

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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	University of Central Lancashire
Reporting period	2022/2023
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Web address of annual report	<a href="https://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/academic-development-research-enterprise">https://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/academic-development-research-enterprise</a>
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	<a href="https://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/academic-development-research-enterprise">https://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/academic-development-research-enterprise</a>
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Dr Allison McCaig – <a href="mailto:amccaig@uclan.ac.uk">amccaig@uclan.ac.uk</a>
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via <a href="mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk">CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk</a>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 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*)**

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) is home to a community of ~2,600 research staff, including Teaching & Research and Research Only academics, postgraduate research students (PGRs), and Technical and Professional Service staff.

Our Strategic Plan for 2021 to 2028 with its associated sub-strategies and enabling strategies sets out six priorities for this period. Priority 3: Our People Experience; Priority 4: Real World Research and Innovation; and Priority 6: Future-proofing our University outline actions that directly support creation of a world class research culture and environment that values its staff and their wellbeing.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to 2028, *Belonging at UCLan*, sets out our ambitions in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), ensuring fair treatment and opportunity for all. Enhancing sense of belonging is core to our aspiration to eliminate or significantly narrow disparities and inequalities that currently present in our staff and learner groups.

In total, 441 researchers were submitted to REF2021, 35% of our eligible population. It is our ambition to substantially grow this number and proportion by REF2028 by encouraging current staff to undertake high quality, impactful research; and recruiting staff with track records in research. We recognise that this can only be achieved by maintaining a nurturing, supportive research environment and culture, and delivering the commitments set out in our HR Excellence in Research submission (HREiR) and the Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers.

We have held the HREiR award since 2011. In 2021, we also became signatories to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, further signalling our commitment to the research community. Oversight of this commitment is provided by our Researcher Development Steering Group, with representatives from across career stages, and with formal reporting three times per year to the University's Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee. The Research and Knowledge Exchange EDI Group oversees all aspects of inclusivity with respect to research.

The University is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment and has responsible research metrics policy (based on the Leiden Manifesto), developed in consultation with its researchers. In 2023, we became

members of Coalition on Advancing Research Assessment, further commitment to ongoing review and improvement of our practices.

All staff are expected to participate in appraisal conversations three times per year, at which progress in achieving research objectives and future research aspirations are discussed. In addition, we regularly engage with staff informally through our three career stage forums associated, and formally through institutional and CEDARS surveys. We provide a range of induction and development activities spanning the research lifecycle.

Our Research Institutes, first established in 2018, enhance the quality of our research environment, helping us grow and develop our research activity in diverse areas, and providing a vibrant and active environment to nurture our early career researchers. The number of Research Institutes will be expanded in 2023/24, to embrace all staff.

**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 continue to deliver core researcher development activities, including induction, training and development programme, and career stage forums/networks. In addition, we will focus on three priority areas:

1. Consolidating research groupings into a number of large research and KE Institutes, to provide focus for excellence in research and KE. Clear definitions, pathways and support will enable staff to work towards attaining Significant Responsibility for Research (for submission to the next REF) and full institute membership. *Success criterion - number/proportion of staff with SRfR status increases year on year.*
2. Improve our data collection processes and analytical capacity for evaluating inclusivity of research, including training and development provision, and satisfaction around research environment and culture. *Success criterion - decrease in identified EDI-related gaps, increased rate of engagement with training and development, and improved evaluation scores.*
3. Updating our Researcher Portal functionality and content, providing a single source of information on training and development opportunities at UCLan and elsewhere. We will use and promote national resources to support institutes and managers in their support of ECRs. *Success criterion - Increasing*

*numbers you engaging with the Portal, and quantitative data showing positive evidence of impact (survey/focus groups).*

## **Employment**

We will focus on three priority areas:

- 1.** Continuing welcome events, local and School inductions for all new starters (including ECRs/Researchers), including employment policies and practices, setting out expectations and responsibilities for all UCLan colleagues. We will continue to actively promote our research mentoring scheme. *Success criterion – At least two case studies from new researchers on their experiences of their new starter induction, welcome events or local induction activities; increased uptake of research mentoring scheme.*
- 2.** Implement a Researcher Development Welcome resource for new ECRs/researchers to enable easy access to information about the Concordat and available support for research and Knowledge Exchange. *Success criterion – feedback via interviews with the research community on the usefulness of this resource and publicised via internal Researcher Development intranet pages.*
- 3.** Improving our responsible research assessment practice, including development of a COARA action plan and participation in the UKRN's project, with review of recruitment/promotion guidance (as required), development and communication of resources. *Success criterion – increased awareness in staff survey/CEDARS.*

