

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

Universities and Research Institutes

<b>Name of Institution</b>	Bath Spa University
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<b>Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development</b>	Ms Sarah Priston Head of Research Office
<b>Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via <a href="mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk">CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk</a></b>	13 January 2025

**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*)**

As a professional practice and creative-led institution, the University is keen to ensure that teaching, research and knowledge exchange & enterprise are treated equally across the institution. Three new career pathways have been put in place to enable academic staff to focus on their strengths and career aspirations, and link to our existing promotion pathways, creating a parity of esteem for all. These pathways link to our KEF/TEF/and REF strategies and ensure that research underpins all of our activities, and that staff are allocated time to focus on specific activities, rather than trying to meet the demands of all 3 areas. The intention is to relieve pressure on academic staff and support their mental health and wellbeing, by putting in place more transparent and equitable opportunities for all.

We continue to be committed to developing researchers at all career stages, and supporting those who wish to be research active by:

- Monitoring sector-wide recommendations for best practice in research culture
- Embedding an understanding of the importance of impact and public engagement in research practice
- Supporting our staff and Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs) through our Researcher Development Programme (RDP), the MA in Professional Practice in HE, and our Research and Enterprise Leadership programme
- Recognising the value of professional and creative practice as research
- An annual promotion round for Readers and Professors across our three career pathways of teaching, enterprise and research.

Early career researchers are allocated lighter teaching loads and teaching timetables and adjusted to take account of the needs of particular research projects or writing activities. All ECRs are also given the opportunity to be allocated a mentor from across the research leadership community, and attend bespoke induction and training workshops.

Support for the development of a positive research culture is in place at Academic School level through the devolution of HE Quality Related funding (HEQR) to support locally led projects and initiatives, managed by designated Research Leads in each area. All academic schools have a range of Research Centres and Groups and encourage staff and PGR students to get involved in a variety of events and activities.

The following institutional activities are managed by the Research Office to support our wider research environment and culture:

- Annual Seed funding for projects and activities aligned to our research strategy
- A bespoke programme of training events for our contract researchers – ‘The Network’ – enabling them to select the topics of their development and work regularly as a cohort with an external trainer
- One-to-one leadership coaching for mid-career researchers to support the development of their careers, publications and profiles.
- Inter and multi-disciplinary sandpits and workshops across the year to bring researchers together and to foster cross-University collaborations
- An annual research festival to celebrate our research, including a PhD poster competition
- ‘Research Matters’ – a marketing and communications initiative to showcase our research more broadly

**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**

The University Research & Enterprise Committee (REC) has elected representatives from across our research and academic communities, and we actively encourage ESRs to take part in working groups and initiatives. The Research & Enterprise Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Working Group (REEDIWG) and a University Ethics Panel aim to embed good practice across the university - progress in this area is reported to and evaluated through REC.

Staff are introduced to the Concordat at the Research Induction sessions, and details are circulated regularly in the Research newsletter. The RSO engages regularly with research staff across the university, through induction events and participation in school level research meetings, and feedback and good practice informs the review and development of the Concordat Action Plan.

In the 2023/24 academic year, the Research Office implemented the National Culture, Employment and Development of Academic Researchers Survey (CEDARS) for the first time, and the evaluation of the responses will act as a benchmark for improvement in future years. A comprehensive action plan has been developed for discussion and will inform success measures within our Concordat Action Plan for the next 3 years.

### **Employment**

The RSO works with HR on any changes to recruitment processes to ensure that the needs of researchers are embedded within institutional policy and to ensure that all new PIs are included in recruitment training. An annual promotions process is in place, with bespoke workshops to support staff with their applications, and there is an annual review of the process which informs future rounds.

The PVCRE chairs termly meetings with our research leadership community and with Heads of School to discuss strategy, research environment and culture. A new annual reporting process was put in place in 2023/24 through which REC monitors and evaluates the management of research and research outcomes at local level, and this has supported academic schools to develop their own internal research strategies and activities, and to ensure that devolved funding is prioritised to address local needs.

The Research Office is represented on the Workload Planning Steering group and has informed the development of the WLP tariff and the pilot exercise that took place in 2023/24. In particular, we have worked closely on the scope of activities included with the Research and Scholarly Activity time that all academic staff can access, and workload allocations for externally funded projects and activities.

