

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

Universities and Research Institutes

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| Name of Institution | University of Manchester |
| Reporting period | October 2023-September 2024 |
| Date approved by governing body | 1 October 2024 |
| Date published online | TBC |
| Web address of annual report | HR Excellence in Research The University of Manchester |
| Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage | https://www.researcherdevelopment.manchester.ac.uk/research-environment/researcher-development-concordat/ |
| Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development | Dr Amy Smith Amy.smith-2@manchester.ac.uk |
| Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk | 4 October 2024 |

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*)

We are committed to embedding a positive and inclusive research culture and environment where 'researchers at every stage can develop into and thrive as leaders in their chosen field' (*'Our Future' Strategic Plan, 2021-25*).

The University has held the HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) since 2011 and successfully renewed our ongoing commitment to its principles in autumn 2023. Our action plan dovetails with broader commitments to continuously improve inclusive and supportive cultures through the Athena Swan (Silver, 2023) and Race Equality Charter (Silver, 2023) charter marks.

Our research culture work is conceptualised around four themes:

- Supporting diverse and rewarding careers
- Enabling open and impactful research
- Upholding the highest levels of responsible and ethical research
- Building collaborations and interdisciplinarity

Initiatives include: a dedicated researcher developer post to embed learning from Prosper, a range of leadership programmes for different career stages, internal funding opportunities to enhance interdisciplinary collaboration, a new responsible research and innovation framework, a project to promote and embed 'team research' principles, and an open research skills and development framework.

Positive research culture is maintained and cultivated in the following ways:

Governance:

The Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG), chaired by the Associate Vice President for Research, has oversight of research staff career development. RSSG reports to the Research Strategy Group (RSG), the key decision-making body in university research governance. RSSG comprises academic leads for research staff from each faculty, research staff reps from each faculty, and representatives from centralised professional service teams including Learning and Organisational Development (L&OD), People and Organisational Development (P&OD), the Library, Researcher Development (ResDev), and the academic lead for EDI.

Representation and engagement:

Additionally, each faculty has active research staff reps networks who meet quarterly with the ResDev team to discuss issues and enhance development support. Researchers

can raise concerns and make suggestions to faculty research staff leads, and in confidence directly to the AVP email inbox.

Training and development:

As well as faculty/school provision, ResDev provide and facilitate personal, professional, and career development training, resources, and one-to-one support for PGRs, research staff, PIs, and supervisors. L&OD deliver bespoke 'Leading for Fellows' and 'Managing for Researchers' courses, and the Library delivers research-specific training through My Research Essentials.

Rewarding collegiality:

We recognise and celebrate colleagues' contributions to supporting others, valuing these equally with other esteem indicators. Key mechanisms for this are our annual awards aimed at different career stages, which include specific categories for contributions to research culture and environment. These comprise the Manchester Doctoral College awards for PGRs and supervisors, the Research Staff Excellence Awards, and the 'Making a Difference' awards, open to individuals or small teams of academics, researchers and PGRs.

Collegiality is recognised in promotions criteria and all faculties provide guidance on evidencing researcher development and collegiality to applicants and review panels. Our statement of research contribution expectations includes 'Collegial service to support a vibrant research environment', outlining the expectation that colleagues promote the training and development of ECRs, mentor colleagues, and engage in peer review of colleagues' research.

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success (*max 600 words*)

All three stakeholder groups (institution, managers of researchers, and researchers) have a role to play in implementing the Concordat and enhancing researcher development at Manchester. The HREiR Award (2023-26), successfully renewed in autumn 2023, included a plan of 26 actions to support researchers at every career stage. Our overarching strategic objectives focus on enhancing:

- engagement with researchers and their managers, including increasing visibility of available support;
- Researcher engagement in professional development programmes.
- support for careers beyond academia.
- career development support for research fellows and other staff vital to the research process, such as research methodologists.
- support for managers of researchers to facilitate professional and career development of their researchers.

Environment and culture

We're focussing on creating new methods of engagement with research staff and managers of research staff, as well as increasing the representation and visibility of research staff.

- **Launching a new SharePoint site for ResDev, establishing dedicated SharePoint sites and channels for all research staff**, and growing the number of research staff reps. *Success measures:* A third of research staff to have engaged with new SharePoint site by May 2025, as measured by website analytics, and consistent engagement via Teams or alternative.
- **Maintaining representation of research staff across Faculty and University committees and increasing representation in under-represented areas.** *Success measure:* Each School to have a research staff representative on the Research Staff Reps Forum by May 2025, Research Staff Rep on Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group by December 2024.
- **Support and retain diverse talent by developing specific resources for researchers from under-represented groups.** *Success measure:* launch of targeted development provision for BAME and disabled researchers by Spring 2025.

Employment

- **Creating job security and promoting progression** of research staff, by increasing visibility and transparency of reward and recognition policies *Success measure:* Annual increase in number of applications for promotion from research staff from 41 in 2023.

- **Reviewing and updating the Performance & Development Review process.** *Success measure:* Increase by a third % of research staff reporting having a P&DR from 49% (Research Staff Survey 2023) to 65% by 2026.
- **Delivering improved job security through the pilot of a new scheme for research staff through a "talent bench" approach.** *Success measure:* Pilot launched in Spring 2025; positive initial feedback from those involved in the pilot on the impact on their sense of job security.
- **Improved support for Research Methodologists via a framework that supports their career progression.** *Success measure:* Introduction of the framework by 2026, and positive feedback from Research Methodologists.

Professional Development of Researchers

- **Full integration of Prosper insights and resources at Manchester** by developing and offering workshops and development sessions available to all researchers and their PIs. *Success measure:* Target of one third of UoM postdocs being registered on Prosper Portal by 2026; 75 research staff to have participated in UoM Prosper cohorts by May 2026; and 75% of participants to reporting having found the course useful in their professional and career development
- **Further expand a portfolio of opportunities that show how researchers can utilize and document their 10 days of professional development,** *Success measures:* high rate of click-throughs to new resource using case studies of 10 days' development; double the percentage of research staff undertaking at least 'ten days' professional and career development activity from 15% (Research Staff Concordat survey 2023) to 30% by 2026.
- **Increase research staff awareness and access to mentoring scheme.** *Success measure:* Increase uptake of Manchester Gold mentees from 28 research staff in 2023 to 40 by 2026. See below for data from this year.

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 communications schedule with Research Staff is set for 2024/25. The first Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG) newsletter will be shared with Research Staff and PIs in October 2024, continuing annually. The 'PIs need to know briefing', which will include actions specific to PIs, will be shared in December, March, and June.

The **new ResDev SharePoint**, with improved interfaces for Research Staff has been designed over Summer 2024 and is currently being built. Focus groups with research staff are planned for September 2024 to review the new site, with expected final delivery in mid-Autumn.

The **pilot phase of enhanced engagement solution is on schedule, despite** feedback indicating MS Teams may not be effective for research staff communication. A survey launched in August 2024 will assess viability and explore alternatives, with pilots set for 2024/25.

Onboarding support for Research Staff is being revamped in response to feedback from Associate Deans for Research and Research Staff reps. Specific inductions were offered but saw low engagement in 2023/24, and have therefore been reviewed and refreshed for 2024/25. These form part of ResDev's new internal communications plan to increase engagement. Feedback has been used to update the Research Staff Handbook over the Summer 2024 period. The Handbook and Induction will be more closely linked in 2024/25.

The results of the 2023 Research Staff Survey were analysed, and reports circulated to all Faculties, research staff reps, and to the EDI Directorate. We have engaged with the Colleague Experience team and are currently agreeing the inclusion of 'pulse' questions in the new joiners, one year, and leavers questionnaires, and in the 2025 Staff Survey.

ResDev remains committed to regular meetings addressing researcher issues and promoting the Concordat. In 2023/24, three main events occurred: Post Doc Appreciation Week (154 sign-ups), Research Staff Conference (110 attendees), and a networking event (15 attendees). For 2024/25, these meetings will also incorporate open discussion forums for researchers.

Research staff representation has improved within the Faculty of Humanities Reps Network, growing from 2 to 4 reps. We are working to further increase reps, with AVP Research recommending each School R&I Group include a Research Staff Rep and RSSG is collating data which will inform more targeted action on this in 2024/25.

In EDI and wellbeing, a new bystander training course was piloted by Royce Research Institute and is now available as

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| | <p>asynchronous training, with face-to-face sessions offered by the EDI Directorate. 500 colleagues have participated so far. The new SharePoint site and updated Research Staff Handbook, featuring wellbeing and harassment support, will launch in October 2024, with wellbeing training details included in the RSSG Newsletter.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>The PI Toolkit, launched in June 2024, includes guidance on wellbeing, reporting harassment, and good research practices. It had 34 unique users and will be evaluated in January 2025. See below for detail on the communications plan for the PI Toolkit.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Focussing on recognising and supporting individuals, our Research Staff Excellence Awards have been reviewed, the process streamlined, and categories added. We addressed concerns on burdensome nomination process, improved the promotion of the awards, and added a new category for ‘Best Outstanding Interdisciplinary Research’. We saw the number of individual nominations increase from 13 in 2023 to 27 in 2024.</p> <p>We are a founding member of the <u>British Academy Early Career Researchers Network North West</u>.</p> |
| <p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p> | <p>Institution (themes – job security)</p> <p>Actions for this stakeholder group focus on the theme of improving job security for research staff.</p> <p>RSSG received report from P&OD in March 2024 on numbers of research staff on fixed term contracts in 2021/22 and 2022/23, which showed the percentage of research staff on FTCs reducing from 80% in 2021/22 to 67% in 2022/23, with the number on permanent or finite-funded open-ended contracts rising from 20% to 33%. RSSG will receive the next update in March 2025, which will provide success measures for actions detailed in this document.</p> <p>The Research Methodologist Task & Finish group had recommendations on a development framework accepted by the P&OD sub-committee and are now tasked with developing</p> |

detail and scoping the framework using the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health (FBMH) as an exemplar.

We are encouraging PIs to consider the promotion of research staff from the earliest stages of the project and include this in their grant application costings where possible. From October 2024, guidance in the research costing tool will prompt PIs to cost in additional increments past the top of a named researcher's current grade.

The pilot of a 'talent bench' scheme, wherein researchers will be hired onto permanent contracts with UoM and move between projects within the university. Scoping of the scheme has been ongoing since early Spring 2024; People and Organisational Development have identified the three Schools within the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health as suitable for the pilot, and the UCU has been informally engaged. A scoping paper has been drafted which will be taken to the BMH faculty leadership team in Autumn 2024 for approval. Consultation with staff and unions will take place in Autumn 2024, before rolling out the pilot in 2025 and evaluating in 2026.

Academic Managers of Researchers

The PI Toolkit is an invaluable employment tool for managers of researchers. It includes sections on recruitment and induction, and giving feedback to unsuccessful candidates, as well as on the end of a contract and how to support research staff through this transition.

Managers of researchers are also encouraged to participate in a range of leadership courses including the new Leading for Research Fellows @ Manchester course (33 researchers attended) and the externally facilitated Leading Researchers (24 researchers attended). These courses will be delivered again in their existing formats in 2024/25.

The review of the Performance and Development Review (P&DR) process and form to ensure usefulness for research staff has been delayed. This is due to turnover of P&OD representation on RSSG and has been picked up over Summer 2024 for progress. A general review has been undertaken by P&OD, with a move towards a 'lighter touch' but more frequent conversation, rather than completion of a form.

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| | <p>Researchers</p> <p>An initial questionnaire was sent to all School ADs for Researcher in July 2024 to gather data on how promotion is advertised and supported at School level, and on what feedback is giving to researchers throughout and beyond process. The questionnaire will be followed up by interviews from September 2024.</p> |
| <p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p> | <p>Institution</p> <p>We continue to offer dedicated support to staff at all career stages and are enhancing provision for staff across all developmental stages and increasing support for diverse career paths.</p> <p>We are producing a new resource on pathways through 10 days of professional development. We have identified six potential candidates to approach for case studies and have drafted an overview of content plan. This content will be available on the new ResDev SharePoint by December 2024. It will be included in our new internal communications plan for 2024/25.</p> <p>We are producing targeted support for BAME researchers and disabled research staff, who reported highest levels of dissatisfaction in the 2023 Research Staff Survey. Analysis of that data, and review of sector best practice, is underway. The results of these will be shared with the incoming Researcher Development PGR intern (early 2024/25) who will further research best practice and lived experience of disability among UoM researchers, working with the EDI Directorate. We are on track to deliver new provision from Spring 2025.</p> <p>A new Leading for Research Fellows @ Manchester course was delivered in 2024. Two cohort-based programmes were launched and promoted. 33 fellows completed the programme. A review and evaluation process in Summer 2024 identified actions for improvement, mainly around administration and communications. Two further cohorts are planned for 2024/25. 100% of respondents (8 people) rated the programme as excellent/good and as useful.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> |

The PI Toolkit contains signposting, guidance, and practical examples of careers conversations and providing feedback. Resources from the Prosper project have also been adapted and included in the Toolkit. We will review, promote, and update the PI toolkit annually to reflect sector best practice, focussing on leadership in 2025. A comms plan for the PI toolkit is required and specific questions on leadership added to the Toolkit evaluation survey.

We promoting Prosper to managers of researchers and will be increasing this in 2024/25, including the PI Network.

Researchers

Embedding Prosper throughout 2023/24: Currently there are 194 registered users citing University of Manchester as their institution, making up 23% of total UK registrations. 9% of UoM research staff are registered on the Prosper Portal. We have delivered Prosper cohort programme to 35 researchers, with 100% rating sessions as good or excellent. Prosper is promoted in the ResDev newsletter each month and in the Research Staff induction.

Our support for recognition for researchers beyond their immediate project work includes supporting them to achieve UKCGE Associate Supervisor Recognition, comprising providing funding and development support during the writing of their application. Take up has been low, and this is explored in the lesson learned below.

We have supported more researchers in mentoring. The 2023 Research Staff Survey results were discussed by Res Dev and L&OD leading to bespoke comms stressing the advantages of mentoring for research staff as both mentors and mentees. Research staff involvement in the Manchester Gold mentoring programme in 2024 was as follows.

- Mentors: 19 as mentors (up from 16 in 2023, 19% increase). 95% of mentors were matched, up from 56% matched in 2023.
- Mentees: 49 mentees (up from 28 in 2023, an increase of 75%). This comfortably exceeds the action plan target of 40 research mentees by 2026.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of research staff mentees: research mentee applications as a proportion of all mentee applications to MG are now 10% compared to 8% last year. <p>Research Staff reps will be consulted on the Manchester Gold mentoring programme in Autumn 2024.</p> |
| <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. <i>(max 500 words)</i></p> | |
| <p>There has been delay in progress on some actions due to staff turnover in the ResDev team in early 2024, including on the delivery and evaluation of the PI Toolkit, talent bench progress, and analysis of EDI data from the 2023 Research Staff Survey. These issues are now resolved, and delivery and evaluation dates have been replanned. <i>Success measure: delivery of actions within new timeframe.</i></p> <p>Many of our actions planned for the 2023-26 period focus on driving engagement with Research Staff and improving our communications operations, including using MS Teams. In consultation with research staff over the past year, we have learned that researchers may not use MS Teams as a communication tool in their everyday work. This has necessitated further research to establish the channels they do use and consider how to best engage them. It has also prompted us to re-think communications processes through other channels, such as email. For example, we are identifying the best software for us to track engagement and click-throughs on newsletters. <i>Success measure: 5% click throughs on newsletters by January 2025; new engagement solution in place by Spring 2025; 1/3 of research staff to have engaged with new solution by Summer 2026.</i></p> <p>It is difficult for us to identify PIs as a cohort through the HR systems available at the university, which makes communicating directly with this group challenging. The measurable impact of this is low engagement with resources such as the PI Toolkit. We have raised this problem with P&OD and have requested that line managers be added to PowerBI, and we continue to monitor the impact of this issue whilst solutions are being found. We are also planning 2 new PI-facing communications in the communications strategy for 2024/25 (RSSG newsletter and PIs Need to Know). <i>Success measure: 5% click-through rate from RSSG newsletter and PIs Need to Know to PI Toolkit by January 2025; 1/3 PIs to engage with PI Toolkit by May 2025 measured by unique site visitors.</i></p> <p>We have had no engagement from research staff with the UKCGE associate recognition process in 2023/24. In July 2024, the university launched a renewed institutional commitment to training for PGR supervisors, encouraging all supervisors to complete annual CPD. As part of this push, ResDev will promote UKCGE associate recognition via the new SharePoint and internal communications strategy and will continue to support</p> | |

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| and fund applications. <i>Success measure: 10 associate applications submitted by June 2025.</i> |
| Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period (max 500 words) |
| <p>The following are our key objectives for the upcoming year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and launch of the Talent Bench scheme pilot: Fixed-term contracts and precarity continue to be a key driver of research staff dissatisfaction. Enhancing job security wherever possible, and where contract changes are in the best interests of researchers, will have a positive impact on the research staff environment. The talent bench pilot scheme will move a small number of researchers based in FBMH from fixed term to permanent contracts, where there is a high incidence of staff ‘churn’ from project to project. The pilot scheme will be launched in Spring 2025. • Raising researchers’ engagement with development opportunities: Consultation with research staff reps tells us that awareness of researcher development and the Concordat, and of the 10 days’ development expectation, remains low across the university. We will respond to this challenge through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our Res Dev strategic internal communications plan, comprising the launch of the new SharePoint site, improved and planned communications with consistent reporting, and the alternative Research Staff engagement solution. 2. Greater integration of open discussion between senior staff and researchers into events such as Postdoc Appreciation Week and Research Staff Conference, where the Concordat will be discussed and promoted. 3. The ‘Pathways to 10 Days of Professional Development’ resource will be launched by December 2024, giving researchers case studies to inspire their use of the 10 days. • Development and launch of targeted provision for underrepresented researchers: In the 2023 Research Staff Survey, Disabled researchers and BAME researchers reported highest levels of dissatisfaction with development opportunities. We will design and pilot targeted provision for these groups by Spring 2025. • Increased representation of researchers across University: Representation of research staff is inconsistent between faculties. We will continue to drive engagement in the Faculty of Humanities by recruiting at least one rep per School by May 2025 and 1 rep on the University’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisory group by December 2024. We will review and report on representation of research staff on all School R&I Committees by March 2025. |

- **Prosper fully integrated in ResDev programme and engagement with PIs increased**

In addition to the above action plan priorities, the ResDev programme and resources will undergo a thorough evaluation between November 2024 and January 2025. This will provide robust data on the quality of the development offering at Manchester, will capture data for reporting, and will identify any gaps in provision.

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 was drafted by colleagues in ResDev and Research Strategy, working closely with the AVP Research. It was first shared with the Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG) for review and approval. RSSG is chaired by the AVP Research and comprises research staff reps, academic staff, and reps from ResDev, P&OD, and the EDI Directorate. RSSG has oversight of the HREiR Award action plan. RSSG members were asked to review and provide feedback on the strategic priorities and objectives for the previous and upcoming reporting period.

Following RSSG approval, the report was considered by P&OD Sub-Committee, the committee with oversight of all working culture and practice at the University of Manchester, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer. The body approved the report on 1 October 2024.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries: Dr Amy Smith, amy.smith-2@manchester.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