

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

Name of Institution	[Heriot-Watt University]
Reporting period	[2021-2022]
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Web address of annual report	[HR Excellence in Research and Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk)]
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	[HR Excellence in Research and Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk)]
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Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	[24 th April 2023; and 7 th July 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*)

Heriot-Watt University is a research-intensive institution specialising in Science, Technology, Engineering, Business and Design. It attracts researchers from across the world to its campuses in Scotland, Dubai and Malaysia. The University's Strategy 2025 - Shaping Tomorrow Together has "Excelling in Research and Enterprise" which aims to use our research and entrepreneurial approach to place us at the forefront of academic endeavour while making an outstanding impact on society. We aim to address crucial world issues through our interdisciplinary approach and close collaboration with industry and business. This is exemplified via our business-focussed 'Global Research Institutes' in Robotics and AI, addressing Net Zero, in Earth and Environmental Science, and in Health and Care Engineering.

Researcher Concordat: Heriot-Watt University has around 2000 staff of which 450 are academic staff, 250 are Research Staff (postdoctoral researchers, research associates, research fellows) and approximately 1000 Graduate Students. In 2010, it was one of the first institutions in the UK to receive the 'HR Excellence in Research' (HREiR) award (European Commission). In 2020, it became a signatory of the "Revised Concordat to support the career development of researchers" and successfully completed a 10 year HREiR review. Heriot-Watt 'Action Plans' for HREiR and Researcher Concordat are focused on institution-wide support for Research Staff. They were developed in consultation with key stakeholders, discussed at the 'Research Staff Forum', approved by the 'University Committee for Research and Innovation', and led by the Deputy Principal for Research and Impact.

PGR students/Academic Staff: In parallel, other activities since 2020 have focused on facilitating a positive/inclusive environment for researchers at earlier or later career stages. The Research Degrees Committee, Academic Registry and Students' Union for example, have led initiatives fostering PGR student experience, while Research Engagement and Human Resources have introduced new development programmes for academic staff. These included activities organised by the Research Futures Academy (e.g "Festival of Research and Enterprise", "Supporting our Researchers" programme) and EDI enhancements stimulated by a new 'Global Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee'.

Recent HWU Enhancements to Research Culture beyond Concordat Action Plan.

- i) A review and/refinement of our Academic Schools' **Research Strategies** including actions on Research Culture development for our researcher community.

- ii) A new team of 4 **Associate Principals** include an '**Associate Principal for People and Research Culture**' currently leading a consultation to develop and refine Heriot-Watt's Research Culture.
- iii) Formation of a University **Graduate School** has been agreed (from September 2023), to include recruitment, administration and training and skills development support for Doctoral Students and Postdoctoral Research Staff, to ensure a consistent and excellent experience.
- iv) A **Research Recovery** fund (£250k) was established to help researchers recover their research capacity, momentum and visibility post-Covid.
- v) A **Research Culture Programme** of activity is underway encompassing 5 themes:
 - Research Integrity; Responsible Research & Innovation
 - Collegiality; collaboration
 - Research Recognition; Reward
 - Research Careers; personal development; EDI
 - Open Research; Engagement

It will be overseen by a new **Research Culture Working Group**, ensuring future alignment between our Research Culture programme and the Researcher Development Concordat.

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*)

Research Culture Strategic Objectives.

Discussions about Heriot-Watt's Research Culture work programme have identified 5 Strategic Objectives it will seek to enable (Table 1). Mapping of Concordat activities against these 5 Objectives will demonstrate any gaps and help us refine/expand our Concordat Action Plan to include all early, mid and senior career researchers at Heriot-Watt University.

Table 1: Mapping of Heriot-Watt's 5 Research Culture Strategic Themes against 3 Researcher Concordat Principles.

Concordat Principles	HW Research Culture Strategic Themes, 1-5
Principle 1: Environment and culture	Strategy 1: Embedding Research Integrity; RRI Strategy 3: Promoting Research Recognition and Reward Strategy 5: Facilitating Open Research; Engagement
Principle 2: Employment	Strategy 2: Building collegiality and collaboration Strategy 3: Promoting Research Recognition and Reward
Principle 3: Professional and career development	Strategy 4: Support research careers; personal development; EDI.

