

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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	University of the West of Scotland
Reporting period	2024
Date approved by governing body	25 June 2024
Date published online	27 June 2024
Web address of annual report	<a href="https://www.uws.ac.uk/researcher-development-and-concordat">Researcher Development &amp; Concordat (uws.ac.uk)</a>
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	[ <a href="https://www.uws.ac.uk/researcher-development-and-concordat">Researcher Development &amp; Concordat (uws.ac.uk)</a> ]
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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*)**

The Concordat Steering Group, chaired by Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), is tasked to ensure progress against the HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) action plan developed in line with the Researcher Development Concordat. It includes representation from the school representatives of the Research and Enterprise Committee, research staff, staff forum for research and research enabling staff from careers services, research services and people services.

Delivering towards the Researcher Development Concordat is a collective responsibility for the institution, line managers of researchers and researchers. The Concordat Steering Group has set out an ambitious three-year action (2023-2025) plan to take UWS towards a fully integrated research community. Within this community our excellent researchers are provided with equally excellent opportunities to contribute, develop and progress, feel valued and supported to achieve their full potential. UWS has held the HREiR award since 2016 and will undergo the eight-year review in 2024. The Concordat action plan complements the UWS Athena Swan action plan, with responsibilities and themes around equality and inclusion.

At UWS our actions are designed to include anyone who does research. We have an open approach to researcher engagement, and we actively encourage participation in our programme of induction and development activities designed for various career stages across the research lifecycle. This activity is designed to help foster a vibrant research community at UWS and build bridges between staff and student communities. As a commitment to responsible research assessment, UWS is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). Following a comprehensive review in 2023, our approved research institutes, centres and groups enhance the culture of our research environment. The number of research groups is expected to grow further during academic year 2024/25 and the number of researchers involved in these groupings has exceeded that anticipated in the action plan.

A particular development in 2023/24 has been the launch of Research Culture Conversations across the University. The conversations culminate in a Researcher Festival in May 2024, with the theme of "Building a Positive Research Culture". The festival is organised in conjunction with the Staff Forum for Research, a peer-to-peer network lead by ECRs (primarily for ECRs and mid-career colleagues) from all

UWS Schools. The festival includes a dedicated day to celebrate the Postgraduate Researchers and their contribution to university life.

A “CultureFest@UWS” event on 21 May 2024 brings all UWS Research Institutes, Centres and Groups together to showcase the best practises that play out in their research groupings to ensure that leaders and researchers at all career stages including, doctoral students, feel supported and valued through what they are doing to help members thrive in a positive environment embracing inclusion, openness and integrity.

The principal output from the investment in time and resources across the institution will be the development of our first living Research Culture Action Plan.

**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*)**

The University of the West of Scotland is committed to the delivery of the HR Excellence in Research: Action Plan 2022-2025 (updated January 2023) developed as part of the HR Excellence in Research six-year review. In addition to our core researcher development activities, including induction and the researcher development programme, the action plan includes measurable objectives supported by vehicles to support researchers and research enabling staff. Associated actions in our plan, which the following strategic objective support, are either complete, ongoing, or delayed and ongoing, as noted below.

## **Environment and culture**

### **1. Promoting a positive research culture**

Consolidating the research groupings into Institutes, Centres and Groups to provide a focus on research excellence and support staff who have or are working towards significant responsibility for research, and Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) (Complete).

Introducing a staff training portal to provide a single source of information on training and development opportunities and investment in a training portal on the student progression system to add functionality and support PGRs with their professional and career development (ongoing).

## **2. Recruiting and retaining talent**

Clear career pathways for career advancement are built into the new academic career development framework (complete).

The UWS recognition and reward procedure aims to recognise exceptional contribution/performance, capability, competence that is consistent with the annual “My Contribution” process. The procedure allows for self-application by and individual or management recommendation. (ongoing)

## **3. Capacity building and strategic investments**

Support to include strategic secondments, visiting and honorary appointments and pledged support for large collaborative grants and the strategic investment in equipment and facilities and funded studentships (delayed and ongoing).

### **Employment**

#### **1. Academic Career Development Framework**

New academic promotions criteria and pathways were launched in 2023 to recognise the full range of academic and research staff contributions and the diversity of personal circumstances. A new employee forum has also been established by the university, a groundbreaking initiative, and the first meeting will take place in September 2024 (complete).

#### **2. Recruitment**

Chair’s training is mandatory for staff who Chair recruitment and selection panels. This raised awareness for interview panels ensures not only the capability and knowledge of diversity and inclusion but helps to reduce risks of unintended bias and create a better candidate experience, with 214 individuals trained from June 2023 to date. To complement to this, a range of training sessions are available to support researchers and managers of researchers in their wider equity, diversity and inclusion practices (EDI) (ongoing).

### **Professional Development of Researchers**

#### **1. Training and development processes**

Underpinning the My Contribution process is the need to create a culture where career development is a core activity. We are developing further guidance and support for researchers and research managers to understand what development provision is on offer. The success criteria include increased awareness of resources and increases in attendance in training, supported by the development of the UWS training portal. Following a cyber incident in 2023, the base lines for all measures of professional development need to be re-established (ongoing).

In academic year 2024/25 our postgraduate progression and supervision system will include additional functionality to support PGR students throughout their entire journey.

## 2. Concordat and development communications

Working towards an open and inclusive research culture remains a key objective for UWS. Following a cyber incident impacting the communications plan for raising awareness of the HREiR action plan for part of the year, the web pages were rebuilt and the UWS Research Festival 2024 “Building a Positive Research Culture” was leveraged to raise awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat.

**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

UWS holds Athena Swan Bronze award and has made a new application (for institutional Bronze) under the ‘transformed’ Charter (28 March 2024) which builds on the strengths of the previous framework to support greater inclusivity for people in all roles, of all gender identities, and those facing intersectional inequalities. An evidence-based report and SMART action plan, designed to progress gender equality work over the next five years, form the university’s submission. UWS has committed to the principles of the transformed Charter as part of this process.

The toolkit planned to accompany the action plan - to ensure institutional policies and practices relevant to researchers are inclusive, equitable and transparent, and are well-

communicated to researchers and their managers - remains under development.

The UWS Public Sector Duty Report 2023, identifies the progress made toward meeting our quality outcomes set in 2021 and includes an action plan, which focuses on the key areas where we will focus our efforts in this review period. This is enhanced by recent recruitment of a 1.0 FTE Wellbeing Specialist and a Head of Sport and Wellbeing.

Workshops relevant to EDI, wellbeing, and mental health continue to be offered and provision was adapted during the cyber incident mid-2023.

A suite of EDI and Wellbeing development workshops are available within UWS:

- Induction
- Trans Awareness,
- Intersectionality,
- Menopause for Managers,
- Equality Impact Assessment,
- Let's Talk About Race,
- Reasonable Adjustments,
- Recruitment Panel Chair,
- Mindfulness,
- Positive Psychology,
- Developing Personal Resilience,
- Mental Health Awareness,
- Emotional Intelligence,
- Time Management and Prioritisation
- Strategy workshops and survey

Opportunities for development are blended, face to face and on-line and across all campuses.

At UWS, EDI Champions play a crucial role in advancing the institution's commitment to equality and inclusivity. They serve as catalysts for positive change, fostering dialogue, raising awareness, and implementing strategies to address systemic barriers and promote a culture of respect and belonging for all members of the university community.

Our 28 EDI Champions, including a dedicated research Champion, are strongly encouraged to join one or more colleague network to further their learning and champion EDI-related work ongoing at the University. All new colleagues are made aware of where to find details of their dedicated EDI Champion as part of Induction.

UWS works to eliminate bullying and harassment in the research system through implementation of a 'report and support' policy. During this reporting period, advertisement of this policy has increased across social media and through on-campus communications. The communications plan to support this, led by People and Wellbeing, is ongoing.

### **Academic Managers of Researchers**

UWS is building their complement of Leadership and Talent Development programmes, ranging from Graduate Trainee to Senior Leader Development Programmes. On our Women's Leadership Development Programme, 46% were academic colleagues and we have dedicated elements within programmes on creating inclusive cultures and teams.

Our approach to environment takes account of Research integrity – A landscape study, with research integrity and research culture intertwined components. A Code of Research Practice and Ethics is under development and expected to be introduced in academic year 2024/25. To support this, UWS offers access to research integrity and ethics training programmes, both inclusive of EDI in relation to research leadership.

### **Researchers**

71% of researchers with significant responsibility for research (2023) are currently aligned to a research grouping.

820 people are registered to receive updates on the Staff Forum for Research MS Teams. This peer-to-peer network focusses on training and development. Under leadership emerging from the UWS Crucible, the forum takes an active role in supporting the annual Research Festival and activities

	<p>have expanded with the form an active chapter at UWS London Campus under local leadership.</p>
<p><b>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>The new Academic Career Development Framework (ACDF) was launched in 2024, with prior cross institutional engagement with colleagues over a 12-month period to learn from lived experiences, and career development requirements; recommendations and the framework design is based on this feedback.</p> <p>The framework includes three pathways for promotion. People and Wellbeing have made resources available to academic staff to support engagement in the promotions process, including: drop-in sessions; videos on completing the application form; narrative writing; and, guidance on professional and personal development opportunities. All supported by passionate videos from our Executives population on their support for ACDF, housed on a dedicated site, which to date has received over 1900 views.</p> <p>Post cyber incident, a rebuild and development of the Staff Training Portal is underway through IT services.</p> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <p>UWS aims to ensure researchers and their managers are engaging in productive career development reviews. Staff have taken part in workshops to improve the My Contribution process and a training suite of materials to support engagement for managers and researchers in the My Contribution process are planned across May and June 2024 (PCDI2), including sessions on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Managing team expectations</li> <li>● Assertiveness training</li> <li>● Coaching conversations for managers and leaders</li> </ul>



Actions towards a pilot programme to support engagement of managers and researchers in career development reviews are currently paused due to staff changes.

A new procedure for dealing with allegations for research misconduct (based on the UKRIO template) is under development by the Academic Integrity and Ethics Committee to support academic managers of researchers and researchers.

All research managers who are chairing interviews receive mandatory chair training, in line with UWS recruitment policy.

### **Researchers**

Through the Academic Career Development Framework, the contributions of researchers at UWS are now recognised through 3 pathways. To support researchers to engage in activities which support their career progression and contributions to the UWS research environment, new processes are being established for researcher development to enhance engagement that aligns with this framework (see professional development, below). Researchers have an active role in shaping this programme through engagement in our recent research culture work, including through the Research Festival.

Research Services has developed a new 'resource for researchers' section on the Connect intranet website which is signposted to new researchers. All new researchers receive information on the Concordat which is also covered in the researcher development Programme. Plans to relaunch research induction sessions for new staff have been delayed due to staff changes and are in development to be launched in the next academic year.

Researchers can access support with research grant applications via specialist working within Research Services.

Feedback captured from the Research Culture Conversations, the festival, and the Student Experience Survey is undergoing

	<p>analysis to provide evidence on researcher views on culture and the research environment in relation to their employment.</p>
<p><b>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>Research Services works closely with schools to engage researchers in training and development opportunities and identifies opportunities for researchers to lead in university programming, such as the Staff Forum for Research’s leadership co-developing the UWS Research Festival, and their curation of peer led training. The cyber incident and staff changes impacted researcher development programming for 2023/24; a new researcher development programme will launch for researchers in academic year 2024/25, integrated into the UWS wide training portal and new PGR system functionality.</p> <p>A plan to deliver a UWS wide monitoring system for training is in progress via the Training Portal. It is led by IT services and Research Services will utilise this for 2024/25 Programming and as a feedback and planning tool for supporting cross school engagement, to support the recommendation of a minimum of 10 days of development for researchers. The concordat steering group will work across its representative areas to better communicate the 10 days of professional development as outlined in the Concordat.</p> <p>UWS aims to provide researchers with opportunity to progress in their careers by developing their research identity and leadership capabilities. The UWS researcher development programme provides activities to support research leadership, as well as opportunities to build on this engagement with in-house leadership, such as through the UWS Crucible.</p> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <p>To support development and directly address feedback from our colleague surveys, UWS are delivering a Senior Leadership Development Programme designed for the academic leadership teams, including: Deans; Deputy Deans;</p>

Associate Deans; Heads of Division; and, School Business Managers. This programme will run in two cohorts over two days in-person in June and July 2024 with teams coming together collectively for a further half day team follow-up session to continue development and actions. As part of the programme a series of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a sample of the programme participants, school representatives and wider stakeholders across UWS will take place. This exercise helps to establish what areas to focus on in the development programme and develops a shared understanding of what the priorities are.

### **Researchers**

In January 2023, 28 researchers including research staff completed the 3rd bi-annual Crucible programme for developing future research leaders, all of whom are working on collaborative projects. Over the course of three two-day workshops, known as 'labs', participants engaged in challenging thinking with a theme. UWS Crucible forms a vital part of the University's commitment towards the Concordat to support the career development of researchers and focuses on:

- 1) Promoting positive research cultures, research careers and amplifying research collaborations
- 2) Nurturing and retaining talent from a diverse pool
- 3) Seeding cross-disciplinary activities and supporting research into novel ideas designed for purposeful impact.

During the rebuild of the UWS researcher development programme, engagement events for researchers have included activities such as:

- funding and funder events
- research social activities
- research data management
- academic writing and research communications
- research supervisor development

	<p>A significant element of rebuilding development opportunities for researchers sits within our recent work towards enhancing UWS' research culture. Researchers took part in research culture conversations within a series of 18 facilitated sessions for staff from a broad range of academic and professional services job families. These sessions informed the design of the UWS Research Festival, where researchers showcase the work they do within their research Institutes, Centres and Groups, and take part in a range of activities to inform future programming for training and development to support the career development of researchers.</p> <p>Researchers also have access to external, self-guided courses to support their development in research skills, integrity and ethics.</p>
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**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)**

Over the period, several activities have taken place and whilst we had notable impact on deliverables due to disruption from a cyber incident and colleague movement, we do feel proud of our achievements through such a challenging time.

We have a cohesive approach on re-mobilising our commitment and associated action plan, and utilising cross institutional resources to deliver this more collectively is a lesson learned.

A revised approach to how the Steering Group operates has been implemented, with Steering Group Core and Sub- Groups created, with dedicated resources split across the 3 commitments to engage and drive activity.

New opportunities for ways that we can support the career development of researchers and managers of researchers have also moved on during this reporting period, such as through our recent research culture action planning and increasingly joined up practices for training and development that are supported by infrastructure changes such as the training portal.

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

Our key objectives for the next year are:

- further enhancing the training environment through cohesive and consistent use of the new training portal and associated communications
- development of metrics and associated actions on employment factors such as job security and induction processes
- development of a toolkit to support integration of the Athena Swan action plan
- review of approaches for how the steering group will work together to support communications and resources to engage in the commitment to development time outlined in the Researcher Development Concordat.

A range of strategic vehicles aimed to deliver our institutional research strategy such as strategic secondments, visiting and honorary appointments and pledged support for large collaborative grants and the strategic investment in equipment and facilities are under development. The recent review and establishment of research groupings and appointment of Associate Deans for Research and Innovation each school and their recruitment to the Concordat steering group in a stronger position to connect activities across the university and form a taskforce to communicate opportunities to the UWS research community in ways that are responsive to our collective learning through the research culture conversations and our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

**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 Concordat Steering Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) with support from Vice Chair, Vice-Principal (People & Student Wellbeing) leads on the implementation of the Concordat and has responsibility for the creation and evaluation of the Concordat Action Plan. Membership includes, Associate Deans for Research and Innovation, Head of Research, People Experience Manager, Research Staff representative (s) as well as ECR and MCR representatives.

At the draft stage feedback and approval was sought from the members of the Research and Innovation Committee.

The final report was reviewed by the Vice Chancellors Executive and Senate prior to submission to the Court of the University of the West of Scotland for Approval.

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Kate Allum  
Chair of Court

Contact for queries: Helen Kennedy, Head of Research, University of the West of Scotland. Email [helen.kennedy@uws.ac.uk](mailto:helen.kennedy@uws.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](mailto:CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

[www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk)