

## 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 Dundee is committed to supporting the professional and career development of our researchers with a focus on academic excellence at all career stages. The University of Dundee became a signatory to the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in January 2021 (hereafter referred to as “the Concordat”) and has held the HR Excellence in Research Award (HR-EiR) since 2010. The HR-EiR award was renewed in June 2024, recognising the University’s continued commitment to supporting an enabling and inclusive research culture as well as a thriving environment for our researchers. The original HR-EiR also endorses the University’s commitment to the revised Researcher Development Concordat.

The following report provides an overview of progress to date in implementing the obligations of the Concordat - setting out key strategic objectives to support researchers and embed a positive and inclusive research culture for them at every stage of their career.

**Governance**

Academic year 2024/2025 saw the introduction of a new sub-committee of Senate called Research, People, Culture and Environment (RPCE-SC). Papers tabled at this sub-committee feed up to the University Research Committee and to the University Court via the People & Organisational Development Committee. The RPCE-SC, chaired by the Assistant Vice-Principal of Research Culture & Environment, includes representation of research staff, has taken on the responsibility of planning, coordinating and monitoring the Principles of the Concordat and the HR Excellence in Research Action Plan which was formerly carried out by the now disbanded Career Development for Research Staff Steering Group (CDRS).

Other relevant governance functions in the researcher development space are exercised by the Professional and Organisational Development Committee (PODCO), the Research Governance and Policy Sub-Committee and the Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee.

At School level, the Concordat is typically overseen by the Associate Dean for Research, and (where applicable) the Associate Dean for People, Culture and Performance.

### **New Initiatives**

The University was awarded a £1m award from the **Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture**. This fund aims to transform the culture of research and its environment for the benefit of all and was initiated in May 2024. It widens access to funding and provides support under the following headings – Breaking Barriers, Support for Career Development, Support during School Holidays, Flexible Dependent Care, Leadership Transition Programmes, Carer Friendly Meeting Spaces and Research Culture Cafes. [Read more](#).

A new **Researcher Advancement Programme** has been developed with the research community and complements development opportunities ongoing at the university.

### **RDC Implementation**

An Assistant Vice Principal of Research Culture and Environment was appointed in October 2024 to steer the RDC activities to embed a positive and inclusive research culture.

An RDC stakeholder group has been initiated with the purpose of implementing a streamlined action plan. They will be consulted to define indicators for measures of success, so that the action plan can be evaluated rigorously.

**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 Dundee has undergone a turbulent year in 2024/2025 with financial challenges brought on by sector wide constraints. This has put pressure on delivery of activities in relation to the Concordat, including reduced staffing and loss of budget. As a result, colleagues have adapted to progress the RDC agenda, so our research community are not adversely affected.

The streamlined RDC action plan sets out our targets taking account of these constraints and will be adjusted accordingly, while still seeking to maximise impact for our research community.

The overall strategy for achieving this can be summarised by three main principles:

1. Ensuring the action plan is coordinated with other strategic University actions, as well as other relevant concordats and agreements.
2. Promote more joined-up messaging and service delivery by relevant professional services units.
3. Further empower research staff by strengthening representation and recognition.

### **Environment and culture**

A newly developed **Research Cultures Strategy** will be presented to UEG (Nov 2025). This lays out our mission and vision statements, which have been underpinned by key insights from our research community. This local consultation and sector mapping exercise defined four key priorities:

- Researcher development and careers
- Cultures of good governance and Integrity
- Collaborative and inclusive environments
- Sustainable research practices

Four fixed term working groups will lead on each priority, drawing on expertise and ongoing community input, with aligned university and school level action plans.

The Head of Research Culture and Environment worked with the Research Excellence Manager and other stakeholders to support the development of the Institutional statement for the mock **REF 2029 PCE pilot**.

In a separate consultation the University of Dundee participated in a consultative process with other universities in Scotland, to contribute to a document, '**REF PCE 2029 – A Scottish Perspective**', which commented on the uniqueness of research culture in Scotland that underpins our research excellence.

### **Employment**

Due to financial strain over the last year, there has been a recruitment freeze, with one round of voluntary severance undertaken and ongoing discussions towards a recovery plan.

Despite the current climate, by committing to the principles of the Concordat and ensuring that researchers are better aware of opportunities and responsibilities in relation to career development by means of actions focused on induction, probation and appraisal, the aim is to create researchers who know what they want to achieve in their career and the necessary steps to progress to their next position of employment.

After review of the process and outcomes of the Annual Research & Knowledge Exchange Review (ARKER), which included all stakeholders focussing on required outcomes and providing maximum benefit to the researcher, work has now started to more closely align research assessment in the academic appraisal process and develop school-level data. Revising this assessment process can better focus effort on developing custom support for each researcher, identify blockers and ways around, and review research strategies to diversify and improve their research portfolio.

### **Professional Development of Researchers**

A new **Researcher Advancement Programme** will be delivered for researchers. This will be evaluated using an enhanced version of the Kirkpatrick model.

The Research Culture and Environment team will continue to engage with researchers through the Research Staff Forum, the British Academy Early Career Researcher Network, the Associate Deans of Research Forum, and with national sector specific groups such as ScotHERD, Universities Scotland Researcher Development and Culture Committee, and the British Academy ECR Consortium to promote activities of relevance to the research community.

Newly established national collaborations are in progress for the Research Integrity & Culture week 2026 and The Scotland Aspiring Research Leaders Network. These initiatives are strategic moves within the sector to work together to improve resource efficiencies at a time of financial challenge across the sector.

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>Environment and Culture (max 600 words)</p>	<p><i>Institution</i></p> <p><b><u>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2024–2027</u></b></p> <p>Launched in October 2024, the EDI strategy is guided by four interconnected themes: creating inclusive campus communities, building workforce diversity, fostering a vibrant research culture, and promoting equity in educational achievement and experience. Oversight is led by the AVP of EDI, ensuring these priorities are embedded across the University.</p> <p><b>Research Culture and Open Practices</b></p> <p>The University continues to strengthen its research culture through responsible assessment and open research. Building on the work of the DORA Working Group, the Library reviewed the institution’s position on responsible research assessment and progressed towards aligning with the <u>Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment</u> (ARRA). An action plan is under development for consideration by the PCE Sub-committee.</p> <p>In February 2024, the Library’s Open Research and Publishing (OR&amp;P) team launched the <b>Open Research Leads (ORL) Network</b>, meeting bi-monthly. Each School nominates an Open Research Lead to interpret sector policies, exchange best practice, and support colleagues in embedding open research. Leads receive training and are expected to cascade expertise within their disciplines. The OR&amp;P team also helps researchers develop dissemination strategies that extend the reach and impact of their work beyond academia, increasing both visibility and citation potential.</p> <p>To further promote inclusivity in research recognition, Dundee’s OR&amp;P team created a guide on the <b>CRedit</b></p>
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**Taxonomy**, which defines 14 contributor roles across the research process. The guide encourages transparency and acknowledges contributions beyond authorship, such as project management and data curation, aligning with the Technician Commitment and open research values.

CRedit Taxonomy: Recognising Research Contributions, DOI: [10.20933/100001406](https://doi.org/10.20933/100001406)

CRedit Taxonomy Register: A practical tool for tracking and recognising individual research contributions using the CRedit Taxonomy, DOI: [10.20933/100001402](https://doi.org/10.20933/100001402)

A related initiative, the **Meet Our Researchers** case study series, showcased early career researchers through video profiles. These outputs highlight institutional research strengths while providing individuals with tools to enhance their professional visibility.

### **Wellbeing and Mental Health**

The University has taken significant steps to embed wellbeing in the staff experience. A **Wellbeing Week** in September 2024 showcased services such as Sports and Active Health, Counselling, and the Chaplaincy, while also promoting the online Wellbeing Portal.

Early in 2025, the University launched the **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**, providing staff with 24/7 support through multiple channels. Talent and Development delivered a suite of wellbeing-focused sessions, including training on managing stress, mental health awareness, digital wellbeing, and yoga at work.

With Wellcome Institutional Fund support, the **Breaking Barriers Mental Health and Inclusive Wellbeing Initiative** (2025–2026) was introduced. This programme enables all staff, including researchers, to build knowledge, skills, and confidence in addressing mental health issues, further embedding wellbeing into the institutional culture.

	<p><b>Support for Researchers</b></p> <p>A range of resources have been developed to strengthen research careers under the <b>Researcher Development Concordat</b>. These include a statement of expectations for managers of researchers, career conversation guidance, a training video, and micro-learning tools. Materials are available through the Research Culture and Environment SharePoint and promoted in staff communications.</p> <p>Mentorship is also a core priority. The <b>Dundee Research and Academic Mentoring Scheme</b> (2024–2025) attracted 130 participants and established 55 mentoring partnerships. It provided support for fellowship applications and leadership development through Advance HE and other programmes.</p> <p>The <b>Breaking Barriers Co-Mentoring Initiative</b> (2025–2026), piloted in the School of Business, applies a co-mentoring model to digital skills. Research staff are primarily mentors, contributing to peer learning and knowledge exchange while targeted workshops address identified skill gaps.</p> <p><b>Listening and Engagement</b></p> <p>Recognising the challenges of recent financial uncertainty, the University launched an <b>Institutional Listening Exercise</b> in August 2025. Through online submissions and in-person sessions, staff can share feedback and ideas to strengthen community connection and support recovery.</p> <p><b>Technicians Commitment</b></p> <p>In recognition of the submission of work that the University of Dundee has made with regards to progressing the Technicians Commitment, it has been recognised with an ‘Award of Impact’.</p>
<p>Employment (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p><i>Institution</i></p> <p><b>Dundee Difference Awards</b></p>

The Dundee Difference Awards were held in Jan 2025 and are by staff for staff. All staff had the opportunity to nominate their colleagues, or themselves, to have their work recognised and rewarded through this scheme.

### **Long Service Awards**

Long Service Awards were given to staff who joined the university in 1999 and 1984 in recognition of the hard work and commitment they have demonstrated over the years.

### **Responsible Research Assessment**

A Responsible Research Assessment Action Plan is being created by the Library OR&P team with an aim to evaluate current practices and policy as well as inform the University on how it can improve its position on responsible research assessment.

This work aims to ‘provide clear and transparent merit-based recognition’ and to acknowledge the ‘full range of researchers’ contributions.

As a part of providing “relevant training and development opportunities” and to improve the accuracy of the data held, the Library OR&P team created a guide to help the research community to maintain control of their externally hosted online digital profiles. The Library OR&P team have also incorporated Responsible Research Assessment into existing Researcher Advancement Programme Open Research and Publication Dissemination sessions, and upon-request School-led training sessions for early career and post-graduate researchers.

### *Academic Managers of Researchers/Researchers*

Career planning for researchers was one of the development sessions piloted in 2024/2025, during which the newly revived Vitae Researcher Development Framework that launched in 2025, was utilised with the employability lens. Additionally, career progression resources from Prosper have

	<p>been mapped to the Researcher Advancement Programme for the coming year.</p> <p>An event was funded through the Wellcome Trust Institutional Fund for Research Culture called Breaking Barriers for Long-Term postdocs. It was organised by postdocs from the School of Life Sciences and School of Medicine in partnership with BioDundee, to encourage the transition from academia to industry. Local industry partners attended for a panel discussion and networking session.</p>
<p><b>Professional development (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p><i><b>Institution</b></i></p> <p><b>Researcher Advancement Programme</b></p> <p>A pilot programme of career and professional development opportunities, focused on specific needs of research staff was delivered. This <b>Researcher Advancement Programme</b> has been honed for delivery in academic year 2025/2026 through conversations across the Dundee research community and informed by best practices from the UK Higher Education sector through attendance at sector relevant conferences (Vitae, REDS) and participation in networks (ScotHERD, British Academy Early Career Researcher Network). It has been co-developed with steerage, invited comment and approval to proceed from the Research Staff Forum, the Research People Culture and Environment Sub-committee, the Associate Deans of Research Forum and approval at University Research Committee. Following this consultation, development sessions were grouped into seven key themes: Grant &amp; Fellowship Development, Research Impact &amp; Engagement, Publication &amp; Research Dissemination Strategies, Research Methodologies, Innovation &amp; Commercialisation, Research Principles &amp; Intelligence, and Career Success.</p> <p><b>Library-led publishing</b></p> <p>The Open Research and Publishing team run library-led publishing services supporting academics, staff, and postgraduate students in establishing and running open</p>

access journals, on the Open Journals Systems platform (OJS). Using OJS to manage the entire editorial and publishing workflow, users learn to develop editorial, peer review, and authorship best practices and ethics whilst building upon experiences of academic publishing.

Open research publishing practices, sharing outputs, and research data, enable researcher staff and PGR students to understand, achieve and maintain high standards of rigour regarding transparency and reproducibility, and care and respect for all participants in research.

