

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)

Newcastle University aspires to be a world class, research-intensive university where, through impactful research and research-led education, we can truly tackle societal challenges at national and global scales. To reach our ambition, we recognise the need for a research environment that nurtures creativity, equips everyone in our research community with the skills they need to realise their potential and career aspirations, and fosters interdisciplinary approaches and collaborative partnerships to increase the reach and impact of our research.

Through our [Research Culture Action Plan](#) (launched October 2022), we have embarked on an ambitious programme of work to build a more positive research culture, focussing on those issues that matter most to our research community. To effect positive change, we have identified Top-Priority Projects in 2023/2024 that aim to deliver on actions within the Research Culture Action Plan. These projects were selected based on an assessment of the urgency, value and impact of their intended outcomes, both in response to internal community-led drivers and external opportunities:

- **Behaviour Matters:** Develop a preventative approach to tackling bullying, harassment and all forms of discriminatory and inappropriate behaviour, and promote more positive behaviours.
- **Releasing Quality Time:** Increase colleagues' ability to create, protect and use quality time for their research and research-related activities.
- **Open Research:** Increase institutional capacity to develop and deliver training in open research through engagement with the UK Reproducibility Network Open Research Programme.
- **The Research Space:** Developing accessible resources to support research skills development, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and enhance career support.
- **Reimagining Leadership:** Improve, recognise and reward leadership practices that build psychologically safe and inclusive research environments (funded through the Wellcome Institutional Research Culture Fund).

The projects involve collaborations across multiple groups with diverse representation within the institution. Progress and evaluation are overseen by our Research Culture Development Group and, ultimately, by the University's Research and Innovation Committee.

Our [Research and Development Action Plan](#) contributes to these projects and is supported by other key Concordat initiatives, such as Research Integrity, Responsible use of Research Metrics, Athena Swan, and Technician Commitment.

With the research community at the heart of what we do, we continue to put them at the centre of our initiatives. Some notable examples:

- Allocated £130K from QR to an Enhancing Research Culture Fund (ERC) People Fund. This fund was open to everyone in the research community to facilitate the uptake of training and mobility of researchers across sectors, disciplines, and geographies and to support early career transitions.
- Allocated £80K from QR for an ERC Project Fund that supported 16 projects community-led aimed at delivering measurable improvement(s) in research culture. Specifically, projects and initiatives that produce some tangible learning or good practices will be shared across the institution.

- A monthly Research Culture Café held across the University estate to connect and engage with our community on the topics and areas that matter most to them.

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)

Our Concordat Action Plan spans from 2023 to 2026, so many actions are still in progress. Researcher development governance is centralised in Organisational Development, but it is a University-wide effort encompassing teams in Faculties and Central Services.

Environment and Culture

- **Research Culture Cafés:** We continue to offer open discussions through Research Culture Cafés, enabling colleagues to share what works, what doesn't, and propose ideas for cultural change. Success Criteria: Strong, active, and diverse researcher communities engaged with the Research Culture and Researcher Development Teams.
- **Researcher Network:** This overarching network allows researchers to connect and engage with each other. Success Criteria: Increased number of researchers on the MS Teams site, attending coffee events, and the annual RENU Conference (Researchers Empowering Newcastle University).
- **Interdisciplinary Research:** We promote and support interdisciplinary research opportunities through Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs), special interest groups, academies, and seminars. Success Criteria: Increased awareness and uptake of opportunities by researchers, measured through specific groups like NUCoREs.

Employment

- **Funding Opportunities:** We raise awareness of both internal and external funding opportunities to support grant applications, discipline hopping, conferences, and small project grants. Access to the Research Connect database of funding opportunities is available via single sign-on for all colleagues. The Research Funding Development Team is available to provide group and individual funding services and support. Success Criteria: Increased awareness through regular checks with researcher networks and targeted promotion where needed.
- **Harmonised Induction Materials:** We are in the process of developing harmonised induction materials across the University, bringing together expertise to ensure a consistent and comprehensive onboarding experience for all new research

community members. Success Criteria: Positive feedback, high attendance, and effective knowledge retention through networks and surveys.

Professional Development of Researchers

- **Leadership and Development Opportunities:** We streamlined leadership and development opportunities through Organisational Development to create a sustainable and inclusive leadership community. This includes clarity on what it means to be a leader at Newcastle University and support for both first-time and experienced managers. Success Criteria: Increased attendance of researchers and research leaders at development opportunities.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** We raise awareness of the University’s commitment to development and fostering a positive research culture through communications, including the Starter for 10 campaign targeted at researchers. Success Criteria: Increased signups for workshops and use of development days.
- **Embedding Concordat Principles:** We embed Concordat principles within grant development and proposals to ensure time and resources are included in project designs. Success Criteria: Routine inclusion of time allocation and funding for development activities in grant applications.

These initiatives and their success criteria ensure we are making measurable progress towards our strategic objectives, fostering a supportive and dynamic research environment.

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>Institution</p> <p>Open Research is a Research Culture Top Priority Project, aligning with our institutional commitment to the UKRN Open Research programme. A dedicated Open Research Training and Development Officer is now leading the development and delivery of open research training in collaboration with the research community. Six new workshops have been introduced, including those integrated into the revised Research Project Leads programme. Through our participation in the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) open research programme, we have recruited 11 trainers, 16 UKRN train-the-trainer courses, and 5 Carpentries Instructors. To further support these efforts, Open Research Champions are being recruited to promote practices locally.</p> <p>Regular UKRN events have been held to ensure researchers and managers are familiar with the events and expectations of open</p>
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research. This includes the monthly ReproducibiliTea Journal Club, which encourages peer discussions on open research practices.

Two **new Local Network Leads** have been recruited, and enhanced administrative support is now in place, reflecting the network's growth and increased activity within and beyond the University. A new **Associate Dean of Good Research Practice** has been appointed to act as UKRN institutional lead and provide strategic oversight for the UKRN Local Network and the University's participation in the UKRN programme.

The University is dedicated to fostering cross-disciplinary thinking collaboration. The **Newcastle University's 16 Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs)** are designed to encourage interdisciplinary and inclusive collaboration offering a supportive research environment. Through community workshops and networking events, NUCoREs engage stakeholders and researchers across all career stages, promoting innovation and collaboration across various fields. NUCoRE events are widely promoted across faculties to reach all colleagues through various channels, with some events co-hosted to encourage collaboration and strengthen interdisciplinary connections.

Academic Managers of Researchers

As part of the **Behaviour Matters project**, workshops have been delivered to the University's senior leadership team to foster discussions on role-modelling positive behaviours and challenging inappropriate behaviours. A gap analysis is currently taking place to evaluate existing policies, procedures and guidelines relating to behaviour. This aims to enhance accessibility, raise awareness and improve the effectiveness of these frameworks. Upcoming focus groups are planned to encourage a collaborative approach to better understand the language we use around inappropriate behaviours. They will contribute towards creating a behaviour framework or code for all colleagues in the University. Additionally, Active Bystander training continues to be provided to all colleagues.

Researchers

To uphold a culture of high standards in research integrity, the University has appointed a **new Research Integrity Project Officer** in April 2024. One of their responsibilities is evaluating the current

	<p>e-learning provision of research integrity training. Enhanced communication and signposting efforts have already led to a significant increase in engagement with the training.</p> <p>There is strong cross-faculty communication and collaboration, supported by individuals at various levels, to ensure consistency and the sharing of best practices. Faculty-level committees, such as the HaSS (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) Researcher Forum and the newly established SAGe (Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering) RA Committee, provide platforms for researchers to engage, while the FMS (Faculty of Medical Sciences) Faculty Research Career Development Group is being reviewed to enhance researcher participation. Additionally, the FMS Post Doc Society, supported by senior leaders, continues to foster career development, hosting its 5th Postdoc Symposium in November 2024.</p> <p>With the help of the Research Culture QR funding and support from the Research Culture and Researcher Development Team, researchers organised and hosted their second annual conference: RENU 2. This conference was open to all researchers and colleagues in the research community, providing an opportunity to network and listen to talks on development opportunities and research culture. The conference received positive feedback from attendees, highlighting its success and impact on the research community.</p>
<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>The Research Funding Development team promotes funding opportunities across the University. We provide access to the ResearchConnect funding opportunities database, allowing all colleagues to access and search for funding by subject or type. This is further supported by the team's recently refreshed training offer, which includes a dedicated full-day session on Early Career Fellowships and EDI in Fellowships, among more detailed sessions on grant proposals and writing. A range of 'quiet time' writing sessions and retreats are offered, to provide quality time for scientific writing, including preparing funding proposals and publications.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>The free online Prosper tool has been endorsed and promoted across the University as a critical resource for supporting managers in having career conversations, building management skills, and staying updated with best practices. The researcher development</p>

	<p>team is working with the community to identify areas where the tool can be embedded into existing guidance.</p> <p>A '<u>failing forward</u>' project has been completed. Ten videos of colleagues discussing their research journeys in the context of failure (e.g., in funding or publication acceptance) have been launched and made widely available. This project has allowed researchers' managers to tell part of their career stories and showcase their challenges. As part of this project, the Research Funding Development Team has developed and promoted a guidance document titled 'Repurposing your Unfunded Proposal'. This resource provides valuable strategies for researchers to refine and reuse unsuccessful proposals, turning setbacks into future opportunities for funding success. Failing Forward normalises failure as a part of the academic process, promoting transparency and encouraging researchers to view setbacks as learning opportunities and a natural part of professional growth in careers.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>The Prosper communication plan successfully promoted the adoption of the online tool among all researchers. Feedback is being gathered to assist the researcher development team in preparing for a second cohort in Spring 2025 (refer to key objectives). The upcoming Prosper cohort training will integrate content from the Prosper portal and provide participants with extensive support through action learning, peer mentoring, and activities aimed at encouraging personal reflection, career planning, and skills development.</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>The Research Space is a pivotal initiative within the Research Culture Programme and Research Strategy, developed in response to extensive engagement activities with the research community. This initiative represents an investment in supporting our research community by improving access to research skills development opportunities, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, supporting career development, and sharing of expertise. Importantly, it aims to streamline processes, making it easier for the research community to locate and use resources effectively.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>The University has introduced several new leadership and management training programmes for new leaders, developing leaders, and strategic leaders. These annual programmes allow a cohort to reflect and develop their skills. These sit alongside a</p>

	<p>yearly programme of Leadership bitesize sessions and an on-demand management hub full of materials to support our managers.</p> <p>Additionally, we offer two development programs tailored for researchers at critical transition points. The first, the Research Project Leads programme, is designed for those new to the Principal Investigator role and includes training on team leadership and management. The second programme, Leading Researchers, delivered by 64 Million Artists, targets colleagues at the Senior Lecturer, Reader, and Professor levels. It emphasises interdisciplinary research and includes discussions on leadership, along with opportunities for reflection.</p> <p>The University has introduced mandatory supervisory training for both new and experienced PhD supervisors, developed through extensive collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. This training, while primarily focused on PhD supervision, is also relevant to researchers and leverages a range of transferable skills. The programme's content is expected to evolve over time to respond to developments in the internal and external PGR researcher development environment and it co-created as part of the Next Generation Research SuperVision <u>(RSVP) Project</u>.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>To support researchers' career development, we have launched a new communication strategy to increase awareness of Concordat's principles, particularly the entitlement to 10 development days. This strategy includes promoting the uptake of development opportunities through multiple channels, such as newsletters, relevant networks, induction processes, and faculty handbooks. Researchers in one faculty are being piloted to log their development days in the annual leave system, which will be signed off by line managers who can monitor engagement and ensure full use of this benefit.</p> <p>Development opportunities are also promoted through the Starter for 10 campaign, which showcases training and development opportunities categorised across five themes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reaching Your Potential - Achieve your career aspirations both within and beyond academia.- Research Skills - Develop your research skills and unlock creativity to enhance your day-to-day work.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doing Your Best Research - Ensure you design, deliver, evaluate, and present your best research. - Building Your Research Network - Build your network and create meaningful connections to ignite ideas, spark inspiration, and fuel creativity. - Navigating Research at Newcastle - Resources and ideas to simplify navigation to save time and energy for what matters most to you and your research. <p>We include information about the <u>Starter for 10</u> campaign in induction materials and welcome events to foster a culture where using 10 development days is normalised and encouraged.</p> <p>In Spring 2025, we will be delivering our second Prosper cohort programme, designed specifically for postdocs to take control of their professional development. The pilot last year was very successful, and the updated programme will reflect the feedback and consist of three full-day workshops alongside three sessions of action learning. It will encompass a range of topics focussed on career and personal development, while also providing dedicated time and space for self-reflection. Participants will have the opportunity to identify and refine their skills, set meaningful goals, and consider their future growth.</p>
<p>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)</p>	
<p>Several key lessons have emerged from our activities over the past reporting period, leading to proposed modifications to enhance our action plan and measures of success.</p> <p>Delivering The Research Space for Researcher Development</p> <p>Over the past reporting period, we have recognised the importance of aligning teams and resources to effectively advance the Research Space project. Actively engaging with stakeholders and the wider research community at every stage has refined our goals and strengthened our commitment to co-creating solutions with the community rather than for it. To support this work, we have assembled a Delivery Team, including colleagues from Organisational Development, Strategic Planning, and IT Services, and established a Steering Group with Faculty Heads of Research, PGR Training Leads, and the Research Culture Programme. This collaborative approach positions us well to make meaningful progress on the project and deliver innovative initiatives over the coming year to streamline resources for the research community.</p>	

Increasing Attendance

Attendance at development sessions remains a challenge, with signups not always translating into actual attendance. To address this, we will continue the Starter for 10 marketing campaign, communicate with Managers of Researchers to instil a culture of development and support researchers in prioritising their development. Additionally, we will explore how The Research Space can foster a culture of development through recognition of training attendance. These adjustments aim to increase attendance rates and overall programme participation significantly.

Enhancing Research Culture Initiatives

A positive and inclusive research culture is crucial for the well-being and productivity of our researchers. We have learned that continuous promotion and support of diversity, inclusion, and mental health initiatives are essential. Moving forward, we will enhance existing programs and introduce new initiatives focusing on these areas. This includes regular workshops on diversity and inclusion, mental health support sessions, and integrating the 'Behaviour Matters' action plan into our researcher development offerings. Our goal is to create a more supportive and inclusive environment that fosters collaboration and innovation.

Working with the Research Community and Researcher Network

Effective collaboration with the research community and networks has proven invaluable. Open dialogue and co-creating solutions with researchers lead to more effective and relevant development sessions and programs. We will strengthen our engagement with the researcher community by attending researcher networks and Research Culture Cafés. These platforms will allow researchers to share their experiences, provide feedback, and contribute to developing new initiatives. Additionally, we will leverage the expertise within our networks to create more collaborative and impactful programmes.

By focusing on these areas, we aim to create a robust and supportive framework that aligns with the Concordat's objectives and supports the career development of our researchers.

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

Engagement and Communications

Effective engagement and communication with the researcher community are crucial for embedding the value of development and targeting researchers' managers. Our strategy focuses on creating open communication channels to ensure that researchers are aware of the development opportunities available to them and understand their importance. This involves regular newsletters and talks highlighting the benefits of continuous professional development. Additionally, we aim to engage researchers' managers by providing them with the training, tools and knowledge to support their teams effectively. This includes training sessions on leadership and management skills, as well as resources to help them facilitate the development of their researchers.

Researcher Networks

Ensuring that all researchers at the University have access to a network is a crucial objective. These networks operate at both local and overarching levels. Locally, we encourage forming smaller, specialised groups to support peer collaboration within specific disciplines. At the overarching level, the University's Researcher Network is a central body representing researchers on decision-making committees. This network aims to give researchers a voice in the institution's governance, ensuring their needs and concerns are heard and addressed.

Explore Expanding Developing Excellent Researchers (DER) to Cover All Researchers

Currently, our decision-making committee DER covers researchers and the Concordat. However, there is a discussion about expanding this to include all individuals in the researcher community, particularly those at established (mid-) and more advanced career stages. This expansion would ensure that the needs of all researchers are considered in institutional decisions, not just those in the early stages of their careers. By including established (mid) and more advanced career researchers, we can address their unique challenges and provide targeted support to help them advance their careers. This initiative aims to create a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to researcher development, ensuring that all voices are heard, and all needs are met.

Researcher Development Programmes

We currently have five cohort-based development programmes for researchers and academics designed to provide tailored support and training at various career points. However, it is essential to regularly review these programmes to ensure they meet our researchers' needs. This involves gathering participant feedback, assessing the programmes' outcomes, and making necessary adjustments to improve their effectiveness. By continuously evaluating and refining our development programmes, we can ensure that they provide the best possible support to our researchers and help them achieve their career goals.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Active monitoring and evaluation of our activities are critical to ensuring we meet our year's objectives. This involves setting clear metrics and benchmarks for success, regularly reviewing our progress, and making data-driven decisions to improve our initiatives. We will use mixed methods to assess the impact of our programmes and activities. By maintaining a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation, we can ensure that our efforts are practical and aligned with our strategic goals. This process also allows us to identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions about future initiatives.

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 Developing Excellent Researchers (DER) group is responsible for overseeing the development and monitoring of the progress of the Concordat Action Plan. Co-chaired by Professor Candy Rowe, Dean of Research Culture and Strategy, and a rotating researcher each academic year, the group consists of academic leads, researcher representatives, and professional service colleagues from the three faculties and central teams. Data for the report is collected from DER members and colleagues in Organisational Development, Research and Innovation, People Services, and Careers. The final approval for the report is granted by the University's Research and Innovation Committee, chaired by Professor Matthew Grenby, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation.

Signature on behalf of governing body:



Prof Matthew Grenby, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation

Contact for queries: Dr Chris Emmerson, Organisational Development Lead – Researcher Development (chris.emmerson@ncl.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