Strathclyde's Senior Academic Concordat Champion supported by Dr Emma Compton-Daw (Researcher Development Manager, OSDU) as the Institutional Concordat Champion and Dr Maria Weikum (Researcher Development Concordat Officer, OSDU). Strategic oversight and advice on the implementation of the Concordat is provided by the Research Development & Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC) which has been merged with the former Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group in August 2024 to ensure a closer connection between the institutional Concordat work and wider research culture and development activities. The committee meets four times a year with two meetings focused specifically on Concordat progress. It reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and has representation from all Faculties and Professional Services units currently supporting Researchers, as well as Researchers and Managers of Researchers themselves. In addition, links between the Concordat work and related activities are ensured through Concordat representatives on other research- and culture-focused committees as well as working groups.

Success continues to be measured and monitored in terms of timely achievement of the Action Plan. For each Strategic Objective, this is captured through:

<p>a. operation of appropriate governance structures and opportunities for stakeholder inputs as well as continued Concordat and Researcher representation within aligned committees and initiatives;</p> <p>b. implementation of new provision and supporting resources, including structures to maintain and update new online resources, mechanisms to regularly monitor and report on continuing activities through the RDCSC and RKEC as well as the identification of follow-up actions where needed; and</p> <p>c. evidence of progress/improvement regarding views and perceptions of staff, collected through a range of quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures, including among others the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS).</p>	
<p>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]</p>	
<p>Environment and Culture (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p><i>Including actions supporting Researchers and their Managers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An enhanced communication strategy to increase staff awareness of the Concordat was developed and implemented from early 2024, building on previous baseline communication work. Results from Strathclyde's CEDARS <i>Lite</i> survey in late spring 2024 showed an increase in staff awareness over previous years, with now 80% of Researchers and 85% of Managers of Researchers aware that the Concordat exists or having an understanding of it (compared to 61% and 84%, respectively, in 2023 and 62% and 75%, respectively, in 2022). • The Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG), which – until August 2024 – strategically oversaw the Concordat implementation, was integrated into the Research Development & Culture Sub-Committee (RDCSC). RDCSC is now responsible for oversight and advice on the Concordat strategy which will enable better

	<p>connections between the institutional Concordat work and wider culture and development activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strathclyde's second Research Integrity & Culture Week ran in March 2024 and offered 22 live events as well as online resources for staff members to engage with aspects of research culture and integrity. 168 staff members – the majority Researchers and Managers of Researchers – attended the live activities, while ~250 individuals engaged online. In addition, several events were co-organised with Heriot-Watt University and the Scottish Research Integrity Network, enabling more than 180 external research professionals to participate. The Week was evaluated by external evaluators who reported positive feedback, with 100% of internal respondents saying they would recommend it to a colleague. The opportunity to network, discuss emerging topics with experts and collaborate with people from other organisations were highlighted as key benefits. Strathclyde's ~£1M Wellcome-funded 'Cultures of Collaborative Research in a Socially Progressive Technological University' project started in May 2024. Researchers and Managers of Researchers can engage with the project through a community of practice that informs the project design and through a set of internal funding calls that will support testing of interventions and new approaches. A dedicated Responsible Research & Innovation Champion role was recruited in late summer 2024 at the University to enable the development of enhanced training resources for Researchers on the topic. Strathclyde's internal CEDARS <i>Lite</i> survey – a reduced version of the national Culture, Employment & Development in Research Survey (CEDARS) – ran for the second time in late spring 2024 and collated responses from 101 Researchers and 222 Managers of Researchers, corresponding to a response rate of 18% and 28%, respectively. The results from the survey continue to provide an important route for
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	<p>measuring progress and gathering feedback on the institution's Concordat and wider culture work.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication for Researchers on institutional support mechanisms for misconduct and inappropriate behaviours, such as the Safe360 programme and Report & Support tool, has been enhanced over the past year. Results from Strathclyde's CEDARS <i>Lite</i> 2024 survey showed an increase in awareness, with, for example, 75% of Researchers aware of Safe360 (compared to 57% in 2023). The Researchers' Group, Strathclyde's research staff network, launched a series of regular lunch meet-ups in early 2024. With a small but consistent participant group, these allow Researchers to take a healthy lunch break while also networking with other Researchers at the University. <p>Managers of Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of events targeted at Health & Wellbeing for Managers of Researchers were organised in 2023/24 as a collaboration between the Organisational & Staff Development Unit and the Safety, Health, Wellbeing & Security Directorate. Engaging 20+ staff members, this included sessions at Strathclyde's Research Integrity & Culture Week and within the Supervising & Managing Researchers Peer Network which supports Managers in their skills and knowledge of people management.
Employment (max 600 words)	<p>Institution <i>Including actions supporting Researchers and their Managers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of the University's annual staff appraisal process started in 2023/24. The first phase of the review was completed in early 2024 with the review of existing guidance on the process and the launch of

	<p>a new guidance online hub, which includes dedicated guidance for Researchers. The second phase will include a revision of the online appraisal system and is aimed to be completed in mid-2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental diversity recruitment action plans have been introduced as a support mechanism to ensure staff apply best practice when recruiting Researchers. • Strathclyde has been instrumental in establishing the UK CoARA National Chapter in 2023/24 and is now a co-lead organisation for the National Chapter through which we are driving forward responsible practices for research assessment for our Researchers and Managers of Researchers. <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication of the Concordat and other researcher-specific benefits have been embedded more deeply in recruitment materials. This will give prospective Strathclyde Researchers a clearer idea of how they will be supported but also raise awareness among Managers recruiting new staff. • Researchers are represented in the institutional HR Policy Forum which reviews new and existing HR policies. This ensures that Researcher needs and contexts are appropriately considered as institutional policies and processes are developed. <p>Managers of Researchers</p> <p>The new appraisal online guidance hub has created a dedicated section for Managers of Researchers to provide support in managing performance, development and career conversations. In addition, a new Researcher Online Hub, which is under development (see section on Professional development), will also feature enhanced materials for Managers to navigate their role in the employment of Researchers.</p>
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<p>Professional development (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution <i>Including actions supporting Researchers and their Managers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new Researcher Online Hub is being developed, a digital space for Researchers that brings together key information relevant to their roles. The project will transform how Researchers and their Managers can access online resources to support their development and employment, thus providing an important new mechanism for raising staff awareness of existing policies, practices and support. As such, it will benefit future work across all three Concordat pillars. • New provision and development opportunities were added to Strathclyde's SPIRAL programme, the University's key professional development scheme on research topics, in 2023/24, including especially new events on research funding and research impact for different career levels. This is embedded within the wider existing provision within SPIRAL and the Strathclyde Supervisor Development Programme, which support Researchers and their Managers in their development on topics ranging from people management, leadership and career development to personal effectiveness, publishing research, research funding and research culture. <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In autumn 2023, Strathclyde's Researcher Development Time Policy was published to support Researchers in taking at least 10 days professional development time per year, plus additional time for their research identity and leadership development. The past year has seen a strong focus on raising awareness of this new policy and encouraging Researchers to make use of their development time. Anecdotal feedback so far has been positive and Researchers have found the policy particularly helpful in taking ownership for their development.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated Researcher Career Development Advisor joined Strathclyde in August 2023 and has over the past year been building up a portfolio of career development initiatives for Researchers, most prominently one-to-one career coaching sessions. More than 30 Researchers have engaged with this offering so far, often over multiple sessions, and Feedback has been very positive. Further work has been undertaken on enhancing the career consultation process as well as testing new models, such as group coaching. • The Researchers' Group ran its annual, flagship StrathWide conference in May 2024. The conference is organised by and for Researchers, bringing together individuals from different disciplines to develop inter- and multi-disciplinary research ideas. Participants can apply for a seed-funding call after the conference to develop their project ideas and gain experience as a Principal Investigator. As an excellent networking and leadership experience, StrathWide 2024 saw 57 participants at the conference and 13 collaborative project applications were submitted to the seed-funding call from a total of 36 Researchers following the event. • Strathclyde's Fellowship Academy supports early-career academics in working towards prestigious research fellowships. Research Fellows are eligible to join the scheme and available support has been expanded in early 2024 to include all other Researchers via a Fellowship Retreat which focused on participants developing a clear understanding of the funding landscape and their own funding ambitions. The online resources from the Fellowship Academy have also been made available to all staff in 2023/24 – thus further supporting Researchers in working towards their own research funding portfolios. <p>Managers of Researchers</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the launch of Strathclyde's Researcher Development Time Policy, guidance was developed and communicated for Managers of Researchers in how to support their Researchers around their development time. This has also included a guide on embedding researcher development time into funding proposals to allow appropriate resource for Researchers on externally funded projects. New Directors of Research and Directors of Knowledge Exchange Networks were launched in early 2024. Meeting quarterly, these act as network-building and practice sharing platforms for Managers of Researchers involved in leadership positions relating to research or knowledge exchange.
	<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>Considerable progress has been made in the implementation of the Researcher Development Concordat at Strathclyde during the past year. A focus of activities has been on communication, streamlining of existing initiatives and the initiation of new large-scale projects – this approach has allowed us to continue to encourage researcher engagement and work towards higher levels of awareness of available support, while also tackling some of the more complex areas of the institutional Concordat Action Plan.</p> <p>Streamlining governance structures has been found to be useful to better bring together complex conversations across the University. Research culture activities are distributed in many different units and this approach allows us to align and coordinate among them; our strategy to work closely with initiatives related to this Concordat and to link action plans across relevant areas (such as with Athena Swan) has been particularly effective. We will continue to strive towards a collaborative, connected approach to ensure Researchers and research culture are central in our institutional work.</p> <p>Overall, Strathclyde has followed an ambitious, multi-year strategy for the Concordat implementation that recognises the need for longer-term thinking to drive culture change. The review and update of our Action Plan in late 2023 as part of the HR Excellence in Research Award review enabled us to thoroughly examine our progress to date and take into account new institutional developments that</p>

had not been considered in the Action Plan before. It also demonstrated that our strategy has been working well so far and that we can continue progress in the same direction.

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

We will continue to drive forward the five Strategic Objectives for our Concordat implementation strategy, as outlined above. Focus over the next year will be placed in this context on a set of four core activities, including:

- Developing and delivering a number of large-scale projects specifically targeted at Researchers, such as the Researcher Online Hub as well as new programmes to enhance Researcher access to career development support;
- Contributing to wider University initiatives that will impact Researchers, such as the University's Wellbeing Strategy and the review of Strathclyde's appraisal system, with a view to ensuring Researcher needs and contexts are appropriately considered;
- Embedding recently developed processes and initiatives, such as Research Integrity & Culture Week as well as our Researcher Development Time Policy, into common practice to ensure they can offer longer-term benefit to Researchers and Managers of Researchers; and
- Enhancing resources and support available to Researchers and Managers in a small number of strategic areas, such as equality, diversity & inclusion, policy & decision-making and professional development.

Across all of these areas, activity will continue to take place through close engagement with stakeholders, colleagues working in related initiatives and groups, the Concordat governance structure as well as national networks to build well designed activities based on best practice and our stakeholders' needs.

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)

This report has been considered and recommended by the Research Development & Culture Sub-Committee before it was approved by the Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee as well as University Senate. Final consideration and approval were made by University Court, Strathclyde's highest decision-making body.

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

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk