

Research Staff Strategy Group (RSSG)

Wednesday 17 June 2026, 10:00-12:00, Roscoe 3.1

Attendance: Melissa Westwood (chair), Amy Smith, Teri Gosling (minutes), Anne Marie Sowerbutts, Anne-Marie Glenny (online), Jon Pittman, Jack Benton, Stephen Johnson, Sonal Patel, Marta Falkowska, Eve Suharwardy,

Apologies: James Evans, Rachel Cowen, Claire Liggins, Helen Pearce and Sheona Drummond, Marie Brotherton, Lorna Bryant.

Agenda Items

1. Apologies, Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

Discussion:

- The minutes of 11 March 2026 were confirmed and agreed.
- The pay inconsistency issue previously raised in relation to research staff in Humanities was explored with HR and discussed at SEED Research Committee. The matter can now be closed.
- The inconsistency between internal and external costing at Grade 6 versus Grade 7 remains open. A written outline of fellowship grading issues is required before further RSSG discussion.
- Ongoing concerns were noted regarding the clarity and consistency of communications to research staff, particularly around promotions, contracts, job security and the visibility of ongoing initiatives.
- There remains a need to keep research staff informed about developments as work progresses as well as reporting final decisions and outcomes.

Noted:

- An action to develop a communication approach is included in the new Concordat action plan.

Agreed:

- Continue developing a clear approach for communicating progress updates and opportunities for staff to contribute to discussions.
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Actions:

Action	Owner	Deadline
Develop approach for communicating work-in-progress updates	ResDev/Amy	Align with new action plan
Provide written outline of fellowship grading issues	Sheona	Before further RSSG discussion

2. People Updates and Research Staff Representatives' Issues

Discussion:

- The new promotions feedback form remains to be updated; need to decide whether this should be included in the Concordat action plan.
- No new issues were received from Research Staff Representatives.

Actions:

Action	Owner	Deadline
Consider whether promotions feedback should be included in the Concordat action plan	RSSG/ResDev	During action plan finalisation

3. Fixed-Term Contracts and Employment Data

Discussion:

- The paper provided the latest data on numbers of research staff on fixed-term contracts and finite-funded permanent contracts, including trends over time.
- Redeployment or extension outcomes improved from 51% in 2024-25 to 63% in 2025-26 to date.
- Terminations fell from 28% to 22% over the same comparison period.
- Permanent/open-ended contracts increased from 46.0% in August 2025 to 47.9% in May 2026.
- Fixed-term contracts still account for just over half of research staff posts.
- Further clarification is required on terminology and what the categories mean in practice.

Noted:

- Additional contextual data would improve interpretation, particularly service length, progression and how open-ended or finite-funded categories are understood in practice.

Actions:

Action	Owner	Deadline
Clarify terminology and practical implications of FTC, finite-funded permanent and open-ended categories	Stephen/People	Next data discussion
Explore inclusion of promotion/career progression data in reports	Data/People	Next data refresh

4. Research Staff Events: Postdoc Appreciation Week 2026

Discussion:

- Faculty representatives were asked to provide verbal updates on plans for Postdoc Appreciation Week 2026.
- A decentralised model remains the proposed approach, with follow-up needed to ensure provision across all 3 faculties.

Actions:

Action	Owner	Deadline
Follow up with faculty leads on Postdoc Appreciation Week planning	RSSG reps/ResDev	Before September 2026

5. HREiR Renewal and Concordat Actions: Review of 2023-26 Plan

Discussion:

- The update clarified Vitae requirements, highlighted areas where progress or targets had not been achieved, and invited RSSG input on reasons and next steps.

- Areas highlighted for discussion included research culture, EDI, bullying and harassment, recognition, work priorities and access to training on careers beyond academia.
- Survey question changes may affect comparability of results, particularly where trends appear to have reduced.

Noted:

- Quantitative measures need to be interpreted carefully where questions or wording have changed.
- Targets should be realistic, measurable and supported by clearer impact measures.

Agreed:

- The next action plan should use more realistic measures and clearly link actions to evidence, outcomes and impact.

6. Concordat Forward Plan 2026-29

Discussion:

- The discussion considered each theme in turn, testing whether the proposed obligation(s) resonated with consultation findings, whether each action addressed an identified gap or need, and the possible success measures or impacts for reporting.

Key priority themes identified through the Your Voice Matters survey:

- Disability inclusion
- Job security
- Reward and recognition
- Communication
- Career development

Agreed:

- The plan should focus on deliverable, measurable commitments rather than broad intentions.

Actions:

Action	Owner	Deadline
Circulate draft Concordat plan for feedback	ResDev	Within one week
Submit draft to Research Committee	ResDev	Early July 2026
Review obligations with no current actions and identify whether ongoing People plan actions can support them	ResDev/RSSG	Action plan finalisation

7. Prosper at Manchester and Professional Development/Career Pathways

Discussion:

- The continuing need to scale access to career development initiatives and embed support for unsuccessful fellowship applicants was noted.

Agreed:

- Future development should focus on scalability, accessibility and clearer pathways into non-academic careers.

Actions:

Action	Owner	Deadline
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Develop scalable model for career development provision, including learning from Prosper evaluation	ResDev/Anne Marie Sowerbutts	Next plan phase
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8. Activity Updates and Reports

Noted:

- Researcher Development and Library updates were received via papers.

9. Any Other Business and Next Meeting

Next meeting: 14 October 2026, 10:00-12:00, Roscoe 3.1

Summary of actions

Action	Owner	Deadline
Develop approach for communicating work-in-progress updates	ResDev/Amy	Align with new action plan
Provide written outline of fellowship grading issues		Before further RSSG discussion
Confirm update on development of the promotions feedback form	Stephen/People	Next update cycle
Consider whether promotions feedback should be included in the Concordat action plan	RSSG/ResDev	During action plan finalisation
Clarify terminology and practical implications of FTC, finite-funded permanent and open-ended categories	Stephen/HR	Next data discussion
Explore inclusion of promotion/career progression data in reports	Data/HR	Next data refresh
Follow up with faculty leads on Postdoc Appreciation Week planning	RSSG reps/ResDev	Before September 2026
Develop improved impact measures linked directly to actions	ResDev	Draft plan phase
Circulate draft Concordat plan for feedback	ResDev	Within one week
Submit draft to Research Committee	ResDev	Early July 2026
Review obligations with no current actions and identify whether People plan actions can support them	ResDev/RSSG	Action plan finalisation

Develop scalable model for career development provision, including learning from Prosper evaluation	ResDev/Anne Marie Sowerbutts	Next plan phase
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