

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*)

Anglia Ruskin University's (ARU's) approach to delivering and sustaining a healthier and more sustainable research culture and infrastructure is underpinned by policy and practice which places researcher development and community at the heart of an inclusive and developmentally-focussed research and innovation environment. We have held the HR Excellence in Research (HREIR) Award since 2013, evidencing our commitment in this regard, retaining it in 2023 at the ten-year review stage. Our new institutional Research & Innovation (R&I) Strategy was developed and launched in Autumn 2022 in tandem with our new Education and Operational Strategies. This combined, cohesive approach to strategy development, strengthens links between teaching, research and supporting infrastructure. Concordat commitments directly underpin elements of the R&I Strategy, for example in our ambition to 'create an inclusive, professionally-supported and confident research culture.'

In this context, we welcomed proposals for REF2029 which places further evidence on the assessment of the People and Culture alongside Environment. We are keen to influence the details of PCE and also learn from and adopt sector best practice alongside our own to continue to enhance a supportive organisational culture for research.

We have recently revamped our Researcher Development Working Group (RDWG), supported by a new Researcher Development Implementation Group (RDIG) to lead a continuous and joined-up cycle of researcher development ranging from postgraduate and early career researchers (PGRs and ECRs) and more senior researchers. This will appraise needs and ensure a culture that values and develops research and innovation alongside a high quality and diverse HE portfolio.

Our approach places consultation and evaluation at the heart of organisational learning, with RDWG and RDIG bringing together colleagues from Human Resources (HR) and our Research & Innovation Development Office (RIDO) to work in partnership with Faculty Deputy Deans for Research & Innovation and representatives from our academic/research community, including PGRs and ECRs, to coordinate the researcher development necessary for the effective delivery of relevant elements of our R&I Strategy.

Structurally, our three recently-developed multi-disciplinary, cross-university research, innovation and impact themes – Sustainable Futures, Health, Performance and Wellbeing, and Safe and Inclusive Communities – provide platforms to bring researchers at all career stages together to tackle key challenges, collectively. We are in the final stage of shaping the organisational aspects of our research and innovation environment, with the review and/or

<p>establishment of major Research Centres. The Centres will act as key focal points for our research culture, including hosting opportunities for and engaging in the support, development and progression of our researchers and the promotion of the highest standards of research ethics and integrity. At the same time, following feedback from most recent HREIR review, while we remain committed to the development of all colleagues engaged in research, we are also seeking to ensure that the development of needs of researchers as typically defined for the Concordat are made more visible.</p>
<p>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 (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>
<p>Environment and culture</p> <p>ARU's strategy for an inclusive and developmentally focussed research and innovation environment was agreed by Senate in June 2020. Mentoring and developmental support, building research communities, including individual research planning in appraisals, ensuring appropriate research infrastructure, specialist support, and effective communications, are key aspects.</p> <p>Researchers are at the strategy’s heart. New starters benefit from specific Research & Innovation Staff Inductions, complementing more general local/central inductions, raising awareness from the outset. Feedback mechanisms (e.g. CEDARS, PRES, institutional surveys) are critical to gathering researchers’ views and shaping responses. Our ECR Charter, recognising c.150 colleagues, makes time, development and financial commitments enabling ECRs to establish their research careers.</p> <p>Training and development opportunities range from mental health awareness to flexible working. Careful use of workload management, and the My Professional Contribution, Development & Review system (MyPCDR, capturing individual objectives and development needs), augmented for researchers with Individual Research & Knowledge Exchange Plans (IRKEPs) provide tools to understand and respond effectively to our researchers’ identified needs and support wellbeing.</p>

Equality, diversity and inclusion are central to a healthy research environment. Managers and researchers benefit from training going beyond the basics. External accreditation (e.g. Silver Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter, Disability Confident Leader) evidences our commitment to supporting all staff.

Research integrity is championed by our Ethics and Research Integrity Committee, which oversees compliance with the Concordat for Research Integrity. Training and development are integral in maintaining the highest standards.

We involve researchers in policy development, through formal Committees and working groups, consultations and focus groups, and informal networks.

Success measures include survey response and completion data, attendance records and evidence of impact of staff development opportunities.

Employment

Effective recruitment, recognition and reward is essential. Our processes are reviewed periodically to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Our Academic Career Framework provides clear, merit-based promotion pathways, setting out expectations of researchers (including research-only staff) at different career stages.

People management is also critical. We are committed to developing our managers for research and innovation-rich academic environments, especially important for those with limited research experience, and for researchers themselves (research leadership, for example). We use workload management and MyPCDR to gather and report information which supports managers, and aggregated identify development needs.

We are committed to the job security of our fixed-term researchers and have established processes to support redeployment, whenever possible into permanent employment. We monitor contractual patterns for research-only staff, and MyPCDR supports discussions around career development and employability.

