



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

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Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	<u>The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers University of South Wales</u>
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Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via <u>CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk</u>	27 th September 2023

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*)

In the academic year 2022/23, USW created 15 Research and Innovation Groups (RIG) led by experienced researchers. The objectives included support for researchers, their workloads and expectations of maintaining a work/life balance. RIG leads liaised with line managers/Associate Dean for Research and Innovation (ADR&I) to ensure advocacy for their members, and contributed to plans around training needs as well as objective setting.

We undertook a culture survey over a three-month period (October 2022 to 31st January 2023) for all academics and postgraduate research students (PGRs). The purpose was to identify aspects of the prevailing culture before creating an action plan to address areas of concern and/or ensure areas of good practice are disseminated across the organisation. The emergent themes from the survey were time allocation (i.e. the need to protect time allocation or the desire for more time to be allocated to research); the need for experienced researchers to be on appointment panels; for research objectives to be clarified/explained; and permanency of roles and career development.

Recognising that academic and research staff contribute to a wide range of activities, we conducted a detailed review of the academic workload and allocation of time/activities to ensure that balanced and manageable workloads are achieved. In addition, work with line managers was undertaken to both understand and set achievable objectives for research activity.

We have updated our Research and Innovation Strategy (R&I Strategy) to include objectives around research culture; for example, the integration of mental health and well-being support for researchers and postgraduate researchers, and updated training on mental health support for supervisors. These are in addition to our commitments in the Athena Swan Action Plan and the Race Equality Charter application.

We have created an Early Career Research (ECR) Network to provide peer support to researchers and act as a conduit to the Research and Innovation (R&I) Committee, enabling feedback to be received into the deliberative structures of the University.

The Graduate School has this year extended its training programme to include dedicated events around mental health and well-being. PGR student reps have undergone informal training with USW's Wellbeing Services to enable them to better signpost PGRs to the support services available. Graduate School collaborated with the Research Environment Team on a series of events including an interactive seminar on Imposter Syndrome, and monthly Researchers' Coffee Mornings. These events afforded more opportunities for PGRs to interact with our wider research community, increasing a sense of community and belonging. A PGR Well-being Plan will be launched later this year.

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

We will maintain a research culture that attracts, retains and nurtures talented researchers and PGRs, with equal opportunities for all, that is in keeping with the values of USW. This includes but is not limited to raising awareness of the resources available to support mental health and well-being.

To support this, we will:

- Attend Faculty Senior Leadership Team meetings to highlight the importance of the Researcher Concordat and its principles.
- Investigate and address the potential barriers to career development/progression of mid-career researchers.
- Encourage the ECR Network to provide a safe space for support and collaboration of ECRs and PGRs.
- Establish and embed the RIGs, updating the website to promote the work of our researchers and encourage multi-disciplinary collaboration.
- Co-ordinate researcher thematic events such as monthly coffee mornings and specialist half day workshops that bring together researchers at all career stages and allow them to share experiences and create networks outside their subject areas.
- Improve the dissemination of information and provide dedicated support for researchers and our research culture.

- Use data from the USW Researcher Development Survey (open between October 2022 and January 2023) and the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) 2023 to inform new actions.

Employment

The USW People Plan 2030 ensures that colleagues responsible for recruitment decisions have the requisite skillsets to make appointments that are optimal to meet business requirements, embed leadership, managerial, academic, or professional skill sets and recognise the value brought by diversity and inclusivity. Alongside this, the R&I Strategy sets an intention to develop the workforce, supporting and nurturing the development of researchers, with a focus on cultivating leadership and resilience within teams.

The R&I Strategy Strategic Implementation Group (SIG) is focused on achieving an environment which provides fairness in career progression and equality of opportunity.

To support this, we will:

- Work with the relevant departments to develop an online R&I toolkit and distribute this to all new starters via the online induction programme.
- The recruitment group will continue to review and improve recruitment processes and practices with ongoing engagement from the ADR&I and the Research Environment team.
- Recognising that USW has four routes to Professor there should be breadth across all four and at all levels (e.g., ECR/MCR/ Associate Professor, etc.).

Considerations will be made to ensure that all colleagues are equally valued regardless of working pattern or career pathway with steps made to remove unconscious bias within our decision making. Training will be rolled out in January 2024 in support of this.

Professional Development of Researchers

USW's vision is to equip our students with the skills for success and we will make the same commitment as an employer. We will provide support and opportunity to transform our talented people into accomplished practitioners who will have positive impact. We will identify differentiated career pathways, illustrating routes for progression and growth across USW. We will maximise opportunities for

growth across our own organisational structure, our subsidiaries and with our partners to open pathways for development. We believe that our R&I success is dependent on several factors, not least, a workforce that has depth and breadth of skilled professionals aligned and working towards common goals.

To support this development, we will:

- Build/maintain a high-performance R&I culture with people at its core.
- Develop a rich research community by empowering staff and amplifying with strengthened links between teaching and research across USW.
- Ensure well-defined structures to support researchers within our RIGs.
- Review and revise the Research and Innovation Development Programme (RIDP) to consider sector initiatives.
- Develop guidance so that all researcher managers can confidently discuss career development at the annual appraisal (and monitor every six months).

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*)

<p>Institution</p>	<p>Staff are encouraged to engage with policy development through our SIG structure. Within each strand there are groups taking forward themed work, including capacity to undertake research and innovation, developing our new R&I Strategy, and investing in research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised R&I Strategy is pending approval by Executive. • RIGs have been implemented in line with the revised criteria, bringing together smaller groups and lone academics to foster a more supportive and stimulating research culture. • The USW ECR definition was developed and approved by the ECR/MCR SIG thus enabling researchers to self-identify their career stage and engage with the support offered.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Researcher Mentoring Scheme was launched April 2023, resulting in seven successful pairings so far. We will continue to promote the scheme, and survey participants after six months to see how it is working. • In April 2023, the EDI team launched the online <u>Report and Support</u> platform, which allows colleagues or students who experience or witness an incident of concern, to submitting an online form. • The 2023-24 Well-Being Strategy (Making a positive impact for colleagues and students and mental health) is published.
Academic Managers of Researchers	<p>The Heads of Subject Research programme was conducted by the Faculty of Life Sciences and Education in Spring 2023. The programme aims to upskill managers to better understand the research environment and the challenges facing researchers, equipping them to have more meaningful conversations with researchers on a day-to-day basis but also during DPRs.</p> <p>USW Subject Heads are central to supporting colleagues with their research activity, however we found that their confidence to support research is dependent on their own experience. We have worked with an external facilitator to develop a bespoke training session that will support Subject Heads to nurture research. The Faculty of Business and Creative Industries will pilot the programme through the autumn term.</p>
Researchers	<p>A formal sub-group of the ECR Network, which has a direct reporting line to the R&I Committee, enables our ECRs to share their views on USW strategy and inform our future direction. This system of support and mentorship from a peer network and senior colleagues allows ECRs to feel supported and encouraged to develop ideas.</p> <p>Researchers were given the opportunity to have their say via the USW Researcher Development Survey and CEDARS 2023. The feedback provided will be used to determine new actions.</p>

	<p>Additional training on impact has been embedded in our RIDP and covers knowledge exchange activities, working in partnership, engaging with policy makers, and commercialisation support from IP protection to licencing and spinouts.</p> <p>RIG leads are developing their strategies to include plans for the career development of researchers. They will provide all members with opportunities to engage in research and innovation, while advancing their careers in alignment with the Research Concordat principles.</p> <p>The Ethnic Minority Research Advisory Group's (EMRAG) is a subgroup of the R&I Committee whose mission is to proactively support, contribute to, and enhance research that is more culturally inclusive. By establishing an ongoing working relationship with representatives of communities through a research advisory group to improve the way we engage, work and keep in touch with ethnic minority communities in research.</p>
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Employment (*max 600 words*)

The People Plan states that we must support our leaders and managers to ensure they deliver the necessary growth, and organisational transformation to deliver Strategy 2030. The addition of a critical success factor (CSF8) focuses on our workforce and reflects the importance of our people in achieving Strategy 2030 and their contribution to the other critical success factors and goals. This provides an opportunity to communicate the value we place on our staff and their contribution to the University. It also provides a strong link between the People Plan as an enabler to Strategy 2030.

To support this development, we will:

- Develop and implement leadership and management development frameworks, setting out core competencies that align with Strategy 2030.
- Capability will be enabled through targeted leadership and management development resources. We will develop tailored developmental resources and activities aligned to Strategy 2030 that reflect values-based leadership and

management. We will recognise the varying needs of managers with different roles and responsibilities ensuring they are enabled to put strategy into action, monitor and report progress, and drive success.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion will be woven through all our plans, recognising the value and richness that the diversity of thought, experience and opportunity that people can bring to USW, our research, our students, our partnerships and our communities.

<p>Institution</p>	<p>The recruitment policy is to have a research active member of staff on all interview panels. Within the first month of employment all researchers will undertake comprehensive HR, Faculty/ Departmental and research induction.</p> <p>The USW Teaching, Learning Support and Research Induction provides an opportunity for new starters to meet professional services staff, and gain an understanding of the wealth of support available to them in their professional roles and career journeys.</p> <p>New starters are sent a welcome email from Research and Innovation Services offering a one-to-one induction with member of the team together with links to the RIDP, and, where relevant, an invitation to the ECR Network.</p>
<p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p>	<p>We are committed to developing and implementing a leadership and management development framework, setting out core competencies that align with Strategy 2030. We will build on the principles of the success of our Heads of Subject programme to upskill researcher managers to better understand the research environment and the challenges facing researchers, equipping them to have more meaningful conversations with researchers on a day-to-day basis but also during DPRs. We will measure the impact of the programme on researchers using the ECR Network, USW Researcher Development Survey, CEDARS 2023, and post training evaluation feedback.</p>

<p>Researchers</p>	<p>We are committed to improving the job security of our researchers especially those on fixed term contracts (FTC), which are used in line with relevant legislation. All staff on an FTC for over two years are given the same rights as staff on a permanent contract including redundancy. If there are numerous extensions to an FTC that take the timescales to over four years, these would be made into permanent roles.</p> <p>We have reviewed the methodology for more effective Quality-related Research funding (QR) use. This includes support for research assistant fellowships, fellowships for current early career and mid-career researchers for time release and dedicated funds for the bridging of contracts of fixed-term staff on funded research grants. We will continue to monitor the recruitment process to ensure numbers of researchers on fixed term contracts remains low and to receive contract end dates and proactively engage with HR and the individuals concerned.</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	
<p>Institution</p>	<p>The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers reports annually (each October) to the Culture People Values Committee (CPVC) with oversight by CPVC in terms of meeting career development requirements.</p> <p>The People Plan has a focus on leadership and development, developing a high-performance culture, attracting, developing and retaining talented colleagues and embedding inclusivity and USW's values into our everyday behaviours.</p> <p>The R&I Strategy will set out plans for an outstanding working environment. We will continue to invest in researchers and support their career development at every level. We will enhance our development programmes (e.g., Women in Academia) that recognise and overcome barriers</p>

	to career advancement, and continue to support talented people from all backgrounds, as recognised by our Athena SWAN, Stonewall, and Disability Confident awards.
Academic Managers of Researchers	<p>Managers will conduct a Development and Performance Review (DPR) annually with a mid-point review.</p> <p>Managers will utilise the guidance issued in relation to research to ensure DPRs are fit for purpose and adding value to researchers.</p>
Researchers	<p>ECR Network</p> <p>In Spring 2023 the ECR Network became a formal sub-group of R&IC. Colleagues who identify as an ECR were invited to submit an expression of interest to become a member of this new peer network which enables ECRs to share experiences and support each other to succeed. The subgroup is developing the Membership and Terms of Reference.</p> <p>The group will be responsible for organising formal and informal networking sessions, compiling resources to support and benefit ECRs, and aid researcher development through workshops, mentoring schemes, accountability networks.</p> <p>Career Progression</p> <p>The Higher Academic Awards Committee convenes once a year to consider the conferment of Associate Professor and Professor titles.</p> <p>The conferment of Higher Academic Awards provides a framework via which academic members of staff at USW that hold a contract of salaried employment of 12 months or more may progress to becoming an Associate Professor and Professor by one of four routes, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and Development • Teaching and Learning • Innovation and Engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Practice <p>Training and Development</p> <p>Our RIDP offers an extensive range of needs-driven training courses to support personal and professional career development, whilst providing an opportunity to meet others and become part of our vibrant research community.</p> <p>The Researcher Mentoring Scheme, launched in April 2023, allows participants to self-select a suitable mentor and set their own objectives.</p> <p>Four USW Researchers secured a place on Welsh Crucible 2023, the award-winning programme of personal, professional and leadership development for the future research leaders of Wales.</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>We reconsidered our plan to hold a series of events to promote the Concordat and its principles, deciding that the PVC-R&I's attendance at Faculty Senior Leadership Team meetings was a more effective method for disseminating the information.</p> <p>Our surveys highlighted a need to improve our internal communication. To complement our intranet and social media content, we will produce a monthly Research Bulletin which will be emailed directly to RIG members, and include funding opportunities, good news stories and information on current research agendas/activities.</p> <p>Positive feedback and suggestions from our researcher-specific events are being used to build a strong events calendar for the next academic year.</p>	
<p>Outline your key objectives in delivering your plan in the coming reporting period (<i>max 500 words</i>)</p>	

As stated above, our key objectives are to strengthen our research culture and environment so that we provide equal opportunities for all staff across our operations with fairness in career progression for all.

To support this, we will:

- Analyse the USW Researcher Development Survey and the 2023 Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey and incorporate into the HR Excellence in Research Award action plan.
- Publish the USW Research Integrity Policy and embed formalised self-assessment into the ongoing provision, including a mandatory requirement for all researchers to undertake research integrity training.
- [EM2] Managers will familiarise themselves and work in accordance with relevant employment legislation and codes of practice, institutional policies, and the terms and conditions of grant funding.
- [ER1] Researchers will work in accordance with institutional policies, procedures, and employment legislation, as well as the requirements of their funder.

To help us achieve the above, we will develop a programme of communication (email/workshops /training etc.) to raise awareness and encourage engagement.

- [PCDI3] Ensure that researchers have access to professional advice on career management across a breadth of careers by empowering research and innovation leaders to act as role models, supporting directly or signposting.
- Ongoing promotion of the Researcher Mentoring Scheme.

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*)

In 2021, USW Executive established its SIG to oversee the progress and delivery of the 2030 Strategy. Led by the PVC-R&I, the Research Excellence and Innovation Impact SIG has five workstreams designed to support our talented staff to continuously develop and to recognise them for their work in innovation and impactful research. The Researcher Concordat SIG was created to meet our obligations to the Researcher Development Concordat and includes broad representation from across USW. The SIG formally reports progress (and risk mitigation) to the Research and Innovation Committee; Academic Board; and the Culture, People and Values Committee. The SIG is also responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries: Professor Martin Steggall

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