### **Professional Development of Researchers**

An annual Researcher Development Programme is in place to support research staff across all areas of their development, and this is monitored and evaluated each year, and tailored to the needs of our researcher community. The WLP tariff allocates time for training and development, and all staff have dedicated Research & Scholarly Activity time to support these activities. In 2023/24 we had a particular focus on training and development of PGR supervisors, culminating in a Supervisors Forum event at the end of the summer term. We will be building on this across 2024.25 to set up a PGR Supervisor peer community to share and exchange good practice.

In the 2023/24 academic year, we supported a number of staff to attend the SW University ELEVATE programme - an innovative leadership and development programme for women from minority ethnic groups, and will continue with this initiative in future years.

A new leadership coaching programme was put in place for mid-career researchers, and we continue to offer individual and peer coaching support to our small group of contract research staff. This sits alongside our Early Stage Researcher mentoring programme, and 5 year career planning guidance offered by Senior Staff to support and develop our researcher community.

**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**

BSU ran the CEDARS question set locally for the first time in 2023/24. This has highlighted a range of issues that have been identified by our research community, and the outcomes of the survey have been widely discussed. There are two approaches that are being taken to develop an Action Plan to put improvements in place moving forwards:

- HR Excellence in Research Working Group has reviewed the survey outcome and is developing an action plan with success measures that will be considered at Research & Ethics Committee (REC) and inform our HR Excellence in Research 12 year review Action Plan for 2024-2027.
- The Research & Enterprise Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Working Group (REDIWG) will be reviewing a detailed analysis of data linked to protected characteristics, and will be developing a plan for positive action to be considered at the University Equality & Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)

The development of our environment and culture was informed by annual research strategies prepared by each academic school at the start of the 2023/24, approved by REC, who monitored progress against actions at the end of the academic year. Schools were allocated HEQR funding to support their activities.

**Academic Managers of Researchers**

A Research Leaders network is in place which meets on a termly basis, and opportunities are made available and funded centrally for staff to attend sector wide workshops and events related to research policy.

Representatives from this group led a series of interdisciplinary workshops across the year, with each then facilitated a session highlighting this work as part of our Annual Research festival.

A new leadership coaching programme has been put in place for mid-career researcher in leadership roles, to support them with career planning and development. This is a university wide scheme, open to colleagues from across all career pathways, and will be evaluated towards the end of the academic year. A second cohort will be launched in 2024/25. Coaches have been drawn from the UKRI Fellowship Development team, facilitated by an experience external consultant.

**Researchers**

We continue to run the Early Stage Researcher mentoring programme, and an ESR network which offers three events across the year to bring researchers together to share good practice. We are also lead partners in the British Academy South West and South Wales Early Career network, which offers access to

	<p>additional training and development for this group of staff.</p> <p>We continue to run an annual seed funding competition, with additional support for impact projects and activities funded through our AHRC Impact Accelerator Award. Match funding is provided from our HEQR grant to enable us to widen access to this funding, and for development and training for staff across the sciences and social sciences.</p>
<p><b>Employment (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>The Research Office runs a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme (RDP) each year, aligned to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Workshops are developed in collaboration with a number of departments across the university and incorporates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research Integrity and Ethics, including data management and compliance</li> <li>- Knowledge Exchange, Intellectual Property and Consultancy</li> <li>- Grant and Project Management, including risk management and international collaborations</li> <li>- Skills development with the Library Writing &amp; Learning centre</li> <li>- Research, Professional Practice and Creative Practice Research methodologies</li> <li>- Research and Library Induction</li> <li>- Promotions Workshop</li> </ul> <p>The PVCRE and Research Office staff are also represented on a range of working groups and steering groups to ensure that considerations around research staff workloads and development are incorporated across wider university workstreams and initiatives. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workload Planning Steering group</li> <li>- Equality &amp; Diversity Steering Group</li> <li>- Promotions Working Group</li> <li>- Career Pathways Group</li> </ul> <p>The Research Office also has a series of termly forums (Heads of School, Research Leaders, Early Stage Researchers) at which issues can be discussed and raised informally, as well as two Research Town Halls each year which provide a platform for the discussion of wider issues and for consultation on initiatives such as the Research &amp; KE Strategies. Topics covered in 2023/24 in this forum focussed around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research Culture &amp; Environment and opportunities for Interdisciplinary Research</li> <li>- The development of our Knowledge Exchange Strategy</li> </ul> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <p>In 2023/24 we consolidated our support for project leads on externally funded projects by developing a series of start-up meetings for new grants and building on our support and</p>