## **Professional Development of Researchers**

We champion all careers with research, placing equal value on the many different career roles and paths our researchers take. Underpinning this value is the need to create a culture where career development discussions are core to research leadership. We will focus on three priority areas over the next 12 months which will include:

- 1.** Developing guidance and support for research managers on how to develop their researchers and understand what development provision is on offer; support researchers to self-identify training/development needs. *Success criterion - increased awareness of resources; increased in training requests.*
- 2.** Develop and promote research career pathways webpages and CAREEREDGE module, building upon support available through Graduate Research School for PGRs and research staff. *Success criterion – Increasing numbers engaging with the resource, and quantitative data showing positive evidence of impact.*

<p>3. Work with the Graduate Research School to develop and implement a career planning system/templates and guidance that can be used by ECRs/Researchers to plan and record their CPD. <i>Success criterion - Evidence will be measured by the numbers of researchers engaging with the resources. 10 researchers engaging in career planning pilot in Year 1.</i></p>	
<p>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]</p>	
<p>Environment and Culture (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ECR/MCR Network Events</i> - Monthly sessions were facilitated with both Early and Mid-Career Researchers to deliver training, gather views on challenges and areas for improvement. Across 2022-2023 we ran 48 sessions with 167 ECRs and MCRs attending sessions.</li> <li>• <i>Research &amp; Enterprise Development Programme (2022-2023)</i> – 70 training and development events took place in 2022/23 for our research staff. These sessions ranged from Concordat engagement sessions through to identifying funding.</li> </ul> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Research4all Framework</i> – A framework for inclusivity throughout the research lifecycle was developed in 2023. The purpose of the RKE4All framework is to provide a set of guiding principles and points of enquiry to enable researchers (whether as individuals or teams) to adopt an EDI lens through which to view their research and related activities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>UCLan Staff Survey</i></b> – Launched in 2023 to all staff, this survey includes questions around line manager support, mentoring, and career development. Analysis undertaken with comprehensive action planning and reporting in place.</li> <li>• <b><i>CEDARS 2023</i></b> – Launched to the research community at UCLan looking at research environment and culture. Analysis undertaken with action plans in development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Researchers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Research Committees</i></b> - All levels of research staff are represented on the University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee, RKE EDI Group and Researcher Development Steering Group.</li> <li>• <b><i>Researcher Welcome booklet and Induction Programme</i></b> – A new researcher booklet has been developed for all new research staff. This resource has information around the Concordat, support for career development, the University’s research environment and culture, alongside representation and feedback. All new starters receive information about the Concordat, which is also covered in the researcher induction and RES personal and professional development programme.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Wellbeing Sessions for Researchers</i></b> – The University is committed to promoting a healthy working environment for our research community. In 2022, two wellbeing events were delivered with our ECR/MCR networks with a total of 20 researchers in attendance. We will raise further awareness of mental health provision through ECR/MCR networks to researchers, by offering a dedicated session for research staff in 2023/2024.</li> <li>• <b><i>Colleague Support Service</i></b> - launched in June 2023, this Service helps individuals take a solution focussed approach to resolving workplace concerns, problems or issues to enable a positive working environment for all colleagues. The Service acts as a point of contact and support for</li> </ul>

anyone wishing to raise an issue about how they are experience working, providing a skilled “supporter” to meet, listen and signpost to support services.

- ***Roll out of Mental Health Champions*** – The People Team have made significant progress rolling out this scheme across Schools and Services, ensuring that the research community is represented. The University is preparing an application to the Mental Health Charter. People Team to link in with Mental Health Champions to update research staff on progress.

#### **Academic Managers of Researchers**

- ***Research Managers*** - One large area of focus and has been carried over from the 10-year HREiR Award action plan is around identifying the population of research managers and implement new processes to specifically report upon this population.
- ***Research Misconduct Policy*** – The Ethics, Integrity, and Governance Unit produced updated policy guidance, which sets out the Concordat to Support Research Integrity commitments and Research Misconduct Policy. Moving forward for 2023, EIGU will launch a Research Ethics Handbook containing a wide variety of policy, guidance and procedural information for research managers, leaders and researchers.

#### **Researchers**

- ***Wellbeing Sessions for Researchers*** – The University is committed to promoting a healthy working environment for our research community. In 2022, two wellbeing events were delivered with our ECR/MCR networks with a total of 20 researchers in attendance. We will raise further awareness of mental health provision through ECR/MCR networks to researchers, by offering a dedicated session for research staff in 2023/2024.
- ***Engagement events for Researchers*** – Academic Development for Research & Knowledge Exchange have led monthly ECR/MCR network groups for new and current research staff across the institution. Evaluation feedback

	<p>from these groups (2022) has been analysed to provide evidence on researcher views on environment/culture.</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>10 days CPD campaign</i> - Develop and deliver campaign to promote our commitment to 10-days of professional development, including consultation with staff, establishment of institution-wide policy, recording and monitoring CPD. This is ongoing and is a priority for 2023/2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leadership Training through Advance HE for research staff</i> – in the period 2022/2023, 8 researchers attended Advance HE Research Team Leadership training, and 1 researcher attended the Diversifying Leadership programme.</li> <li>• <i>Introduction of quarterly (now three per annum) appraisal cycle</i>, including training for appraisers. Research staff are expected to have a minimum of three appraisal discussions per annum with their line managers where they have the opportunity to discuss their career development options and support for their role.</li> </ul> <p><b>Researchers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Research Mentoring programme</i> – Engagement was low in 2022/23, Action for 2023-2024 is to increase engagement by raising the profile of the programme with a series of events tailored at research staff.</li> </ul>



**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*)**

The University has made progress to date in implementing the principles of the Concordat, demonstrated by the range of cross-cutting activities. This has been achieved through a coordinated and inclusive approach, which in the first action plan period has focused on building structures and mechanisms for data collection, communication, building networks and information sharing.

Close connections and collaboration with researchers, schools and professional services have been central to this work. We acknowledge that culture change is complex and takes time and that the development of underpinning structures and mechanisms is a first step in the process. Our work to date has also allowed us to identify the areas which require more in-depth focus and effort. Our Action Plan 2023-2025 reflects this, building on a strong foundation to deepen understanding and embed the principles across different areas of the University.

Examples of this work will include a working group on the 10 days professional development entitlement, development of training and support for research managers and leaders and in-depth work on mentoring.

Our approach to this will build on what we have learned from the first action plan, that a joined-up approach, and robust, open communication are key to success. Deliverables have been updated for our 2023-2025 Action Plan to align with this approach.

The Researcher Development Steering Group has been instrumental in ensuring progress and providing colleagues with an opportunity to feed into developments and plans. This approach will be maintained and developed through our next action plan.

We note the increasing profile in the sector around responsible research assessment. We are a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (COARA). Raising awareness amongst the research population is reflected in our modified action plan, along with learning from and embedding sector best practice through membership of COARA working groups, including a UK COARA Chapter, ARMA Special Interest Groups and other initiatives.

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

Over the next 12-24 months we have identified three key priorities to take forward, in addition to our ongoing actions:

- **10-days CPD. Guidance for managers and campaign to raise awareness.** Develop and deliver campaign to promote our commitment to 10-days of professional development, including consultation with staff, establishment of institution-wide guidance, and system for recording and monitoring CPD. This is ongoing but is a priority for 2023/2024.
- **Roll out new Research institutes Structure**— Researchers are in the process of identifying which Research & Knowledge Exchange Institute they would like to join. This is ongoing but embedding institute structures is a priority for 2023/2024.
- **Addressing precarity and progression** - Roll-out schemes to support grade progression of Research Only staff and to reduce precarity of fixed-term contracts.

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 Researcher Development Steering Group, chaired by the Director of the Research & Enterprise Service, leads on implementation of the Concordat and has the responsibility for creating and evaluating our Concordat Implementation Plan and the associated governance. Membership of this group includes, Associate Deans for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Head of Impact & Outputs Unit and Researcher Development Officer (Research & Enterprise Service), People Team partners, as well as ECR and MCR representatives.

Following input from the Steering Group, formal approval of this report was provided by the University Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Ethics Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research & Enterprise, Professor StJohn Crean.

StJohn Crean (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise) 19/12/2023



Contact for queries:

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)