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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	University of Dundee
Reporting period	AY 2025/2026
Date approved by governing body	Nov 10th 2026
Date published online	Jan 2027
Web address of annual report	Research Culture and Environment | University of Dundee, UK
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	Research Culture and Environment | University of Dundee, UK
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Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat (refer to Researcher Development Concordat Reporting Guidance)	Nov 2026

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, however it has been decided to withdraw from the external review process of the HR EiR Award and instead use the more streamlined internal process for reporting on the Concordat, an approach which was approved at committee level in Feb 2025.

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

A sub-committee of Senate called Research, People, Culture and Environment (RPCE-SC) was introduced in 2024/2025. Papers tabled at this sub-committee feed up to the University Research & Innovation Committee and the University Court via the People & Organisational Development Committee. The RPCE-SC, chaired by the Assistant Vice-Principal (Research), has the responsibility of planning, coordinating and monitoring the Principles of the Concordat.

At Faculty level, delivery on the Principals of the Concordat is overseen by the Associate Vice Principals of Research & Innovation. A new Faculty structure came into operation in Jan 2026 and eventually Research Culture roles within these new Faculties will be assigned. 8 Schools were merged into 4 Faculties – Life Sciences, Arts & Social Sciences, Science Engineering & Business and Health.

Other 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 covers the period May 2024 - October 2026. 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.

The **Researcher Advancement Programme** that was piloted in 2024/2025 has been successfully delivered again in 2025/2026. It provides bespoke development opportunities tailored to the needs of researchers at all career stages.

RDC Implementation

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

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 2025/2026 with sector-wide financial pressures resulting in a university restructure. This situation has put pressure on delivery of activities in relation to the Concordat, including reduced staffing and loss of budget. That said, remaining staff have adapted to progress the agenda of the Concordat to the best of their ability, to minimise impact on our research community. A Strategy for Recovery: A sustainable future has been developed to deliver on the university mission and vision for the future.

Environment and culture

A Research Cultures Strategy was published by the Vice Principal of Research and Innovation in October 2025. It 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 areas for action:

• Researcher development and careers

• Cultures of good governance and Integrity

• Collaborative and inclusive environments

• Sustainable research practices

Faculty level action plans will be developed, drawing on expertise and ongoing community input, towards each of these priority areas.

Information from the development of the institutional statement from the mock REF 2029 PCE pilot will be considered when REF SPRE guidance is published on 1st Dec 2026.

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 two rounds of voluntary severance undertaken and one round of voluntary redundancy. Those working in the People Directorate have been focusing on the restructure.

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.

The Annual Research & Knowledge Exchange Review (ARKER) was paused this year due to the restructure. Work has now started to align research assessment with the academic appraisal process and develop Faculty-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

The Researcher Advancement Programme will continue to be delivered for researchers. It is evaluated using an advanced Kirkpatrick model and modifications will be made based on feedback.

The Research Staff Forum will be held quarterly, providing a platform to gather input from the research community. This includes representation from each Faculty as well as Professional Services Directorates.

The Researcher Advancement and Culture Manager will engage with sector-wide networks to promote opportunities for researchers at the University of Dundee and learn about best-practice in the sector e.g. Evaluation of Research Cultures. This includes the Universities Scotland Researcher Development and Culture Group, the Scottish Higher Education Researcher Developers Network (ScotHERD), and the Scottish Consortium for the British Academy Early Career Researcher Network.

The University of Dundee will contribute on the Steering Group and act as a delivery partner for national collaborations such as the Scottish Research Integrity and Culture Week 2027 and the Scottish Research Leaders Network. These initiatives are strategic moves within the sector to work together to improve resource efficiencies at a time of financial challenge, as well as developing cross-institutional relationships to contribute to positive research cultures across Scotland. They provide essential connections for researchers and research-enabling staff to develop professionally through peer-learning and sharing of practice and experience at a national scale.

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 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2024–2027 was 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. The EDI Strategy aligns with our Public Sector Equality Duty and covers key aspects of the University's business. The strategy includes a set of goals related to the aim of creating *a vibrant research culture and environment.* These include activities that aim to enhance diversity in research and research-related staff, support academic and leadership development for academic, administrative and technical staff involved in research and enhance an inclusive research culture. The EDI Strategy is monitored by the University's EDI Committee which includes a senior research representative (Associate Vice-Principal Research and Innovation). As relevant the EDI Committee links to other relevant Committees, such as the Research and Innovation Committee, as required. Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture Intiatives At Faculty level, initiatives to support researchers have been implemented e.g. Discovery Days within the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences and an Impact Academy within Faculty of Science, Engineering and Business. In addition, several Research Culture Cafes on varying themes such as 'Promoting Excellence in Interdisciplinary Research Culture' and 'Intersectional Collaboration for Staff Wellbeing', have been delivered. These aim to foster inclusive and positive Research Cultures. International Women's Day IWD 2026 was celebrated by a call for 'Hidden Heroines' to be recognised. Over 100 responses to this call reflected the valuable contributions from women at The University of Dundee - moments that inspired, actions that deserved appreciation, or impacts created by these women were documented in a video called 'Hidden Heroines.' Technician Commitment - self assessment and action plan | University of Dundee, UK - The University of Dundee has been a signatory of the Technician Commitment since 2021,

	supported by a robust governance structure comprising Executive members, the People Directorate, Research and Innovation Services, Technician Commitment Champions, and representatives from across all faculties and directorates. In 2025, the University received an Impact Award following its first self-assessment, recognising the progress made in delivering Action Plan One. Our second three-year action plan focuses on mapping technical roles and skills, developing career pathways, promoting professional registration, and strengthening knowledge exchange. UK Concordat for Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practices The University has been a signatory of the Concordat for Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practices since November 2024. Our Vice Principal of Research and Innovation has appointed a lead co-ordinator to ensure that sector best practice in the six areas of the commitment is implemented where possible. We are actively participating in community of practice meetings and evaluations on progress and potential reporting opportunities. A new policy based on this Concordat and its areas of commitment is due to be developed, aligning our research and partnerships with our existing Net Zero policies. *Academic Managers of Researchers and Researchers* A range of resources have been developed to promote awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat. These include a statement of expectations for managers of researchers, career conversation guidance, a training video, and micro-learning tools about the Concordat. Materials are available through the Research Culture and Environment SharePoint and are promoted in staff communications. These resources have also been promoted at Faculty level through Research Culture Cafes focusing on Researcher Development. These cafes provide an overview of the Concordat, and how it relates to the University of Dundee Researcher Advancement Programme. In addition, tools

	developed for the sector by Vitae and Prosper are highlighted. During academic year 2025/26, the University of Dundee developed a dedicated Doctoral Academy SharePoint site to consolidate resources and support for postgraduate research (PGR) supervision. The site provides a central source of guidance across three key areas: Supporting Your PGRs; Supervisor Training, Development and Support; and Recruitment. It also supports the University's wider commitment to enhancing the PGR experience and fostering a positive, inclusive, and supportive research culture. A key component of this provision is Dundee's involvement in the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP), a major sector-wide initiative funded by Research England to strengthen and professionalise doctoral supervision across the UK and internationally. Bringing together twenty universities and industry partners, RSVP is co-creating evidence-based continuing professional development (CPD) programmes to enhance supervisory practice and improve the experiences of doctoral researchers. As a Practitioner Partner, Dundee is contributing to the design, testing, and refinement of new supervisory development interventions. National pilots are taking place between 2025 and 2027, with the final suite of programmes intended for sector-wide release at the end of the project. Mentoring scheme for staff | University of Dundee, UK - The University of Dundee's Mentoring Scheme offers a structured opportunity for all staff to engage in career and personal development through mentoring. It is mentee-led with matching occurring 3 times a year.
Employment *(max 600 words)*	*Institution* People Directorate SharePoint Site The People Directorate SharePoint site gives 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* **Postdoc Appreciation Week** was run in conjunction with the launch of the Researcher Advancement Programme. Sessions were delivered under the theme of 'Career Success' with consultants brought in supported by funding from the Wellcome Trust IFRC project to look at Neuro-inspired Leadership and a Career Retreat using the Prosper Portal. The employability lens of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework was also used to help researchers think about their next employer. The University hosted a visit from the Scientific Editor from Cell in March 2026, who shared her career story and insights about the interview process in editing, helping some to consider this as a career option.
Professional development *(max 600 words)*	*Institution* **Researcher Advancement Programme** A programme of career and professional development opportunities focused on specific needs of research staff was delivered in 2025/2026. The programme was honed based on a pilot that ran in 2024/2025 and through conversations across the Dundee research community and informed by best practices from the UK Higher Education sector through sector insights from relevant conferences (Vitae, REDS) and participation in networks (ScotHERD, British Academy Early Career Researcher Network). It was co-designed with steerage, invited comment and approval to proceed from the Research Staff Forum, the Research People Culture and Environment Sub-committee, the former Associate Deans of Research Forum and approval at University Research Committee. Following this consultation, development sessions were grouped into seven key themes: Grant & Fellowship Development, Research Impact & Engagement, Publication & Research Dissemination Strategies, Research

	Methodologies, Innovation & Commercialisation, Research Principles & Intelligence, and Career Success. Further, this programme has been mapped to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework that was launched in 2025, as a tool for researchers to map their skills & competencies as strengths and/or areas for development. The programme has also been mapped against resources available from the Prosper Portal. Continual evaluation of the programme, using Kirkpatrick methodology, provides evidence as to the value of the programme to researchers, with feedback informing future iterations. 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 external organisations committed to helping researchers develop their careers and professional skills. Library-led publishing The Open Research and Publishing team run library-led publishing services supporting academics, staff, and postgraduate students in establishing and running open 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

	Training resources and webinars from UKRIO have been publicised widely to the research community through SharePoint. The Research Integrity and Culture Week 2026 was a national collaboration coordinated by the Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager and a steering group which UoD contributes to. Over 40 events were staged online and in person, including a Showcase of activity in this area, held in Edinburgh, to which the UoD made several contributions. *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 Faculty has been reached as well as participation from Professional Services staff. British Academy ECR Network Consortium The Researcher Advancement and Culture Manager represented the university at 3 Scottish cluster consortium meetings and promoted opportunities from this activity for BA-ECRs through SharePoint. A writing retreat for BA-ECRs from across the North was hosted in September 2026 by the University of Dundee to help researchers prepare their Seed Fund applications. BARIToNE summer school 2026 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 an event to help students prepare for their placements.

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)*
In response to the restructure, we recognise that we cannot continue to deliver on the HRiE Award as previously we could. We propose to streamline our RDC action plan, in line with staff capacity, budget constraints and withdrawal from the external HRiE reporting. Key actions of value from the current HRiE will be identified through the RDC stakeholder group and integrated into a new simplified RDC action plan, evaluation of which will be monitored in an ongoing way by this group. Looking ahead, the sustainability of the Researcher Advancement Programme will be strengthened through a flexible and responsive delivery model that recognises changing capacity and needs of internal facilitators. Alongside facilitated sessions, we have developed asynchronous resources that are accessible through the Research Culture and Environment SharePoint, enabling researchers to engage with development opportunities at a time that suits them. This blended approach provides greater flexibility, accessibility and supports continuity of provision. The programme will continue to evolve in response to institutional changes, facilitator capacity and researcher feedback, ensuring that development opportunities remain relevant, accessible and sustainable. Research Culture Cafés have been a successful initiative as part of the Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture and are a sustainable model to use in the future as this funding concludes. We plan to deliver these within Faculties under themes selected by the research community in a 'pay it forward' model, where themes emerge in one cafe resulting in the topic for discussion at the next cafe. Research Culture Ambassadors were named and awarded a certificate as part of the Research Cultures Symposium. This is an initiative in the realm of recognition and reward that we plan to repeat this on an annual basis.
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. • Coordination of RDC stakeholders' group to develop and implement institutional RDC action plan • Operationalising the 2025 Research Cultures Strategy and establishing Faculty working groups to develop and implement the associated action plans • Reporting and evaluation of Researcher Advancement Programme • Engagement with the sector at a national level to deliver on Research Culture & Integrity week 2027 and the Scottish Research Leaders Network • Delivery of Mentoring Scheme
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 University Executive Group. Subsequently, it will be submitted to the People and Organisational Development Committee for approval with the intention of presenting it to the University Court in November 2026. The University is obliged to publish this report on its website in January 2027.

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.