### **Research Integrity**

Resources and webinars from **UKRIO** have been publicised widely to the research community through SharePoint.

A new training resource on Research Integrity created by UKRIO was piloted by staff at the university and will be uploaded to MyDundee for mandatory training requirements in academic year 2025/2026.

A Research Culture Café with the theme of Research Integrity was delivered as part of the **Research Integrity and Culture Week 2025** (a week of events delivered in partnership with The University of Strathclyde, Heriot-Watt University and Queen Margaret University). 395 people attended events, across 46 institutions nationally. This model of collaboration is being used for a national Research Integrity & Culture Week 2026, led by the Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager, with Dundee as an invited partner.

### **Research Culture and Environment SharePoint site**

There are opportunities for researchers to book onto development sessions, access asynchronous resources, as well as collated resources from other organisations that are committed to helping researchers develop their careers and professional skills. **People Directorate SharePoint Site**

The People SharePoint site was launched to allow access to all People services under one umbrella. Services include

employee relations, payroll, pensions, reward & recognition diversity & inclusion, recruitment, staff development, health, safety and wellbeing.

***Academic Managers of Researchers/Researchers***

**Research Staff Forum**

The Research Advancement and Culture Manager hosts quarterly meetups for this forum taking contributions from attendees to feed upward within the university. Representation from each School has been reached as well as participation from Professional Services staff.

**British Academy ECR Network Consortium**

The Researcher Advancement and Culture Manager represents the university at Scottish cluster consortium meetings and promotes opportunities from this activity for BA-ECRs through SharePoint. They also supported a national networking event led by BA-ECRs from Dundee – [Black History Month 2024: BAME Researchers: Contributions, Aspirations and Development Opportunities.](#)

**BARIToNE summer school 2025**

PhD students from the BARIToNE doctoral training programme self-organised a series of events for their annual summer school. Colleagues from Research Culture and Environment and Talent and Development delivered several events as part of the week.

**Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW)**

In September 2024, the RCE team hosted and promoted events for Postdoc appreciation week to recognise the contributions of this researcher group.

**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)**

## Lessons Learned

To streamline efficiencies relating to the university's commitments to the RDC's requirements, a new streamlined action plan has been developed. One of the recommendations necessary to achieve this was that the University of Dundee should withdraw from an external award process. This was approved in February 2025, leading to reimagining the university's existing RDC action plan to identify only key actions that are of value, that can be evaluated effectively and have impact. This revised action plan will be implemented through an RDC stakeholder group and routinely monitored through the Research People Culture and Environment Sub-committee.

In formulating a new Researcher Advancement Programme, there has been an acceptable risk of working exclusively with internal staff for facilitation. This reliance on goodwill requires the key ability to be accommodating/supportive and remain positive during challenging circumstances. Also noting that there is an increasing likelihood of delays in delivery on action points going into 2025/2026.

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

Key objectives for delivering our plan in the coming reporting period for researchers at our university and linking their development and the culture in which they work to larger strategic ambitions for institutional change are outlined below. We are fully committed to delivering this plan and are confident that it will lead to researchers who are more fulfilled, better represented, more uniformly well-supported by line managers and better equipped to progress their careers.

- Publication of a **Research Cultures Strategy** and establish working groups to develop and implement the associated action plan
- Coordination of **RDC stakeholders' group** to implement action plan
- Reporting and evaluation of **Researcher Advancement Programme**
- A **Mental Health Strategy** is being finalised and approval from the UEG will be sought
- Engagement with the sector at a national level to deliver on **Research Culture & Integrity week 2026** and **Scotland's Aspiring Research Leaders Network**
- A new unified **Mentoring Scheme** bringing together the previous Research and Academic Mentoring (DRAM) and the Professional Development Mentoring (PDM) Schemes which closed in July 2025. It offers all staff, including Research and Research Enabling Staff, a structured

opportunity for career and personal development through mentoring. Many of the development areas available align with the RDC. This flexible scheme is mentee-led, with meetings every 6–8 weeks, and matching takes place three times a year.

**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 will be presented first to the Research People Culture and Environment Sub-committee for approval. Subsequently, it will be submitted to the PODCo for approval with the intention of presenting it to the University Court in November 2025. The University is obliged to publish this report on its website in January 2026.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries:

This annual report will be analysed by the 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 via the email address listed on the RDC website: [www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk](http://www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk).