

# University of Surrey HR Excellence in Research 2020-2024 Action Plan

## Context

The University of Surrey is a research-intensive institution with twenty-three research active departments/schools/centres within three faculties: Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (FEPS), Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences (FHMS) and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). The University has launched a new Research and Innovation Strategy in mid 2019 envisioning the academic, economic and societal benefit of Surrey’s research over the next three years. Central to this strategy is fostering an inspiring researcher community, dedicated to the career development of early stage researchers: [https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-05/research-and-innovation\\_strategy-abridged-final.pdf](https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-05/research-and-innovation_strategy-abridged-final.pdf). The Research and Innovation Strategy places the Doctoral College (<https://www.surrey.ac.uk/doctoral-college>) at the heart of this community as a hub for support and development of all the University’s researchers and is the strategic lead for our HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) process. The HR Excellence in Research Working Group (HREiR WG), the ECR forum and Doctoral College Management team have worked closely with senior management to align the University’s strategy for supporting research staff with the Principles of the Concordat and to embed the HREiR process within the University’s research infrastructure.

University of Surrey has approximately 400 members of research staff who are contracted to work either solely or primarily on research, across a wide range of disciplines with a variety of contract types at various stages in their career. This HREiR action plan is intended to inclusively support this varied population of research staff. Whilst we take this inclusive approach, we do appreciate the importance of ensuring that ECRs, particularly those on fixed term contracts have very specific support and development needs. Therefore, where appropriate, specific actions have been targeted to specifically benefit this staff category, ensuring that their unique career development needs are being met. All HREiR documentation is available on the Doctoral College Website: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/doctoral-college/hr-excellence>.

This plan has been developed during a transition period between the 2008 and 2019 Concordats. Therefore, to ensure it is a progressive plan, we have mapped all actions, not only against the 2008 Concordat, with links to our previous action plan where activity is a continuation of previous actions, but also against the 2019 Concordat. This is a four-year plan in its vision. However, it is recognised that by the next review the transition to the 2019 Concordat will be complete, therefore, targets are primarily (although not exclusively) set for the two-year review period to best enable flexibility to update the plan at our two-year review when it is anticipated the 2019 Concordat will be fully embedded in the HREiR review structure.

Acronyms	
ECR- Early Career Researcher	DC- Doctoral College
HREiR- HR Excellence in Research	URIC- University Research and Innovation Committee
HREiR WG- HR Excellence in Research Working Group	RDP- Researcher Development Programme
SuRSA-Surrey Research Staff Association	CROS- Careers in Research Online Survey

FEPS- Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences	FTC- Fixed term contract
FHMS- Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences	HR-Human Resources
FASS- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	CSC-Concordat Steering Committee
PCI- People, Culture and Inclusion	

2020 Action Reference number (if related 2018 action)	Action	Success measures	Concordat Steering Committee Lead	Timescale	Link to 2019 Concordat
<b>Principles 1 &amp; 2</b>					
2020_1 (linked to 2018_1)	<b>Recruitment</b> All managers involved in recruiting research staff must have undergone unconscious bias training prior to conducting interviews.	Virtual and face to face training available to meet demand of all staff.  Only those who have undertaken unconscious bias training will be able to be involved in interviews for research staff.	Equality and Diversity	Training available to meet demand Jan 2020.  Policy in place April 2020.  Review of policy Oct 2021	Employment Institution 1; Manager 1 & 3
2020_2 (linked to action 2018_2)	<b>Appraisal</b>  Review the appraisal process for research staff..  Undertake consultation with research staff and their managers to ensure alignment of appraisal practice with the research strategy and HR policy.  Following the review of appraisal and consultation, develop a series of actions for improving the appraisal process where necessary.	Consultation report on research staff appraisal (with comprehensive research staff input) produced with specific recommendations.  Actions to improve appraisal implemented.  >80% research staff undertaking new appraisal by 2022.  CROS scores for overall usefulness of appraisal, increasing year on year after implementation of the new system. Current score is 69%; aim is to hit 80% by 2024.	HR	Review of and consultation on research staff appraisal completed Jan 2021. New Appraisal Actions implemented for by Jan 2022.  Initial survey of usefulness in Oct 2023.	Employment Institution 5

				Review impact of changes following CROS 2023.	
<b>2020_3</b> <b>(linked to action 2018_5)</b>	<p><b>Promotion and recognition Action:</b> Review researcher recognition and promotion.</p> <p>Recognition and promotion will be policy and processes will be clear, transparent and merit-based, recognising the full range of researchers' contributions, and the diversity of personal circumstances.</p>	<p><b>Success Measures:</b> A clear policy of recognition and promotion of research staff linked to appraisal.</p> <p>Baseline data collected by tracking number of people applying for promotion and succeeding in promotion, with attention to equality and diversity issues.</p> <p>Create new targets for promotion based on the initial data to increase the number of research staff members who successfully apply for promotion.</p> <p>Managers of researchers are aware and supportive of research staff recognition and promotion.</p>	HR	<p>Policy by 2022.</p> <p>Initial data and new targets by 2024.</p> <p>Evaluation of research staff managers awareness and support of research staff recognition and promotion pathways, Jan 2024.</p>	Employment Institution 3 and 5
<b>Principles 3 &amp; 4</b>					
<b>2020_4</b> <b>(linked to 2018_6)</b>	<p><b>Induction</b> Do a complete audit of induction for researchers across the University, from department to University level. Identify and share good practice.</p> <p>Create a University wide research induction package</p>	<p>95% new members of staff reporting having had an induction.</p> <p>By CROS 2023 have increased our score for effectiveness of induction by 15% at both institution (currently 59% positive) and department/faculty (currently 48% positive) level.</p>	DC, PCI(HR), RIS and faculties	<p>Review of current induction procedures by October 2020.</p> <p>New induction procedures launched in Jan 2021, with initial feedback collected.</p>	<p>Employment, Institution 2</p> <p>Environment and Culture, institution 2</p>

	<p>from acceptance of appointment to end of probation. This plan should include an alignment of University, research-specific, Doctoral College and faculty/department induction activities. Throughout this induction period researchers have open transparent access to all relevant institutional policies, procedures and practices researchers may need to undertake their role and develop their career. This should include clear understanding of how research staff are represented within the University committee structures, and how they can feedback into the system to identify problems and make improvements.</p> <p>Create best practice guidance for departments on researcher induction, which clearly defines expectations of the Institution, managers and the researchers themselves.</p>			<p>Undertake an evaluation of changes Sept 2021 and Sept 2022.</p>	
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<p><b>2020_5 (new)</b></p>	<p><b>Researcher Development &amp; Training Forum</b> Create a Researcher Training Forum to strategically oversee researcher development and training across the University, bringing together all research training across the University (inclusive of professional services and faculty). This committee will also identify gaps in training provision and ensure quality of training. It will report into the HREiR WG (soon to be the Concordat Strategy Committee, see action 2020_17). Once all training is identified, create a unified website and communication strategy so that research staff can easily identify and register for training.</p>	<p>Active committee, meeting at least twice a year and feeding into the Concordat Strategy Committee.</p> <p>Research staff training needs analysis across the University completed.</p> <p>Gap analysis of training offered against strategic demands and researcher needs.</p> <p>Updated suite of training launched.</p> <p>Creation of website that is utilised by research staff (baseline hit rate established, then set specific goals for increased usage).</p> <p>Establish baseline research staff training participation across the University, with a target of at least 90% of research staff engaged in some University training during their time at Surrey.</p>	<p>DC</p>	<p>Committee formed Jan 2020</p> <p>Audit of all training and gap analysis against needs and strategic drivers with development plan in place Nov 2020.</p> <p>New website developed Apr 2021.</p> <p>Gaps in training provision complete with new full suite of training available Dec 2021.</p> <p>Annual review of feedback and participation 2022, 2023, 2024.</p>	<p>Professional and Career Development Institution 1, 4 &amp; 6</p>
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<b>2020_6 (new)</b>	<b>Leadership and Management training</b>  Create a suite of leadership and management training and developmental opportunities for research staff. Also develop a suite of leadership and management training for managers of research staff focused on effective management for career development.	Suites of training created.  Measures of baseline engagement rates and feedback collected.  Targets for increased engagement and any enhancements set.	PCI & DC	Training Suites in place by Jan 2021.  Initial engagement and feedback reported Oct 2021.  New targets set Jan 2022.  Review annually.	Employment, Institution 4  Professional and Career Development, Institution 2 and 4
<b>2020_7 (linked to 2018_6 &amp; 7)</b>	<b>Professional &amp; Career Development</b>  Develop the Employability & Engagement Strategy for the Doctoral College, ensuring alignment with the Research and Innovation Strategy and the 2019 Concordat expectations.  Investigate and explore work placement/ internship options for research staff e.g. secondments  Evaluate research staff involvement in mentoring to include review of processes, engagement and impact. Use findings to develop the	Strategy developed.  A programme of options and streamlined process for research staff placements/internships created.  Start to capture research staff experiences with placements and internships, to demonstrate benefits to both the research staff and to the greater research community.  Action Plan for increasing research staff engagement in mentoring programmes. 10% increase in uptake.	DC	Employability and Engagement Strategy for DC in place by Jan2021.  Placement options and processes widely available to research staff Jan 2022.  Impact feedback from research staff who have undertaken placements Jan 2024.  Action plan for increasing research	Professional and Career Development, Institution 3, 5 and 6; Managers 2

	programme increase research staff engagement			staff engagement with mentoring Oct 2020	
<b>2020_8 (new)</b>	<p><b>Fellowship Programme</b> Create structured support for Fellows targeting various stages: 1) pre-fellowship stage, 2) fellowship application stage 3) transition into and during fellowship stage 4) transition to next career stage. This support will be linked to the newly established Surrey Research Fellowship programme for ECRs but will also be available for those funded through different fellowship schemes.</p> <p>Support will include professional development planning support, leadership and professional skills training, supervisor training, mentoring, as well as various other training sessions and opportunities to support fellowship success and future career development.</p>	<p>Identity baseline data on current fellowships. Once established, we will want to see year on year increases in number of fellowships applied for and awarded.</p> <p>&gt;80% positive feedback regarding career and professional development training and opportunities.</p> <p>80% successful transition from fellowship appointment into next career with no unwanted career gap.</p>	DC/RIS	<p>Suite launched by Jan 2021.</p> <p>Review of participant feedback and fellowship numbers annually.</p> <p>Tracking of fellow career destinations from Jan 2021.</p>	Professional and Career Development, Institutional 3 & 4



<p><b>2020_9</b> <b>(linked to 2018_9)</b></p>	<p><b>Doctoral College Alumni programme</b> Increase awareness and ECR enrolment in the <a href="#">Doctoral College Alumni</a> programme by embedding information about the offer in staff induction materials and in the staff leaving package.</p> <p>Communicating information about the scheme more clearly on ECR DC website pages and within newsletters, as well as in job advertisements.</p> <p>Establish an Alumni communication strategy to keep Alumni informed about training, events and opportunities they can attend and contribute to.</p> <p>Create a system by which we can better record and report on Alumni interactions with the Doctoral College.</p>	<p>10% increase ECR Alumni registered in programme each year. ECR alumni contribution to mentoring programme and to all networking events.</p> <p>Establish baseline satisfaction measures.</p> <p>For those ECR Alumni actively involved in participation and contribution to sessions and events &gt;80% positive feedback.</p>	<p>DC</p>	<p>Alumni Programme to be incorporated into leaving pack Oct 2020</p> <p>To be incorporated in new induction (Action 2020_4) Jan 2021.</p> <p>Record baseline Alumni participation for 19-20, then set increase target for following years by Oct 2020.</p> <p>Conduct feedback survey July 2021.</p>	<p>Professional and Career Development Institutional 3 and 5.</p>
<p><b>Principles 5 &amp; 6</b></p>					

<b>2020_10</b> <b>(linked to 2018_10)</b>	<b>Protected Development Time</b> Embed a minimum of 10 days protected time per annum (pro-rata) for fixed term contract members of research staff.	10 days protected development time for fixed term research-only staff embedded in University Policy.  Policy highly visible on website and communicated to all researchers during recruitment and induction.  See related action 2020_11, which is required for recording of development time usage.	HR	Policy in place by Jan 2021.  Embedded in new induction and visible on web Jan 2021.  Policy visible at time of recruitment Oct 2021.	Professional and Career Development, Institution 1
<b>2020_11</b> <b>(Linked to 2018_12)</b>	<b>Recording and Reporting Professional Development</b> Find a technical solution that will allow recording and reporting of all professional development activity that researchers undertake.	Technical solution identified that inclusively covers all areas across the University that provide training and development for researchers.  Researchers utilising the system, positive user feedback. Any negative feedback addressed to ensure new system is fit for purpose.	HR & PCI	Consultation across training providers, faculties and researchers to determine system requirements. Jul 2020.  System identified by Jul 2021 and implementation plan in place.  System in place. October 2022.	Professional and Career Development Institution 6
<b>2020_12</b> <b>(Linked to 2018_11 and 2018_13)</b>	<b>ECRs involvement in Innovation and Societal Benefit of Research</b> Provide a comprehensive suite of training and opportunities for	At least 15% of Institute of Director student memberships allocated to ECRs.  Suite of training and opportunities clearly visible to all members of research staff.	DC (Employability and Engagement) & faculties	Suite of training and opportunities developed and communicated by Jan 2021.	Professional and Career Development, Institution 6; Researcher 6

	<p>ECRs to become involved in a variety of activities to promote the impact of research beyond academia, including continued development of the Institute of Director's Student membership programme (see HREiR <a href="#">case study</a>), open research and public engagement training and opportunities, and knowledge transfer and consultancy training and support.</p>	<p>Capture baseline engagement of research staff in these activities, and then set targets to increase research staff involvement. 10% uptake in 2020 – 21, with an incremental rise of 10% per year in subsequent years.</p> <p>Public Engagement Day showcasing different ways of understanding and incorporating into research with at least 50 attendees.</p> <p>Create connections with at least three new external PE partners to increase engagement opportunities of research staff.</p> <p>Provide PGRs and research staff members with access to free PE consultation drop-in sessions for advice on designing PE into research, maximising impact, and writing funding applications, with at least 3 research staff members attending and resulting in at least one successful event/activity within the first year of trial. New targets set based on the turn out from this first trial</p>		<p>Review ECR IoD engagement July 2021.</p> <p>Baseline of research staff involvement Oct 2021.</p> <p>New targets for engagement set Jan 2022.</p> <p>Three PE partners successfully engaged by 2022.</p> <p>PE consultation launched April 2020, reviewed annually.</p>	
<p><b>2020_13</b> <b>(Linked to 2018_11)</b></p>	<p><b>Researcher Led Community Building</b> Deliver at least 4 researcher-led events annually.</p> <p>Continue to offer opportunities for research staff to bid for money to enhance their research community.</p>	<p>The delivery of at least 4 researcher led events. &gt;80 instances of positive feedback from organising and participating researchers.</p> <p>Continued, successful engagement in the Researcher Communities Fund by research staff.</p>	DC & faculties	Annually report on delivery and feedback.	<p>Research Environment and Culture Researchers 1</p> <p>Professional and Career Development Institution 1</p>

<b>2020_14 (new)</b>	<b>Mental Health Wellbeing</b> Create a suite of training and support for positive mental health and wellbeing for researchers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Develop a Wellbeing strategy for support of researchers</li> <li>2) People in key pastoral and research staff support roles (Doctoral College Staff, Associate Deans for the Doctoral College, research staff champions) to become certified Mental Health First Aiders.</li> <li>3) Mental Health First Aid training offered to people managing research staff.</li> <li>4) Establish a suite of training and support for researcher wellbeing to be embedded into University offering.</li> </ol>	Key people at University, faculty and department level trained to be mental health first aiders, able to support research staff needs.  A suite of training designed to promote and support wellbeing available for research staff to participate in.  >75% of Doctoral College staff trained in Mental Health First Aid (Timescale: Dec 2020)  >80% positive feedback from training courses.  All Doctoral College research staff training materials, support and activities reviewed from a wellbeing perspective, and appropriate content and messages embedded throughout provision.	DC (Mental Health and Wellbeing lead)	Training launched Jan 2020.  Suite of training and support for those supporting researchers (i.e. managers and support service staff) launched Oct 2021.  Doctoral College staff trained by Dec 2020.  Research staff suite in place by Jan 2021.  Feedback reviewed annually.	Research Environment and Culture Institution 3 & 4
<b>2020_15 (Linked to 2018_14)</b>	<b>Links with Equality and Diversity initiatives</b>  Maintain University's commitment to equality and diversity by retaining and achieving awards that	Research staff representation on all major EDI committees, with links with the ECR forum Equality and Diversity working group.	Equality and Diversity	Review annually	Research Environment and Culture Institution 3 & 4

	demonstrate this commitment. In each of these endeavours we will ensure that the research staff voice is heard, through committee representation and through consultation.	Measures of impact of EDI initiatives on fixed term contract researchers collected, fed into the ECR forum and HREiR WG and acted upon.			
<b>Principle 7 (transitioning from Concordat 2008 to Concordat 2019)</b>					
<b>2020_16 (2018_15)</b>	<p><b>Engagement</b></p> <p>Increase research staff participation in CROS, through a targeted communication campaign.</p> <p>Increase communication of the University's Concordat implementation plans (including HR Excellence in Research initiative) through ECR newsletters and ECR Reps.</p> <p>Continue to maintain full engagement with ECR forum and SuRSA.</p> <p>Research staff representation on all relevant committees at University, faculty and department level.</p>	<p>Increased in CROS participation to greater than 30% of research staff population.</p> <p>Research staff awareness of the Concordat demonstrated by an increase 25% CROS by 2023.</p> <p>Quarterly newsletters communicating about progress against our Concordat implementation plan.</p> <p>Active and engaged ECR forum and SuRSA.</p> <p>Research staff representation on committees.</p> <p>Research staff report feeling represented and have an understanding about how they can voice suggestions/concerns (survey/focus group).</p>	DC (Communication and Experience Manager)	<p>Increased CROS comms campaign in 2020 and 2021, with reviews and improvements in strategy year on year.</p> <p>Year on year improvements in CROS scores on Concordat awareness.</p> <p>Newsletter schedule launched Jan 2020.</p> <p>Review engagement annually.</p>	Implementation and Review 1 and 6

				Survey/focus group of representation completed Oct 2023.	
<b>2020_17 (new)</b>	<p>Become signatories of the 2019 Concordat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HREiR WG to be reconstituted at the Concordat Strategy Committee, overseeing the reporting for the Concordat and the HREiR process.</li> <li>• Undertake a full gap analysis against the 2019 Concordat.</li> <li>• Embed Concordat review and reporting requirements within the HREiR action plan.</li> </ul>	<p>University successfully engaged in the new 2019 Concordat signatory process.</p> <p>Full Gap analysis against 2019 Concordat completed.</p> <p>Concordat reporting requirements embedded and aligned with 2022 updated Concordat action plan.</p>	HREiR WG	<p>Become Signatories of the 2019 Concordat by April 2020.</p> <p>Gap analysis by April 2022.</p> <p>Updated Concordat action plan Jan 2022, for HREiR submission</p>	Implementation and Review 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
<b>2020_18 (Linked to 2018_17)</b>	<p>To continue to share best practice through engagement in national and international conferences, workshops and events; as well as through publication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annually, create a plan to identify areas of our practice which would</li> </ul>	<p>Share our experience/good practice/challenges at a minimum of one regional/national/international event annually.</p> <p>Active engagement in the process of transitioning to the new Concordat, including participation in consultations, surveys, feedback opportunities.</p> <p>Adopt best practice from others to strengthen our own provision and support for research staff.</p>	HREiR WG	Review annually	Implementation and Review, 'systematic challenges'

	<p>benefit others and target at least one venue to present at or publish within.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each year identify specific areas of our practice which we would benefit from learning other's practice and identify a way of gaining this knowledge. At least four members of Doctoral College staff to attend a conference, event/workshop/seminar, or site visit to learn about best practice in supporting research staff, each year.</li> <li>• Particularly work with colleagues across the sector to support the transition to the 2019 Concordat.</li> </ul>				
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