	<p>development for project management, research integrity and ethics and budget management skills into the Researcher Development Programme, and in a series of one-to-one meetings for new Research Leads.</p> <p>As part of our seed funding initiative we encourage Early Stage Researchers to seek funding for Research Assistants to input into their projects, to enable them to gain valuable skills in managing research team within a supportive internal environment. This has enabled us to build up a pool of students and post-doctoral researchers across the University, also contributing to employability and graduate skills agendas.</p> <p>We launched our first Leadership Coaching programme for 15-20 mid-career academics new to leadership, with 18 staff taking up this opportunity for 3 x 90-minute coaching sessions with UKRI trained coaching professionals. The schemes aims to support them both in their career development planning, and in enhancing their leadership skills. A second cohort is planned for 2024/25.</p> <p><b>Researchers</b></p> <p>We continue to support our researcher community with internal peer networks, coaching opportunities (for contract researchers) and a mentoring scheme (for all Early Stage Researchers).</p> <p>In addition to this, in 2023/24 we focussed on a series of interdisciplinary research workshops and sandpits to provide opportunities for researchers to discuss their research with colleagues, and to support interdisciplinary collaborations. This culminated in the annual Research Festival in June 2024, where staff presented their work to colleagues, and shared their projects and activities with the university community.</p> <p>29 HEQR seed fund projects were awarded in 2023/24 academic year, of which 13 were led by Early-Stage Researchers (45%).</p> <p>Academic schools also supported research in their areas through devolved funding programmes, aligned to their school research priorities and strategies – as agreed by Research &amp; Ethics Committee at the start of the 2023/24 academic year.</p>
<p><b>Professional development (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>A new Senior Lecturer in Research &amp; Enterprise Development was appointed in May 2023, and developed a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme which was piloted across the 2023/24 academic year, in collaboration with academic schools. The programme was very successful and has been refined and developed for the 2024/25 academic year.</p> <p>Key elements of the programme were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PhD Supervisor Training workshops, enabling the development of a peer community for supervisory practice supported by experienced supervisors and Higher Degree Tutors in each academic school. This culminated in a PhD Supervisors forum in the summer, which will be repeated</li> </ul>

	<p>on an annual basis. From 2024/25 this programme will be compulsory for all new PhD supervisors, and a new Supervisors Toolkit is being developed for launch in Spring` 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhanced Research Integrity &amp; Ethics training, and the development of the Ethics Peer Review College with support for members across the university.</li> <li>- Workshops for ESR and PhD students linked directly to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, ensuring that key skills for researchers are embedded within the programme.</li> <li>- The annual Research festival was run for the second year, acting as a showcase for our interdisciplinary work, and providing an opportunity for PhD students to showcase their work through a poster competition.</li> <li>- The University took part in the SW ELEVATE programme for the first time – aimed at women from minority ethnic backgrounds. We supported 4 staff from across the University to attend the programme based in Bristol with other SW University partners. Feedback from the scheme was that it was a valuable experience which has supported their career development, and we will be sponsoring an additional 5 staff to attend in 2024/25.</li> </ul> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <p>Leadership skills, Research Identity and Research Management continue to be embedded within many of the training sessions across the Researcher Development Programme, and leadership is also one of the criteria for promotion that has been developed across all three career pathways this year.</p> <p>The PVCRE continues to run termly forums for those in Research Leadership positions across the University, and in 2023/24, we strengthened the membership of the Research &amp; Ethics Committee by including Research Leads from each Academic School as formal representatives. Each School is required to develop an Annual Research &amp; Enterprise Plan for discussion at the start of the academic year, and to report on the success of these at the final meeting of the year. This has helped shape the development of research culture in each of the academic schools, and the devolvement of HEQR funding to support their activities has ensured that they have resources to support this work, and to support researcher development at a local level.</p> <p><b>Researchers</b></p> <p>We continue to run an annual HEQR seed fund competition, to support individual researchers in gaining experience in planning, managing and reporting on a research project each year. We have also used our AHRC Impact Accelerator Award funding to support staff with building networks and external collaborations, and on a range of larger Research Impact projects, to build on their research. In addition, the funding supported two Early Stage and two PostDoc Research fellowships, allowing researcher time to build on their existing research practice to evidence and document</p>
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	<p>impact from their work.</p> <p>HEQR devolved funding managed by the School Research leads has been spent in a variety of different ways to support researchers within Academic Schools, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seed-funded projects</li> <li>- Support for Research Centres and Groups</li> <li>- Conference attendance for those presenting papers at disciplinary level</li> <li>- Training and development</li> <li>- Creative practice based exhibitions and events</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>Building on the success of REF2021, a new Research Strategy was the subject of extensive consultation across the 2021/22 academic year and was approved by the Board of Governors in December 2022. Over 2023/24 we have worked with Heads of School to develop the implementation strategy focusing on how we best manage and support research activities across the university, to support a fully funded research environment and culture.</p> <p>The University ran the the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) question set internally for the first time in the 2023/24 academic year. An evaluation of the responses has been undertaken, and an Action Plan agreed to address issues raised. This has been aligned with and informs the actions and success measures that have been incorporated into our 2024-2027 Action Plan to support the Concordat to Support Researcher Development. Although the response rate was only 15% of academic staff, which was not as high as had been hoped, the responses received were valuable and raise a range of concerns that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Key issues that were raised centred around how we develop the existing workload planning model to ensure that staff feel confident that their research and career development needs are being met, and that their wider contributions are being recognised and valued across the University community. We will work with HR and the Workload Steering Group to address these issues, including how the annual Staff Development Review process works better to support this process.</p> <p>The PVCRE has also relaunched the Research Matters initiative, with a dedicated Graduate Marketing and Communications Co-Ordinator recruited to showcase and celebrate our research more widely, and to enable better communication and advocacy for researcher development training and events. We intend to develop a range of case studies that demonstrate how research underpins both teaching and knowledge exchange activities across the university, which will highlight the value of these activities, as well as contributing to TEF and KEF.</p> <p>The survey also highlighted concerns raised around discrimination, bullying and harassment and other equality and diversity issues across the University. These are being discussed within the Research &amp; Enterprise Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion Working Group, as well as some worrying data in relation to staff mental health and wellbeing that is being discussed with HR. An action plan with positive actions to address these issues is being developed for consideration by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG).</p> <p>Building on the launch of the new Research Strategy, and informed by discussions with the Research Leaders Group, we put in place a series of interdisciplinary workshops across the 2023/24 academic year, which provided staff with opportunities to come together to</p>	



discuss their work, and to start developing collaborations across the university. This will be enhanced in 2024/25, with each groups being allocated a small amount of HEQR funding to support these developments, which we hope will lead to a range of projects and collaborations that support our research environment and culture.

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

The new Research & Enterprise strategy has been aligned with the University Teaching & Learning Strategy to reinforce the links between TEF/KEF and REF, and to show the value of research to the university. The local CEDARS exercise that was undertaken in the Spring of 2024 has raised concerns around workload and how time is allocated and protected for research, alongside the need to focus more on supporting staff with their personal and professional development, and with longer term career planning. These are key aspects of the Concordat, and an action plan addressing these issues has been developed and is summarised below.

**Environment and Culture**

The 2024 survey showed that awareness of the Concordat is not strong and work will be done to raise its profile as well as other sector wise research initiatives. There is a clear need to provide opportunities for staff to meet together to engage with their research, and to showcase this more widely across the university. Research only staff report that they can feel isolated and not part of a research community, and we need to embed them more into these activities and events.

Issues of mental health and wellbeing centre around workload management practices, and a university wide effort is being put in place to address these issues. The new REEDIWG has been tasked with identifying positive actions that can be put in place to support staff from protected characteristic groups, and to embed these within our policy and practice.

**Employment**

The research induction works well, but the survey results show that staff are not clear about the opportunities that exist for them to develop their research careers, and that support for this is inequitable across schools, with teaching pressure impacting on their ability to do research. This is a particular issue for ESRs who are also undertaking the Professional Practice in HE Certificate as part of their probation period.

The RSO will work closely with HR and the Workload Planning (WLP) Steering Group to address these issues and to ensure that annual Staff Development Reviews are aligned to WLP discussions. A need for better training and development for managers has been identified, to address some of these issues.

**Professional and Career Development**

The survey highlighted the need for managers to be trained in career development discussions, and for opportunities for staff to engage with opportunities outside of academia to be identified.

Engagement and take-up of personal and professional development and training is low, and the SL RED will be working with Research Leads in schools to embed discipline specific training into school level activities, as well as working with the RO more widely to support events and activities that will bring research staff together to discuss their work and develop collaborate projects, as well as encouraging more informal mentoring and providing opportunities for coaching and leadership training.

**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 annual plan has been informed by the review of the Concordat Action Plan undertaken by the HR Excellence in Research Working Group.

It was considered and approved by Research & Ethics Committee on 16 October 2024, by the Academic Board on 5 November 2024 and the Board of Governors on 12 December 2024.

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Contact for queries: Ms Sarah Priston, Head of Research Office ([s.priston@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:s.priston@bathspa.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](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk)  
[www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk)