

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)

The University of York is dedicated to fostering an institutional culture that promotes ambition, collective purpose, and continuous improvement. York was among the first UK universities to obtain the HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) award in 2010, and has maintained it for 14 years, demonstrating its commitment to a positive and inclusive research culture.

The [University Research Strategy \(2023\)](#) and the [University Research Culture Action Plan \(2024\)](#) were developed in close consultation with our research community, aligning with the principles of the Concordat. These documents outline the vision and steps towards a healthy, productive environment, where research is conducted with the highest integrity.

The Building Research and Innovation Capacity (BRIC) team coordinates efforts to support the Concordat's aims, involving various teams such as People and Organisational Development; Policy, Integrity and Performance; Open Research; and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This collaborative effort also includes input from dedicated research and academic staff. York also supports an inclusive research environment through the Technician Commitment, DORA and institutional Bronze Athena Swan Award. The Research Culture Working Group (RCWG) includes established and early career staff from all three Faculties and professional services, to build on these commitments. The RCWG oversees the development and monitoring of the HREiR (Concordat) Action Plan, with biannual group-level discussions. Two [Research Staff Liaison Officers](#) ensure researchers' voices are heard through their consultations with departmental researcher networks.

The University of York is home to two significant research culture projects: [Valuing Voices for Equitable and Responsible Research](#) and the [Next Generation Research SuperVision Project](#) (RSVP). Valuing Voices aims to drive positive culture change through the co-production of a set of principles and accompanying toolkit, with researchers and support staff, designed to foster equitable relationships and dismantle hierarchies that often limit collaboration and impact. RSVP aims to transform the culture and practice of research supervision, by providing world-leading professional development resources, self-assessment tools for institutions, and routes to reward and recognise excellent practice. Cited as a key element of the [UKRI New Deal for Postgraduate Research](#), RSVP seeks to improve the experience of everyone in the supervisory team, including researchers who are often under-recognised for their contribution to PhD supervision.

The University has also invested Enhancing Research Culture funding in a variety of different researcher-led projects. Examples of those led or co-led by postdoctoral researchers range from a project exploring intercultural communication in research teams, to the creation of resources and webinars on reproducible analysis and code sharing, and a series of research culture seminars and workshops on a range of topics. The fund also supports new research staff networks within departments, as well as topical networks, which unite research staff with professional services, technical and academic staff, such as our Research Data Software and Infrastructure (ReDSI) network. Importantly, all research staff, irrespective of contract status and career stage, have been able to apply for funding and lead their own research culture projects.

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 York HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Action Plan (2022-2025) can be summarised by the following priority aims and success measures (*SM*).

Environment and Culture

- **To increase awareness of the Concordat, and institutional policies and practices most relevant to researchers.** Build awareness through consistent reference to the Concordat, as part of researcher training, regular communications and when promoting events and opportunities. *SM* - Researchers are aware of the Concordat, evidenced through increased participation in professional development opportunities, and engagement with related policies and initiatives.
- **To create a safe, supportive and equitable working environment, institutionally and within departments and research groups.** Implement and evaluate policies and practices to promote researchers' wellbeing and work towards eradicating cases of bullying and harassment. Communicate expectations regularly, including via University leadership and management training. *SM* - University staff and students understand what constitutes professional conduct and know how to report unacceptable behaviour.
- **To recognise researchers as key stakeholders and advocate for research staff representation on department, faculty and University committees.** Invite researchers to contribute to policy and decision making and provide active support for researcher-led grassroots activity. *SM* - Increased

representation of research staff on committees and increased number of research staff networks. Researchers are engaged and supported to share their perspectives, drive implementation of the Concordat and participate in research culture initiatives.

Employment

- **To provide an effective induction and consolidate resources available to support new and existing researchers.** Create an easily accessible and well communicated resource to supplement the University staff induction process and effectively integrate researchers into departments and schools, where tailored provision may currently be missing. *SM* - An updated resource that is integrated within the University induction process and works effectively to raise awareness of Concordat related policies and provision.
- **To attract, develop and retain researchers using fair and inclusive recruitment, reward and recognition practices.** Develop a new 'Community without Limits' Framework with the long term aim to build a diverse and collegiate community who share an understanding of the behaviours that are valued at York. *SM* - A finalised behavioural framework that is communicated to researchers and a plan to ensure the framework is implemented effectively to attract, develop and retain researchers.
- **To support managers of researchers to provide the highest quality leadership and people management.** Provide high quality, flexible opportunities for managers to extend their leadership and people management skill set. Raise awareness of resources to support managers to have productive career development reviews with researchers. *SM* - Managers of researchers engage with opportunities and resources to develop their leadership skills. Researchers have a supportive, enabling experience at York with well trained and highly skilled mentors and managers.

Professional and Career Development

- **To ensure researchers engage in at least 10 days of professional development per year and provide encouragement and structured support to facilitate this.** Enhance and monitor engagement with the wide range of available professional and career development opportunities available to researchers. Review, consolidate and promote online resources to support induction and professional development and career planning. *SM* - Researchers feel empowered to dedicate time to their professional development, they understand what opportunities are available, know

where to access support and demonstrate increased engagement with their professional development.

To provide researchers with the opportunity and time to develop their research identity and leadership skills, supported by managers who engage in their own leadership training. Provide support for individual researchers through the York Research Fellowship Programme and raise awareness of this support. *SM* - Increased number of fellowship specific events and participation in the Preparing for Fellowship Success programme. An increased number of fellowship applications.

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

The annual [York Researcher Festival](#) is a key route for raising awareness of the Concordat, featuring a communications campaign emphasising the 10 days' professional development requirement, and a session on University policies and procedures relevant to researchers. In November 2023, the Festival reached a record audience with 15 bespoke sessions and 1,034 unique sign ups, 564 of whom attended live events. To maintain awareness through the year, the [Concordat web pages](#) have also been redesigned for better navigation and accessibility.

Creating a safe, supportive and equitable working environment for researchers is an institutional priority. The EDI team is revising the [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#), expected to be finalised by the end of 2024. This policy will align more closely with the revised HR Grievance Policy and be more accessible. [Compulsory EDI training modules](#) have been updated in the past 12 months, with high staff completion rates (+85%). The number of [Equality Champions](#) has fluctuated, with targets now set to recruit two champions per department. Revised guidance and procedures for [equality impact assessments](#) have been published, including a repository to support new assessments.

Over the past year the University has produced new Fair Attribution Guidance to ensure all research team members'

contributions are recognised on research outputs. Additionally, the new [Research Reputation and Social Responsibility Framework](#), outlines ethical approval, due diligence and other oversight considerations for research projects.

The University published two key documents during the 2023/24 academic year: the [University Research Strategy](#) and the [Research Culture Action Plan](#). These documents were created in collaboration with early career researchers and managers of researchers/Principal Investigators (PIs). Merging the Concordat Implementation Group with the Research Culture Working Group (RCWG) has aligned University-level projects related to research culture, researcher development and research strategy. The RCWG includes two researcher representatives who consult widely with departmental researcher networks, ensuring the voice of researchers is heard.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Academic staff launched the [EDI Research Centre](#) in July 2024, a hub for innovative research focused on inclusivity, decolonisation and equity. The Centre has published a framework to advance EDI research practices including case studies to provide implementation guidance and generate additional EDI-focused research activity. Academic staff from the Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre developed the [Anti-Racist Research Toolkit](#), encouraging researchers to prioritise collectivity and diversity in research designs, processes and outputs.

The [Enhancing Research Culture Workshop](#) series team has organised 13 workshops, providing a platform for discussing research culture challenges across York, the UK and beyond. Featuring 52 speakers from various sectors, the series has reached 416 participants across 33 departments and all three faculties. The series showcases how to promote a healthy working environment and encourages researchers to recognise their role in creating a positive research environment and culture.

	<p>Researchers</p> <p>A group of three researchers, supported by professional services staff and a larger advisory committee, organised the first Celebrating Spaces: Connecting Researchers event in June 2024. This internal open day invited research and research-enabling staff to showcase and explore the breadth of research at York, fostering a sense of community and enabling new relationships across varied research groups and departments. The event reached a wide audience, with 109 researchers signed up in advance and more attending on the day. It included 20 presenters of 5-minute lightning talks, 22 exhibitors and 13 open spaces/facilities to explore. Feedback indicated that 65% of respondents made connections that could lead to new projects or collaborations; 89% found the lightning talks valuable; 94% found the exhibition stalls valuable and 100% wanted similar events in the future.</p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>The University induction webpages for research staff are currently undergoing significant updates to improve useability and provide comprehensive information. These updates include a more intuitive navigation structure, making it easier for new researchers to find essential information quickly. The content will be expanded to cover a wider range of topics, including short summaries of key University policies. Additionally, work is underway to better integrate the web pages within the existing induction process for new staff. Once finalised, all changes will then be communicated with managers of researchers to increase awareness of available support.</p> <p>Implementation of the new University ‘Community without Limits’ Framework has continued to progress over the past year, despite interruptions due to other more urgent institutional priorities. Following refinements involving an extensive staff consultation, the finalised framework was published in summer 2023. Webpages introducing the framework to the organisation are expected to be launched in autumn 2024. The next phase of this project will involve a broad communications strategy, mapping training provision to the framework and reviewing the Performance</p>

	<p>Development Review (PDR) process to embed the framework behaviours.</p> <p>Related work on the associated institutional Talent Strategy is currently on pause, however a Talent Management Steering Group is currently being established (to include research staff and managers of researchers) with a longer term plan to weave the framework into recruitment, reward and recognition policies and practices. Important aspects of this work related to the University's Concordat commitments involve developing resources and training to support managers to have effective career conversations, and also creating talent pipelines to identify potential and support researchers (and other staff members) to progress in professional services roles at the University.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>Managers of researchers have engaged with opportunities to extend their leadership and people management skill set. This includes participation in relevant training and workshops (e.g. the 'Being an Effective Research Supervisor Tutorial' has now been completed by over 500 supervisors, many of whom are also Principal Investigators (PI's)) and also as part of consultation and working groups to support institutional projects related to leadership and people management (e.g. as part of focus groups for the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) and the Workload Management Joint Working Group).</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>The University Research Staff Liaison Officers (RSLOs) have gathered feedback, raised awareness of the Concordat (in particular University policies and practices related to the Employment principle) and have advocated for research staff representation through their engagement via 'meet and greet' events with 11 department/research centre research staff networks. This activity was followed by a subsequent increase in RSLO applications for 2024/25.</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>Communicating the value and importance of professional development for researchers is ongoing, involving consistent</p>

messaging via staff newsletters, University webpages, induction and training materials. Central to this aim is maintaining a diverse range of professional development opportunities. In the academic year 2023/24 there have been 126 sessions with 418 research staff attending, delivered as part of the York Researcher Development Programme. Feedback has been consistently positive with a 95% satisfaction rating and 97% of attendees recommending training.

The range of professional development opportunities exceeds this total, with additional events such as the York Researcher Festival, Fellowship Fortnight and the first Open Research Fortnight event. This year, York joined a group of Russell Group universities co-delivering a series of practical and interactive workshops on [Networking and Profile Building](#). This initiative provided 20 spaces across two runs, with positive feedback and increased attendance from York researchers. Researchers also participate in University mentoring and coaching schemes, including a scheme for postdoctoral researchers to mentor postgraduate researchers, providing leadership skills development for mentors and access to early career experience for mentees.

Dedicated support for Fellows is key to developing researchers' identities, careers and leadership skills at York. Earlier in 2024, following the departure of the Fellowship Coordinator, the University appointed a specialist Fellowships Researcher Developer. In the first six months, support included 10 events during [Fellowship Fortnight](#), six 1:1 career coaching sessions and three workshops. With the Fellowship position vacant between November-March, the 2023/24 Preparing for Fellowship Success cohort programme was replaced with additional support available between July-September, including 17 1:1 drop-in appointments and feedback on 13 fellowship applications. Recent work has involved collecting data from schools and departments to update and maintain a central record of existing Fellows, applications submitted and the success rates. An updated fellowships web page with learning resources and scheme guidance documents is due to launch soon.

In February, the University appointed a Research Impact and Knowledge Exchange Training Officer to develop and deliver a University-wide programme of training and capacity-

building activities. In the first six months, the training officer has planned and delivered a new session, launched a self-directed online learning resource, scoped and planned a programme of training, and conducted profile-raising activities.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Supported by Research England Enhancing Research Culture funding, academics from the York Environmental Sustainability Institute (YESI) developed an [interdisciplinary research training programme](#). This programme helped researchers think more broadly about solutions to research problems by understanding each other's values, methods and concepts. The workshop, featuring a Dragons Den research pitching event, was well attended by a diverse range of University research community members and international fellows. This training will be integrated into programmes offered across the university and adapted for delivery in overseas YESI fellows' institutions.

Another example, 'From Manuscript to Publication: A Workshop for International Early Career Researchers in the Social Sciences', was led by a Senior Research Fellow with support from two researchers in the Centre for Health Economics. This one-day workshop, attended by over 50 researchers included a panel discussion with three academic staff sharing insights about the publication process and writing advice. Local endorsement from senior academic staff continues to be a key driver of researcher engagement.

Researchers

Researchers have led several training opportunities and events, notably through the [Celebrating Spaces](#) event and the [York Researcher Festival](#), which featured six researcher-led events and saw a significant increase in attendance (399 in 2022; 564 in 2023). One event, [Postdocs Assemble!](#), highlighted the importance of community for researchers, demonstrating how they can kick start initiatives, build communities and bring people together.

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, and UK higher education sector as a whole, are currently experiencing unprecedented fiscal challenges. While there continues to be a sustained, collective commitment to supporting the career development of researchers at York, rapidly shifting priorities and resources have challenged the continuity of Concordat activity. The sector has changed significantly since the York Concordat Action Plan was drafted in 2021/22. Therefore, our current strategy is to remain agile and adaptable, addressing urgent priorities and reassessing planned actions and success measures that may no longer be relevant or suitable. The 'business as usual' professional development provision for researchers at York has steadily increased in recent years, and sustaining this high quality provision is currently a key priority. Recognising the resource required to achieve this will be important in long-term Concordat activity planning.

Researcher-led initiatives and activities such as Celebrating Spaces and department-level ECR events (e.g. the [Contract Researchers Forum](#) in Health Sciences) demonstrate that, despite sector-level challenges, there are enthusiastic and highly motivated researchers ready to drive change. University-level support and recognition is key to the success of grass-roots activity being realised and shared as widely as possible; it is a virtuous cycle, whereby opportunities for researchers to come together create the conditions for new ideas and collaborations to flourish.

Communicating and raising awareness about the Concordat remains challenging. Researchers, and sometimes even their managers, are often surprised by the range of available support and benefits of certain policies, despite widespread efforts to disseminate this information. Current initiatives, such as improving the research staff induction programme and establishing a University Research Staff Forum should help address these challenges. However, for a more substantial impact in the long term, it is crucial to gain a deeper understanding of the communications barriers faced by researchers at York and to implement effective strategies such as targeted engagement and awareness campaigns.

There are many managers of researchers independently upholding the commitments of the Concordat, however, achieving consistent practice and coordinating activity across more than 35 diverse departments and schools is a challenge. Since restructuring into three faculties and, more recently, a number of smaller departments merging to form larger schools, there has been greater alignment and an opportunity to create more streamlined processes and improved faculty-level support for our researchers. Bringing together research staff through the University Research Staff Forum, and leveraging faculty-level coordination

should enhance support for researchers and enable the University to achieve greater consistency in upholding the Concordat commitments across departments and schools.

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

In the coming year, members of the BRIC team, with support from the RCWG and RSLOs, will continue to coordinate activities and monitor the progress of the Concordat Action Plan. The focus will be on advancing priority projects related to research culture and researcher development, ensuring these areas are aligned for maximum impact.

The following priorities have been identified for the upcoming reporting period:

- 1. Continue to engage with researchers and support grassroots initiatives:** Facilitating open dialogue with as many researchers as possible will be a key priority for the year ahead, as we prepare a new 3-year Concordat action plan. Facilitating activities such as the second annual Celebrating Spaces event and a RD Concordat themed Enhancing Research Culture workshop.
- 2. Evaluate researcher representation across the University:** Undertake a project to collect data and produce a summary of current University ECR Forum/Research Staff Associations and the extent to which researchers are represented on department, school and University committees.
- 3. Create a University Research Staff Forum:** Bring researcher representatives together from across the University to raise challenges, share good practice and progress Concordat/researcher-related projects.
- 4. Improve the research staff induction programme:** Improvements to the induction webpages to improve usability and effectively communicate the wide range of support available. Exploring the possibility of a community building event or initiative to help foster connections and collaborations across the wider research community.
- 5. Update the research staff webpages:** Work towards the long-term aim of creating a virtual 'Postdoc hub' which will signpost support and also help to raise awareness of the Concordat and related policies.
- 6. Publish and raise awareness of the new fair attribution policy:** Communicate this policy widely with researchers and managers of researchers to help promote a more equitable working environment.

- 7. Create new 'Research Team Charter' resources:** Graduate interns (with support from researchers and managers of researchers) will undertake a research project to explore how teams can co-create a written document of mutually agreed guidance for operations and workplace norms.
- 8. Extend and strengthen the researcher development programme:** Develop and pilot a new career development and leadership series for emerging research leaders, including trialling new 'bitesize' format and featuring new provision related to research impact and knowledge exchange.
- 9. Improve training opportunities for managers of researchers:** Develop training and resources that will help managers better support researchers, particularly through a period of change. Topics to include team equity, emotional intelligence, psychological safety and change management. Increase uptake by creating more accessible and self-directed resources, including LinkedIn Learning pathways.
- 10. Pilot a Prosper Cohort Programme for researchers:** Delivered by the White Rose University Consortium (in collaboration with University of Leeds and the University of Sheffield), this pilot programme will provide dedicated career development support for postdoctoral researchers over several weeks. This pilot, in combination with consistent signposting to the Prosper portal resources marks the initial phase of embedding the Prosper materials into the wider career development support for researchers at York.

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 Research Culture Working Group (RCWG) is responsible for overseeing the development and monitoring of the progress of the HREiR (Concordat) Action Plan and provides final approval for the Concordat Annual Report.

The RCWG is a subgroup of the University's Culture and Community Steering Group, providing direction and oversight for activities related to research culture. The RCWG consists of members of the University research community including academics, professional support staff, technicians and researchers at different career stages and from different disciplines. The final approval for the report is granted by Professor Matthias Ruth, Chair of the RCWG and Pro Vice Chancellor for Research.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'm ruth' in a cursive style.

Professor Matthias Ruth

Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research

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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