Success measures include conversions from temporary to permanent employment; the implementation of training and development; and improving success rates in annual promotion rounds.

Professional Development of Researchers

Strategically, we have reconceptualised our approach to developing researchers, as a continuum of opportunity across the researcher journey. A broader understanding of researcher development recognises that less tangible activities in which researchers engage, often Faculty-organised, are no less developmental than traditional training, e.g. mentoring, coaching, involving ECRs in large grants, networking and collaboration including through seminars as safe spaces to test research ideas, and leadership/supervision opportunities through our longstanding Undergraduate Research Internship programme.

Dedicated development time managed through workload allocation, meeting Concordat expectations, allows researchers to address their development needs. MyPCDR, focus groups and surveys illuminate those needs, e.g. research leadership. Our Research Centres, as focal points for our research culture and researcher development, will provide opportunities for leadership development, building on best practice.

MyPCDR and IRKEP support employability, and we will introduce more career development content. Promoting career diversity is crucial, addressed by appointing visiting/honorary roles illuminating sector awareness beyond academia.

Success measures include monitoring researcher development time allocation, and survey data. RDWG assesses externally-provided training, and internal initiatives like our ECR Charter.

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*)

Our planned actions and activities, and measures of progress against them, apply across our stakeholder groups, and are intertwined across the three pillars.

Institution

We promote the Concordat, for example through the extensive new staff induction arrangements, including it both in the HR Checklist for new academic staff and in our dedicated Research & Innovation Staff Induction sessions. Responses to CEDARS 2023 demonstrated a higher-than-target awareness of the Concordat (65%, by comparison to a

target of 55%, compared to 42% in CEDARS 2021) but based on a lower response rate than that aimed for (33%, rather than the desired 50%, though an improvement over the 22% achieved by CEDARS 2021).

We have analysed the headline findings of CEDARS 2023 and shared the findings at relevant institutional committees, including Research & Innovation Committee on which researchers are represented, as part of ensuring researcher involvement in policy, development of practice and evaluation across our institution.

ARU's latest Staff Survey, completed in autumn 2023, highlighted concerns about staff wellbeing, with colleagues looking to managers at all levels to help address workload and resourcing challenges. In December 2023 ARU submitted for University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) accreditation, reflecting our commitment and approach to supporting colleagues' mental health and wellbeing, and we look forward to the outcome.

We continue to implement actions arising from our Gap Analysis developed as part of our engagement with the Concordat for Research Integrity. In June 2023, we launched a new *Quality Through Research Integrity* course for researchers, developed with Tricky Goose and tailored for ARU. At January 2024, 13% of academic colleagues had completed the new course, while 63% of probationary staff had completed it or the previous training course, by comparison with our target of 90% completion by probationers. We have now committed to all academic staff repeating the training every three years and are working to embedding this in institutional processes, such as appraisal.

Managers of Researchers

We have continued to ensure that managers of researchers are aware of, and are supported to meet/ameliorate the specific challenges for research-only colleagues on fixed term contracts, the need to offer redeployment etc. Analysis demonstrates that the headcount population of research-

	<p>only staff remained static between 2021-22 and 2022-23, our most recent data, and with an unchanged 34.9% on fixed term contracts. We have ongoing discussions, including those colleagues, around the value of mobility versus stability for researchers, in the context of limited-term grant funding.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>We introduced our new MyPCDR system in summer 2023. While the primary driver was to make ARU's general appraisal processes more effective, the new system is also directly beneficial to researchers, as it enables better management of discussions between researchers and their line managers, including capturing researcher development needs more clearly at an individual level, and to track progress in addressing those needs; it also enables researcher development needs to be analysed in aggregate which can inform institutional planning for researcher development provision.</p> <p>Since this is a new process, management information about usage is not yet available. We will implement analysis during 2024 as it becomes so. Similarly, we have introduced new expectations within our Academic Workload Balancing Model (AWBM). Full-time academics now receive a minimum of 160 credits (roughly half a day a week) for research activities, and in addition 100 credits for researcher development and support, while also making it less easy to accumulate total hours exceeding the maximum workload, to help address and support the wellbeing and mental health of researchers. In its provision for researcher development time, Concordat expectations are comfortably exceeded, and we will begin analysing take-up later in 2024.</p>
Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)	<p>Our planned actions and activities, and measures of progress against them, apply across our stakeholder groups and are intertwined across the three pillars. Splitting this summary between them is somewhat artificial, therefore. This is particularly extant in this Employment section for which our plans were less expansive.</p>

	<p>Institution</p> <p>As noted, we introduced our new MyPCDR system in summer 2023, for use by all staff and line managers across the institution, with the intention of moving what was often an end-of-year appraisal to a more rolling, developmentally-focussed conversation between staff and line managers that would encompass both work objectives and developmental needs more effectively. This includes aggregated reporting of developmental needs which can be used for planning activities which are now expected to be rolled out later in 2024, and the development of baselines to enable comparisons.</p> <p>Similarly, our AWBM was refined for 2023-24 and analysis from it about workload allocation is underway to provide further information the balance and distribution of workload.</p> <p>In September 2023, we also launched our new Worktribe costing, pricing and bidding approval tool which includes relevant checks around ethics and due diligence.</p> <p>We have continued to operate our targeted Research & Innovation Staff Induction sessions for new staff, running sessions in May and October 2023, and February 2024, seeking in the aftermath of each session and the planning of the next to identify suitable enhancements, including through the review of feedback. A session at RIDO's summer awayday in June 2023 was focussed on discussing the effective organisation of the induction.</p> <p>Over the course of the past few months, as mentioned above, we have been reconceptualising our approach to the professional development of researchers. With the oversight arrangements through RDWG reviewed, we are in the process of finalising our priorities for the coming period as an operational plan. This includes a review of the content of our researcher development programme, seeking to ensure effective alignment with our R&I Strategy and to ensure that</p>
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	<p>overlaps with other internally- and externally-provisioned content are minimised.</p> <p>We have continued to seek to improve job security for researchers, for example around the need to offer redeployment etc. Our research-only population has remained static in recent analysis including the proportion on fixed term contracts. Of note, this data conceals a modest 'conversion' rate of fixed term to permanent contractual roles. Further analysis will be undertaken at the end of the 2023-24 academic year.</p> <p>We strive to provide support for researchers wherever it is needed. For example, ARU has recently been awarded Disability Confident Leader recognition. We iteratively evaluate and develop the support provided for disabled staff based on feedback received. We are actively considering ways to better promote our regular staff surveys to researchers, including with disabilities, to help us in better understand, and support with specific needs.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>Our Research & Innovation Strategy explicitly recognised the challenges inherent where researchers are managed by academic colleagues who in some cases are not themselves active researchers. In such circumstances, we have made arrangements to ensure that the research element of discussions carried out through mechanisms such as PCDR and in AWBM setting are informed by research-active colleagues. This included the creation of a Research Lead role in every School across ARU, intended to take a local leadership role including, for example, supporting 1-2-1 discussions with researchers around their career development and employment.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Please see comments above around the introduction of MyPCDR, AWBM, the Research & Innovation Staff Induction, and the creation of Research Lead roles, as mechanisms with</p>
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	which equally researchers are expected to engage around their employment.
Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)	<p>Our planned actions and activities, and measures of progress against them, apply across our stakeholder groups and are intertwined across the three pillars.</p> <p>Institution</p> <p>In autumn 2023, in line with our plans, we appointed two new co-Chairs of RDWG, with the mission to refresh it and ensure it operates effectively, including monitoring the outcomes from its interventions etc . As part of this work, we have promoted a broader understanding of researcher development, such that in addition to traditional training and development, other activities in which researchers engage and from which they gain knowledge and experience are recognised and valued as researcher development. As part of this work, we are finalising our operational plans and priorities for 2024-25, including ensuring that centrally- and Faculty-provided training opportunities are complementary of one another.</p> <p>New elements were introduced into AWBM for 2023-24 to explicitly recognise time credit for researcher development and support, with a clear expectation that full time staff would receive 100 credits for this activity, exceeding Concordat expectations in this respect. It is therefore too early to analyse AWBM data in this respect but doing so is planned for the future.</p> <p>We ensure that researchers and managers of researchers have a good understanding of the Concordat, promoting it for example through our HR Academic Staff Induction checklist and our Research & Innovation Staff Induction. 65% of ARU responses to CEDARS 2023 indicated awareness of the Concordat, exceeding our target by 10%, and showing substantial improvement over CEDARS 2021. Given the importance of the Concordat (and HREIR) as markers of</p>

sector-recognised best practice, all external grant bids reference them.

Our MyPCDR system, launched in summer 2023, is expected to close a 'feedback loop' between managers and researchers and help differentiate between the career development needs of research-only and other research-active academic staff. Given that the system is new, we are yet to see evidence of its value demonstrated by analysis of usage data and aggregated reporting,

Academic Managers of Researchers

The new Research Lead role-holders mentioned above support managers of researchers by taking specific responsibility for local induction, researcher development and best practice-sharing, promotion of research integrity, etc. Our new Academic Career Framework, now in its third year of operation, explicitly recognises staff who contribute formally and informally to developing and supporting their colleagues. Meanwhile our Research Centres, in the refreshed form discussed above, will provide further opportunities for the effective management and development of researchers, including the opportunity for researchers to take on leadership roles as research areas are grown.

Researchers

In September 2023, a Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPI&E) scheme – 'Let's Shape Research Together' – was established to help researchers across the institution engage more effectively with the beneficiaries of their research at the earliest stages of its development. Unanticipated at the time our initial plans were defined, we have also appointed two Impact Development Officers to support researchers in planning for, delivering and capturing impact derived from their research, as part of which and in line with our R&I Strategy we have sought to promote policy

	engagement more effectively. Researchers have continued to benefit from ARU's long-standing sabbatical scheme, supporting both Doctoral completion and research & innovation activities, including providing opportunities for skills development and training where needed; pump-priming initiatives; and from conference support schemes to enable attendance and present papers.
<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>ARU was delighted to retain the HR Excellence in Research Award following review of the action plan submitted in May 2023, which was also submitted to meet the expectations of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. As part of this, we were required to revise both the summary narrative statement and forward-looking action plan, in respect of the latter to build in more explicit measures relating to research-only staff and to include actions running into 2025 and 2026.</p> <p>We intend to further streamline our HREIR and Concordat reporting to more explicitly focus on research-only staff in the coming period, while retaining our commitment to support all staff engaged in research. The areas of strength on which to develop include our newly introduced PCDR system, as a mechanism through which researcher development and support areas can be identified and addressed.</p> <p>Over the same period, progress against our planned actions had been more limited at the overarching institutional level, due to a lack of resource in terms of both the professional support for researcher development and the lacuna in its academic leadership, following the departure of the Researcher Development Manager and the departure of the Chair of the Researcher Development Working Group. Revisions to the forward-looking action plan included in addition delaying some of the actions planned for the period as a result. It is important to note that there has continued to be an active programme of researcher development in established research groupings, including within the communities of our three overarching ARU Research, Innovation and Impact Themes – with more specific discipline areas of focus. A significant investment has also been made in purchasing access to SpringerNature's Masterclasses, providing online professional development training for researchers.</p>	

Planning and preparation for Anglia Ruskin University's merger with Writtle University College, unanticipated when the action plan was originally developed, has created further opportunities for new activities that have been seized. For example, researchers from Writtle were invited to join our regular Research & Innovation Staff Induction ahead of the formal merger date, efforts were made to ensure those falling under our ECR Charter were identified as such and the commitments extended to them. As we operationalise the merger, opportunities to share best practice in research governance and planning have been taken, e.g. incorporating former Writtle University College practices into our research ethics and integrity management.

While challenging in terms of the delivery of institutional-level researcher development, this period has provided the opportunity to revisit our overarching approach to the provision of researcher development as already referred to above. The consultation on initial proposals for REF2029, including around People, Culture and Environment, has stimulated further discussion and engagement, including at local level as REF convenors and their teams have been assembled.

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

Our main priority for the coming period is to consolidate the activity to reconceptualise and refresh our institutional approach to researcher development, including appointing professional services staff critical to supporting this work. In addition to implementing outcomes of work to review and revise the researcher development programme itself as a continuum of activity supportive of all, we will revisit earlier activity to develop research leadership and research project management development opportunities and provide support in this space.

We will develop new guidance for researchers, ranging from the general Researcher Handbook as a go-to resource bringing together summary details of institutional policies and practices applying to research activity as an extension to induction-type support, to specific and detailed guidance applying at post-award to research grant activities and ensuring compliance.

We will ensure that we continue to have mechanisms in place to gather feedback from researchers about their professional and career development needs, not least anticipating reporting coming in stream from the MyPCDR system, but also re-establishing focus groups and other forums including ECR networks through which

researchers can share their views, using further ARU Staff Surveys and with a view to generating excellent engagement with CEDARS 2025. We will also test that time for researcher development as offered through our revised AWBM model is being taken up.

Our research centres and institutes are focal points through which researchers are supported and developed and highest standards of researcher integrity are promoted. Working closely with colleagues in HR Services, we will ensure that effective mentorship arrangements for researchers are in place, building on earlier pilot work conducted with ECRs. We will also ensure that those who manage researchers are effectively equipped to do so, introducing appropriate training and development for such colleagues, including wellbeing and mental health 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*)

This report was initially prepared on behalf of RDWG, including consultation with RDIG, and considered and endorsed by our Research & Innovation Committee (RIC), to which RDWG reports at its meeting of 21 May 2024. RIC is itself a standing committee of Senate, to which the report was presented on 12 June 2024, and discussed and approved. The Senate-approved report was lastly presented to and reviewed by the Board of Governors. The Governors approved the report at its meeting of 9 July 2024.

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Clare Panniker

Chair of the ARU Board of Governors

22/07/24

Contact for queries: Dr. Tim Brooks, Assistant Director (Research Excellence & Enhancement), RIDO

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