Implementation plans for each of the 3 Concordat Principles are outlined below:

1. Environment and culture

Objectives related to improving awareness of the Concordat, ensuring representation/engagement of early career researchers at local/institutional level, and developing better understanding of the research staff population from data analysis will be carried over from the 2021-22 Concordat Action Plan for 2023. In addition, new objectives on provision of training/resources on i) Ethics and Academic Integrity, ii) Responsible Research and Innovation, iii) PURE data repository/enhancing citations will be added to the workplan since they reflect three of Heriot-Watt's Research Culture Objectives i.e. **Strategy 1:** 'Embedding Research Integrity/RRI'; **Strategy 3:** 'Promoting Research Recognition/Reward', and **Strategy 5:** 'Facilitating Open Research/Engagement'.

2. Employment

Objectives related to developing a better understanding of research staff population, mobility and employment experience through improved data, will be carried over from the 2021-22 Concordat Action Plan for 2023. In addition, new objectives on the provision of peer-networking, consultation and feedback opportunities will be added to the workplan since they reflect two of Heriot-Watt's Research Culture Objectives, i.e. **Strategy 2:** 'Building collegiality/collaboration', **Strategy 3:** 'Promoting Research Recognition/Reward'.

3. Professional Development of Researchers

Objectives related to i) presenting career pathways/opportunities online for Research Staff on the range of potential career paths, and ii) on improving reference to '10 days training' for research staff in relevant policies/guidance will be carried over from the

2021-22 Concordat Action Plan for 2023. In addition, new objectives on provision of Mid-Senior Career development, EDI training, scoping for the new Graduate School, and delivery of 'PI Development' and 'Narrative CV' training will be added to the workplan to reflect **Strategy 4**: 'Supporting research careers, personal development, EDI'.

Evaluation of progress and success

Coordination of alignment of Heriot-Watt's 'Research Culture' and 'Researcher Development Concordat' Action Plans will be accomplished via the Research Engagement Directorate. Concordat evaluation reports will be prepared by Research Futures Academy for discussion/review of progress at our new 'Research Culture Working Group.'* Summary reports will be prepared for Research Staff Forum, University Committee for Research and Innovation, and Universities UK (in the University's Annual Concordat Report).

Methods to be used by 'Human Resources' and 'Research Engagement' Directorates to measure/analyse progress will include:

- Researcher Surveys (e.g. comparisons of Annual Staff, CEDARS, and HW Research Culture Surveys)
- Consultation/review of plans/progress with the research community (e.g. Research Staff Forum; Research Culture Focus Groups)
- Analyses of researcher data (to better understand career development, research grant application profiles, training needs)
- Measurement of engagement data to assess uptake of training provision.

[*The new 'Research Culture Working Group' includes Representatives of researchers/staff at different levels including senior leaders (e.g. Associate Principals for 'Research Culture and People' and 'Impact'). Members of the group will provide recommendations to enhance Concordat progress and provide a 'testing ground' for new initiatives via ad hoc 'task and finish' groups].

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*)

[See attached table \(Appendix 1\)](#)

Employment (*max 600 words*)

[See attached table \(Appendix 1\)](#)

Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)	See attached table (Appendix 1)
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>)	
1. Concordat awareness and reporting – It has been decided that Heriot-Watt University will step-down from the HREiR award process managed by Vitae from December 2022, and instead concentrate on delivering its Concordat activities as managed by UUK. Awareness-raising initiatives for the Concordat will be developed in 2023 via Heriot-Watt’s ‘Research Staff Forum’ and new “Research Culture Working Group”, and through closer consultation with the Academic Schools and new ‘Graduate School’. 2. Research Culture Programme – the focus on enhancing Research Culture for the research community has grown over the past year, and Heriot-Watt has instigated several initiatives to stimulate more progress in this area. This overlaps with our existing Concordat activities, and so we have integrated the two such that initial strategic themes for Heriot-Watt identified by the Research Culture Working Group inform our Concordat Action Plan. As the result of recent diagnostic workshops (undertaken by the Associate Principal for People and Research Culture), the Working Group may amend some of the Strategic Themes for 2023 to reflect areas that have been highlighted by our Research Community. This may then result in further modification of our Concordat Action Plan. 3. Covid impact - the Pandemic has slowed completion of some of our original objectives, which will be carried over into the next year. These include a)researcher representation and networking; b)collation of data to track origin/destination of careers and better understand of the researcher population; and c) creation of more online development resources. It also changed the environment within researchers were working and, in some cases, their research plans. We have responded to this in practical ways by making more use of digital technology and in establishing a ‘Research Recovery’ fund to help our researchers adapt to the post-Covid research environment. 4. Digital skills and online resources – there has been further growth in demand and capabilities across the researcher community necessitating adaptation to new modes of delivery and up-skilling of all staff in digital technologies. Heriot-Watt’s ‘Global Essential Digital Skills Steering Group’ has provided a further forum	

to consider actions to enhance digital competencies, while more opportunities for researchers to engage in online training have been provided by the Research Futures Academy (e.g. 'Nature Masterclasses' <https://masterclasses.nature.com/> and 'Data & Software Carpentries'). Further enhancement of online development resources for Researchers on the Research Futures' SharePoint site will be undertaken in 2023.

5. **EDI alignment** – there is cross-over between EDI-related Concordat actions and other EDI strategies and initiatives already in-place at Heriot-Watt University. Recognising that the Institutions' EDI strategy is already well established (with activities such as promotion of good mental health and well-being via well-being webinars, Mental Health awareness training for Managers, bullying/ harassment surveys etc) and that our research community benefits from Athena Swan actions to support embedding equality into culture, we should seek to better align and coordinate Concordat-identified EDI initiatives to maximise their impact.

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

The **main purpose** in delivering the Concordat Action Plan at Heriot-Watt University in 2023 will be to help enhance the Research Culture experience of our Research Staff population, and thereby contribute to the work we are undertaking to develop the Research Culture for all staff and students across the Institution. Key objectives will focus on the 3 pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers), as follows:

1.Environment and Culture

Heriot-Watt University will work to improve awareness of the Concordat principles across the Institution via enhanced communications and more consultation with researchers and their managers in 2023. It will ensure representation of Research Staff at local and institutional level (e.g. School committees, Research Staff Forum and Research Culture Working Group), and develop a clearer understanding of the diversity and distribution of research staff population from improved data collection and analysis (e.g. Worktribe) so as to better provide support for them. Access to Ethics and Academic Integrity training will be widened to all Research Staff and more online training resources created on the topic of "Responsible Research and Innovation". Additional workshops related to academic publishing (e.g. "Getting Cited"; "Using PURE" Publication Repository) will be delivered to help research staff enhance the visibility of their academic outputs.

2. Employment

Heriot-Watt University will continue with the actions carried over from last year's Concordat action plan related to better understanding of our research staff population through data analysis – in particular, to gain improved knowledge of research staff

mobility and employment experience through review of data on career origin and destination. In addition, it will create more peer-networking, consultation and feedback opportunities for the Research Staff population, e.g. via participation in the CEDARs survey, 2023.

3. Professional Development of Researchers

Heriot-Watt University will aim to strengthen the support it provides to research staff across the Institution by encouraging further engagement with training and online resources focused on their personal/professional development and career planning (e.g. the 'PI Development Programme' on designing successful grant proposals). The importance of Managers of Researchers in facilitating the development of their research staff will be further emphasised through a new programme for mid-senior career research leaders. Greater skills and awareness related to EDI will be promoted through additional training opportunities for researchers (such as provided at Heriot-Watt through the Disability Inclusive Science Careers project). The opportunities for enhanced networking and targeted support for the Research community will be further explored in the scoping of the new HWU Graduate School (due to launch in September 2023, and to include Postdoctoral Researchers).

Oversight of the Concordat Action Plan, 2022-23 – Heriot-Watt's new 'Research Culture Working Group' will consider further development and expansion of the Concordat Action Plan in 2023 and beyond, and guide its delivery and assessment (including Research Staff Representatives). Reference will be made to the strategic and operational development of the University's "Research Culture Programme" whose emerging themes include collaboration, interdisciplinarity, impact and diversity.

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 has been compiled by the Head of the Research Futures Academy in consultation with the Global Director of Research Engagement (Co-Chair of the Research Culture Working Group), Global Director of Human Resources (Chair of the Research Staff Forum), and Deputy Principal of Research and Impact (Chair of the University Committee for Research and Innovation).

The report will be considered at the next meeting of the Research Staff Forum which has Research Staff Representatives. It will be considered for approval at the next meeting of the University Committee for Research and Innovation on 22nd March 2023, whose membership include Directors of Research and Enterprise. If approved, it will be considered at the University Executive and then go to the University Court for approval.

In future years, the report will also be considered by the Research Culture Working Group prior to approval being sought from UCRI and the University Court.

Signature on behalf of governing body: **Prof Steve McLaughlin, Deputy Principal for Research and Impact**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve McLaughlin', is centered on the page.

Contact for queries: **Research Futures Academy:** ResearchFutures@hw.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

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk