



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

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Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Professor Mandy Robbins- mandy.robbins@wrexham.ac.uk Frances Thomason Frances.thomason@wrexham.ac.uk
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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.

Our commitment to fostering an inclusive and collaborative research culture is central to our new University Vision, Values, and Strategy 2030. We prioritise nurturing and supporting our staff and students to achieve excellent and impactful research outcomes. The University is dedicated to the principles outlined in the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, which guides our support for all researchers, including both staff and students.

By ensuring that all academic staff and research students benefit from the Concordat, we enhance our commitment to research development and an inclusive culture throughout the career lifecycle. Since signing the Development Concordat, the Board of Governors has been tasked with overseeing and approving all annual reports and action plans related to this initiative.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research is responsible for implementing the Concordat, with formal governance oversight provided by the Research Committee. This committee includes senior managers, research leaders, contract research staff, and representatives from postgraduate research students. Now in its third year, the Research Development Concordat Working Group continues to expand its influence, promoting participation and encouraging members to become 'Champions' for research development. The group consists of three professors, two principal lecturers, six academic staff members, three research-only staff members, and nine professional service staff.

The Research Office manages the operations of these groups, and we have recently decided to implement a rolling chair for each working group meeting to enhance leadership, collaboration and ownership of the development of research careers.

At the time of reporting, the beneficiaries of the Concordat include 252 academic staff members on research and teaching contracts, 65 postgraduate research students, and 14 research-only contract staff.

Institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat.

Since our last annual review, the University has been awarded 10 years of HR Excellence in Research. The strategic objectives for each of the three pillars are detailed in our [Concordat Action Plan for 2023-2026](#). While the Research Office has overall operational oversight of the Concordat Action Plan, the University adopts a collaborative approach to implementing and delivering its actions. The action plan is developed with input from various committees, working groups, and initiatives. This holistic approach ensures that the research culture is integrated throughout the University, both strategically and operationally.

Over the next two years, our primary goal is to create an inclusive and transparent workplace while promoting a positive research culture. The University plans to dedicate time to raising awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat, particularly by encouraging engagement from research line managers to help integrate research culture across all departments. Additionally, the Research Office will focus on developing policies that empower researchers to participate in policymaking, thereby fostering a more positive research environment within the institution. As a small university in the early stages of our research journey, we have ambitious plans to expand our research community and student body. Since our last annual report, which noted four research assistants, we have increased our research staff to include six postdoctoral researchers, three research fellows, and four research assistants. As we continue to grow this community, we are committed to embedding their roles within the University and creating networks of collaboration and opportunity. The University will prioritise professional development over the next two years. The Concordat Working Group will continue to create a guide on "What is Professional Development?" while also developing tools and resources for researchers' careers both within and beyond academia. Additionally, the University will incorporate 10 days of professional development into the Workload Allocation Model, establishing centralized templates and tracking resources for the annual reporting of individual professional development activities.

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.

<p><u>Environment and Culture</u></p>	<p>Wrexham University is dedicated to fostering an environment that enhances research capacity and cultural development. The university aims to create spaces for researchers to discuss their work, promote collaboration, and showcase their achievements. Over the past year, various research networking events, such as Open House Research, Research Coffee Mornings, and the Public Lecture series organised by the central Research Office, have gained significant traction and success. Moreover, sessions and networks initiated by academic and research staff within faculties and departments have also been actively encouraged.</p> <p>In the last year, the central Research Culture Cafés have evolved under the guidance of concordat champions who now lead discussions on relevant topics. A notable example was two Culture Cafés hosted by an early career researcher who is also a concordat champion. The first café focused on researching sensitive topics, where attendees addressed the challenges of working with marginalised groups. Key points discussed included defining what constitutes a 'sensitive' topic, enhancing active listening skills, and ensuring accurate interpretations of participants' contributions. A subsequent Culture Café</p>
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concentrated on trauma-informed approaches, highlighting the significance of using trauma-informed language. The academic host remarked,

"The Culture Café was a brilliant way to connect with researchers on issues related to sensitive topics. The discussion was incredibly helpful and will aid in the development of trauma-informed research guidance."

Additionally, over the past 12 months, the concordat working group has focused on making institutional policies and practices related to researchers more inclusive, equitable, and transparent. Clear communication of these policies to researchers and their managers has been a priority. To facilitate this, the group has developed new policy and procedure webpages, making it easier for staff and students to access relevant information. We have also implemented a Policy Communication and Engagement Plan to ensure that any new or updated policies include a feedback consultation period with our research community. This plan outlines how we will effectively communicate these policies across the university.

The University host two internal conferences for staff and PGR students. The Research Office oversee the Annual Springboard Conference, dedicated to researchers' development and showcasing research and best practice at the University. In 2024 The theme of our annual internal Springboard Conference was equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in research and the workplace. The full-day conference took place on 17 April 2024, with fringe sessions focused on Neurodiversity in the workplace taking place throughout the week of the 15th- 19th April. The focus of the conference was to create a safe, fair and welcoming environment that celebrates each other's differences and empowers individuals. Understanding our differences and learning about biases (unconscious or otherwise) and how to address and manage them is an integral part of creating an inclusive culture, the conference provided an opportunity to explore, learn and discuss all things EDI whilst taking the opportunity to celebrate some of our research in areas of inclusion.

Wrexham University is actively pursuing the Race Equality Charter from Advance HE. For Welsh higher education institutions, this effort is supported by the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2022). At Wrexham University, we are reviewing and evaluating areas that may create barriers for Black, Asian, and

	<p>Minority Ethnic staff and students to foster a sense of belonging and support their educational and career aspirations. Our efforts include analysing data and policies related to academic development, teaching and learning, student progression, degree awarding, and recruitment to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Our goal is to achieve the bronze Race Equality Charter Mark by developing and implementing the Race Equality Action Plan, contributing to a university-wide approach to race equality. We plan to submit our application in March 2025, following a draft submission in November 2024 and receiving positive and constructive feedback by December 2024.</p>
<p><u>Employment</u></p>	<p>In 2023, the University updated its Recruitment and Selection Policy to further demonstrate its commitment to fairness, objectivity, diversity, and excellence. The University provides training, development, and support for individuals involved in recruitment and selection processes. All panel chairs are required to complete the Chair of Interview Panels training course.</p> <p>Currently, the University has a very small number of staff on fixed-term research-only contracts. Over the past 12 months, the University has reviewed the templates and job descriptions for research assistants, post-doctoral researchers, research associates, and research fellows.</p> <p>New training sessions developed during this reporting period include 'Pathways to Readership,' 'Having Research Conversations with Staff,' and 'How to Undertake an Effective PDR.' These sessions aim to equip managers with the necessary training and development opportunities to help them effectively manage researchers' career goals and aspirations.</p> <p>In October 2022, the University implemented a fully integrated HR and payroll system. Over the last 12 months the research office and human resources team have created communications and guidance to encourage academic staff to record and schedule their research and scholarly activities within the system.</p> <p>As part of our collaboration with the Wales Researcher Concordat Network, Wrexham University was invited to participate in a joint programme delivered by Aberystwyth University and Bangor University, aimed at improving research leadership development opportunities for academic researchers in Wales. Developing research leadership and providing collaborative opportunities for researchers is a key objective in our action plan for 2023-2026. Welsh universities have decided to work together to pool skills</p>

	<p>and resources by sharing expertise and knowledge across institutions to develop stronger collaborations in research and innovation. The Welsh Universities Research Leadership Programme aims to support research by enhancing researchers' leadership capabilities, skills, abilities, and confidence to effectively lead and manage research teams. This programme allows us to draw on expertise in leadership from within the Welsh university community to foster cross-institutional engagement and networking. Wrexham University currently has seven researchers participating in the programme for the 2024/25 academic year.</p>
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<p><u>Professional development</u></p>	<p>Wrexham University is dedicated to the research, professional, and career development of all its staff and research students. The University offers a variety of training events and development opportunities, which are widely communicated across the institution. Researcher training events are now open to all research staff and students. The Research Office provides a comprehensive range of training sessions aligned with the Research Development Framework, available for all staff and research students to attend.</p> <p>The Organisational Development and Diversity Office also offers various training programs focused on staff professional development, as well as equality and diversity policies and practices. This office also oversees the University's Aurora Programme.</p> <p>As part of our commitment to the Research Integrity Concordat, the University has invested in Epigeum Research Integrity training, which is available for all staff and research students.</p> <p>The University allows academic staff to apply for one Research Development Award (RDA) per academic year. The RDA aims to help academic staff form productive external research collaborations and generate research outputs. To increase awareness of the internal award process, the concordat working group developed communication plans and created new public-facing webpages. Additionally, to showcase the impact of the awards, we invited participants to provide feedback during our Open House for Research events,</p>
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	<p>where they shared their experiences regarding the internal award scheme. In the last year, we have seen a 58% increase in applications for Research Development Awards. One piece of feedback stated:</p> <p><i>“This conference award has been incredibly useful in enabling me to present at the conference, which may not have happened otherwise. Attending this conference allowed me to showcase my research findings as part of Wrexham University’s research portfolio. I believe such opportunities are crucial for enhancing our visibility as an emerging research organisation.”</i></p> <p>The promotion of Research Development Awards will continue in the next academic year. Furthermore, we have developed additional plans to promote research culture and equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in research practices at the University. We will be launching a new internal development award called ‘Race Equity and Research Inclusion’ to support Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic researchers at Wrexham University.</p>
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Lessons learned & Challenges

Wrexham University conducted the CEDAR survey for the first time in 2023, aligning many of our success measures outlined in the 2021-2023 action plan with the CEDAR questions. However, participation in the survey was low, with a response rate of only 13%. Although this data has been included in our progress report, the Research Office and the Researcher Development Concordat Working Group will implement a clear communication plan to encourage higher participation in the 2025 CEDAR survey. To ensure that achievements can be measured throughout the year and that we have a range of quantitative and qualitative data available, new mechanisms for capturing success measures have been included in the 2023-2026 action plan. Despite several communication initiatives being launched, only 54% of respondents to the CEDAR survey indicated an understanding of the Researcher Development Concordat. The Research Office will continue to raise awareness of the Concordat and the role of Concordat Champions during staff inductions and in communications with all academic staff.

We adopt a collaborative and holistic approach to fulfil our actions and commitments to the Concordat; however, further efforts are needed to ensure that all committees and working groups across the University are aware of the Concordat and their potential contributions to this commitment. The Research Office oversees the operations of the Concordat, but it is a small team. As a result, they use the Concordat principles as a framework for all research office activities and initiatives.

This can sometimes lead to challenges in determining what to report and how to provide evidence under the 'Concordat action plan.'

Looking Forward

The Researcher Development Concordat Working Group (concordat champions) will continue to meet four times a year to update on progress against the action plan and discuss new areas of interest. Concordat champions take forward specific actions on behalf of the group, supported by a lead member, usually from the Research Office of Human Resources. Progress will be reported to and overseen by the Research Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. The input of staff and PGRs is crucial to evaluating and developing the University's Action Plan. Researchers' views will continue to be monitored over the next year to ensure our actions and success measures continue to be relevant in support of staff and students. Key areas of development over the next 12 months are listed below, as listed from our 2023-2026 action plan:

- Implement a new research buddy scheme for PGR's and post-doctoral researchers.
- Launch Neuroinclusion Staff Network
- Continue to support researchers/ academic staff to run culture cafes locally within their own teams or across the wider university.
- Encourage researchers to create a produce research guidance and policies. "Research Guidance created by researchers for researchers".
- Made in Wales 2025: Researcher Career Stories
- Sign the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and create clear communication and promotional webpage.
- Create a researcher career timeline, outlining the different stages, training, activities and opportunities for researchers. The timeline will be used as a resource in PDR and PRP meetings.
- Launch new grant management system with clear workflow routes for funding proposal and due diligence checks. The system will be embedded with guidance for applicants and signatories on legislation, policies and term and conditions of grant funding.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries:

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