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<b>Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage</b>	<a href="https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/research-culture-researcher-development/researcher-development-concordat/">https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/research-culture-researcher-development/researcher-development-concordat/</a>
<b>Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development</b>	Megan McLoughlin, Head of Research Culture & Researcher Development
<b>Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat (refer to <u>Researcher Development Concordat Reporting Guidance</u>)</b>	02 February 2026

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

## Universities and Research Institutes

### **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 (UoY) believes that when researchers thrive, research flourishes. We are committed to building a research community which tackles intellectual challenges with integrity, builds equitable and respectful collaborations, and purposefully develops its community members. Our commitment to a positive and inclusive research culture is shown in our legacy as one of the first UK universities to obtain the HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) award in 2010; UoY has now held it for 16 years.

The Research Culture and Researcher Development team coordinates efforts to support the Concordat's aims. Delivering the aims of the Concordat is a whole community effort, and the coordinating team work closely with various teams such as People and Organisational Development; Policy, Integrity and Performance; Open Research; and Equality & Diversity. 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 (with a Silver application being submitted in January 2026).

The Research Culture Working Group (RCWG) includes representation from early career researchers and those on research-only contracts, including the institutional Fellowships Lead, one or more research staff representatives, and a rep from the York Research Staff Forum, alongside established researchers and research professionals. The RCWG oversees the development and monitoring of the HREiR (Concordat) Action Plan, with biannual group-level discussions, oversight of strategy and activity, and sign off of reporting. Two Research Staff Liaison Officers ensure researchers' voices are heard through their consultations with departmental researcher networks.



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.

UoY is now home to two significant research culture projects: Valuing Voices for Equitable and Responsible Research, which addresses hierarchical research cultures to deliver impactful research; and the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP), which aims to transform the culture and practice of research supervision. RSVP seeks to improve the experience of everyone in the supervisory team, including early career 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*)**

During the reporting period, we maintained established provisions and continued to expand our offering by focusing on the following key strategic priority objectives:

## **Environment and culture**

### **Continue engagement with researchers and support grassroots initiatives:**

Facilitating open dialogue with as many researchers as possible to develop the new three-year Concordat action plan (2026-2029). Facilitating activities such as the second annual postdoc-led Celebrating Spaces event, focused on celebrating the contributions of research-only staff and technicians, and an RD Concordat-themed Enhancing Research Culture workshop. *SM - Researchers have the opportunity to engage in activities to highlight their contribution to the research effort, to voice their opinions and ideas, and suggest new initiatives.*

### **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' awareness of the Concordat will be evidenced through increased participation in professional development opportunities, and engagement with related policies and initiatives.*

**Bring together research staff through the York Research Staff Forum:** Develop an institution-wide Research Staff Forum to enhance support for researchers and enable the University to achieve greater consistency in upholding the Concordat commitments across departments and schools. *SM – establishing this institutional forum by July 2025, with terms of reference developed by research staff leads, and engagement from the wider research staff community.*

## **Employment**

**Improve the research staff induction programme:** Make improvements to the induction webpages to improve usability and effectively communicate the wide range of support available. *SM - Once launched, the resources will be publicised widely and embedded in key processes at the University and the impact of the new induction resources will be monitored through webpage analytics and feedback.*

**Develop a behaviours framework:** The Community Without Limits framework has been rolled out across the University and is becoming embedded in the day-to-day interactions of staff. The framework is currently being used for team development, career advancement and developmental feedback, and the intention is for it to be applied throughout the employee lifecycle, becoming an integral part of recruitment, reward and talent management. *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.*

**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 to engage with opportunities and resources to develop their leadership skills, so that researchers have a supportive, enabling experience at York with well trained and highly skilled mentors and managers.*

### **Professional Development of Researchers**

#### **Consolidate the research staff webpages to create a resource of information for ECRs:**

Work towards the long-term aim of creating a virtual 'ECR hub' which will signpost support and also help to raise awareness of the Concordat and related policies. *SM - Creation and launch of Hub, with engagement monitored via webpage visits.*

**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 Prosper pilot programme provides 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. *SM for the pilot programme include participation of York researchers, and achievement of learning outcomes for participants.*

#### **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, and demonstrate increased engagement with their professional development.*

#### **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**

Consulted on and renamed the Research Culture and Researcher Development team (previously Building Research and Innovation Capacity team) to align with the Concordat communications goals. The new team's name directly relates to the work around research culture as well as wider Higher Education movements.

	<p>Ran consultation sessions with 70+ researchers and research line managers to evaluate cross-departmental awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat. This work will inform the next Concordat three-year action plan, alongside the gap analysis also undertaken this year.</p> <p>Appointed a Research Culture Manager and launched the Research Culture community of practice network to support good practice in research culture within departments. Designed departmental research culture workshops and delivered workshops for 11 departments with 5 more lined up for 2026.</p> <p>Collaborated with Research Staff and support teams through informal consultations for the new Research Staff induction webpages and the ECR online hub. Reported on progress to the Research Culture Working Group (RCWG) and took input from feedback.</p> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b> Ran a tailored consultation session for line managers of researchers as part of the Researcher Development Concordat action plan consultations.</p> <p><b>Researchers</b> A group of three researchers, supported by professional services staff and a larger advisory committee, organised the second Celebrating Spaces: Connecting Researchers event in July 2025. The event reached a wide audience, with 138 researchers signed up in advance and more attending on the day. It included 15 presenters of 5-minute lightning talks from ECRs, technicians and research-supporting staff, 21 exhibitors and 10 open spaces/facilities to explore.</p> <p>One of our Research Staff Liaison Officers also designed and delivered a one-day careers fair for PGRs and ECRs in the Sciences.</p> <p>The newly launched York Research Staff Forum ran social events during national Postdoc Appreciation Week for postdocs, inviting research support staff and line managers to attend, including an online performance of 'BioScience</p>
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	<p>the Musical', an interdisciplinary musical devised by researchers at York.</p>
<p><b>Employment (max 600 words)</b></p>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>The University induction webpages for research staff are currently undergoing significant updates to improve usability 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.</p> <p>The <u>Community Without Limits</u> resources were launched to the research community to help support team development and individual career development.</p> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <p>Managers of researchers have engaged with opportunities to expand their leadership and people-management skill sets. This includes participation in relevant training and workshops (e.g. the 'Being an Effective Research Supervisor Tutorial' has now been completed by over 800 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 <u>Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP)</u> and the <u>Workload Management Joint Working Group</u>).</p> <p><b>Researchers</b></p> <p>Launched the York Research Staff Forum, which brings researcher representatives together from across the University to raise challenges, share good practice and progress Concordat/researcher-related projects. The Forum also maintains a mailing list for community-led events and information sharing.</p> <p>Developed a plan and webpage structure to achieve the long-term aim of creating a virtual 'ECR hub' that will</p>

	signpost support for long-term and newly joined ECRs and help raise awareness of the Concordat and related policies.
<b>Professional development (max 600 words)</b>	<p><b>Institution</b></p> <p>Ongoing communication regarding the value and strategic importance of professional development for Research Staff is maintained through consistent messaging via staff newsletters, University webpages, and induction materials. Central to our Concordat Action Plan is the maintenance of a diverse portfolio of development opportunities; in the 2024/25 academic year, the York Researcher Development Programme delivered 116 sessions which were accessible to research staff. Impact evaluation indicates consistently positive engagement, evidenced by a 98.2% satisfaction rating and 97.2% of attendees recommending the training.</p> <p>Furthermore, research staff participate in institutional mentoring and coaching schemes, including a peer-mentoring initiative where postdoctoral researchers mentor postgraduate researchers to foster leadership skills development and provide mentees with early career insights.</p> <p><b>Academic Managers of Researchers</b></p> <p>Line managers were supported in their role through a range of training opportunities, including an intensive cohort based programme, Collaborative Leadership, and regular sessions on key line management and culture-setting skills/topics, including Psychological Safety in Teams, and Line Management Fundamentals. The Valuing Voices project also supported research line managers/PIs through workshops to help facilitate more effective research team meetings which foreground equity of contribution.</p> <p><b>Researchers</b></p> <p>Working collaboratively with other universities has been a highlight within the past year. This includes working with the other White Rose universities - Leeds and Sheffield - to design and deliver a <u>Prosper postdoc career development programme</u>, and a <u>Crucible</u> programme for later stage ECRs who hold research fellowships or are within 3 years of appointment as a lecturer. This programme focuses on developing interdisciplinary skills and leadership techniques to prepare them for their academic careers, and includes</p>



	<p>the opportunity to secure a seed grant to further develop interdisciplinary research ideas with others.</p> <p>The University of York was also appointed (representing the White Rose Consortium) alongside co-lead York St John University, to lead a new regional <u>British Academy Early Career Network</u> for Yorkshire and the Humber. York ECRs have already had the chance to participate in a wide range of development opportunities and a seed grant call, prior to the official launch in January 2026.</p>
<p><b>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)</b></p>	
<p>The University, alongside the wider UK higher education sector, continues to navigate the unprecedented fiscal challenges of recent years, which have impacted the continuity of our Researcher Development Concordat action plan. Since the initial drafting of the action plan, shifting priorities have necessitated a strategy that is agile and adaptable, allowing us to reassess success measures that may no longer be suitable for the current climate. A key strategic priority is sustaining the high-quality 'business as usual' research staff development provision, which has seen a steady increase in recent years.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with other universities, particularly through the White Rose Consortium, has helped us to work more effectively and with greater impact through our partnership. Future plans for White Rose include targeting research staff groups that are minoritised or simply small in number within one institution but can benefit from targeted support across the collective.</p> <p>Researcher-led initiatives, such as the Celebrating Spaces event and RSLO-organised careers fair, demonstrate that our research staff community remains highly motivated to drive change despite sector-level pressures.</p> <p>Optimising research staff communications remains a substantial challenge to impact, as both researchers and line managers of researchers frequently report surprise at the breadth of available support and policy benefits. Current interventions, including the enhancement of the research staff induction programme and the launch of a University Research Staff Forum, are designed to address these awareness gaps. However, achieving a more substantial long-term impact will require us to investigate the effectiveness of communication channels and implement targeted engagement strategies to dismantle the specific barriers faced by researchers, and this is a significant target for the next Concordat action plan.</p>	

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

- 1. Develop and begin to deliver a communications plan to raise awareness of the Concordat:** The plan will include a programme of activity to engage departments with the Concordat obligations during research away days when the whole research community is present.
- 2. Gather feedback from research staff about the research culture of the University:** Launch a survey for research staff to understand their opinions and challenges around research culture and use this to direct research culture activity through the Concordat and Research Culture Action Plan. This will be tied into work to benchmark research culture KPIs for future years.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Continue the work on updating the research staff webpages:** Finalise and launch the virtual 'ECR hub' that will signpost support and raise awareness of the Concordat and related policies. Update the materials and resources on the Research Staff Induction pages and develop content ideas for a Line Manager's handbook.
- 5. Create a toolkit for line managers of researchers:** A resource which provides all of the key information needed for line managers to fulfill their role thoroughly will bring together the relevant policies and good practice in one accessible online guide.
- 6. Create expectations guides for researchers and line managers:** Making clear the responsibilities of both staff groups in relation to the Concordat.
- 7. Embed the University Research Staff Forum into UoY policy pipelines:** Enable researcher representatives from across the University to feed into Research Culture Working Group conversations on topics relating to Research Staff.
- 8. Launch a new cohort-based programme to develop ECR leadership and research identity development:** Following a small pilot in 2024, a full-scale programme will be developed for delivery from Autumn 2026 onwards.
- 9. Pilot an assistant supervisor programme:** To recognise the role of research-only staff in PhD supervision and provide them with the necessary support and training for the role.

**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 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. Professor Sarah Thompson, Chair of the RCWG and Pro Vice Chancellor for Research, grants the final approval for the report.

Signature on behalf of governing body: Sarah Thompson

Contact for queries: Megan McLoughlin (megan.mcloughlin@york.ac.uk), Head of the Research Culture and Researcher Development Team

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).

