

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

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Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Clare Wunderly, Head of Researcher Development & Employability and Acting Deputy Director of the Doctoral College (c.wunderly@surrey.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 (max 500 words)

Building a positive and inclusive research culture for researchers at Surrey remains a strategic priority. The University continues to work on improving its research culture through several initiatives and collaborations, including a range of events and schemes that enable ECRs to maximise their potential at Surrey. Many of these are detailed in the sections below.

Surrey was proud to achieve again the Human Resources Excellence in Research (HREiR) award in summer 2022 and has now held it for over ten years, illustrating its commitment to supporting its research staff.

A particular initiative in 2022/3 has been the recruitment of thirty Surrey Future Fellows. The initiative offers a 3-year research post with a pathway to a permanent Teaching and Research position from year 4 onwards. There were over 1,000 applicants for these roles, not least because they are designed to mend the 'leaky pipeline' that all too often exists between postdoctoral research and permanent roles.

The University raises awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat and the importance of supporting Surrey's research staff through its co-ordination of the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Committee and delivery of bespoke workshops and programmes aimed at ECRs. These range from specialist semester-length modules delivered by our Careers consultants consolidating career management skills, to the Doctoral College's programme for Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW), a week-long programme that raises the profile of ECRs and their contribution to university life. Doctoral College staff also raise awareness of the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat [through our webpages](#) and during 1-2-1s and individual careers consultation with ECRs.

As well as supporting our ECRs on a daily basis, the Doctoral College continues to advocate for ECRs both at an institutional and national level, establishing Surrey as a leader in delivering upon the principles of the Researcher Development Concordat (RDC). The Researcher Development Training Officer with responsibility for coordinating ECR provision has placed pieces raising awareness of [key issues related to ECR development in WONKHE](#), on [UUK's official Researcher Development Concordat website](#), and in [UUK's 2022 Annual Highlight Report](#).

Discussions in Researcher Development Concordat Steering Committee meetings about embedding a positive research culture at Surrey have been supported by Prof. Emily Farran, academic lead for research culture and integrity, who founded the Research Culture Steering Group in autumn 2022, an initiative that has focused efforts across the institution to embed a more inclusive and supportive environment for our researcher community.

Our central pan-university ECR led forum has undergone changes in personnel and structure, but continues to draw attendees from all three faculties and has been strengthened by efforts at faculty level to develop representative structures for ECRs. The chair of the central ECR forum represents the ECR community at the University Research & Innovation Committee (URIC), a key committee reporting upwards to Senate and Council, and the faculty research

committees of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences include an ECR representative. Plans are underway to invite an ECR representative to attend the faculty research committee of the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences.

Provide a short summary of the institution's strategic objectives and implementation plans for delivering each of the three pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers) for your key stakeholder groups together with your measures for evaluating progress and success (max 600 words)

The University of Surrey is committed to delivering upon its aligned [HREiR and RDC action plan of summer 2022](#), which includes details of measurable objectives supported by actions that will improve opportunities for our community of researchers and their support staff.

Environment and culture

Surrey's key objectives for this pillar include:

(1) raising awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat, which we will do through delivering a bespoke induction aimed at incoming research staff and ensuring the Researcher Development Concordat is referenced in key university policies and communications.

(2) ensuring that our community of research staff are aware of the range of development opportunities available, whether delivered centrally or by colleagues in faculties and schools. We will work towards this by ensuring that opportunities for research staff are signposted in all relevant staff inductions and at key events in the university calendar, such as Learning at Work Week and Postdoc Appreciation Week.

Success measure for both objectives: 55% of respondents reported an awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat in CEDARS 2020. Target of 75% in CEDARS 2023.

Employment

Key objectives for this pillar include:

(3) securing 10 days of protected development time into relevant contracts, which we will work towards by engaging with our colleagues in HR with responsibility for drafting contracts.

Success measure: securing a reference to 10 days of protected development time in all relevant contracts by summer 2024.

(4) placing more research staff on open-ended (rather than fixed-term) contracts, which we will do through working with colleagues in HR and managers of researchers to encourage employing researchers on such contracts.

Success measure: in CEDARS 2020 9% of ECR respondents were on open-ended contracts, with a target of 20% of ECRs to be on open-ended contracts in CEDARS 2023.

5) the more robust collection of data to aid in the evaluation of existing initiatives and

the planning of future actions, detailed in our aligned HREiR and RDC action plan. We are working with colleagues in HR to 'build in' the ability to identify and communicate with our ECRs into the new HR system, with a planned roll-out in May/June 2023.

Success measure: the ability to more easily identify ECRs and compile auto communication/email lists within our HR system by summer 2024.

Professional Development of Researchers

Key objectives for this pillar include:

(6) identifying methods to ensure that our ECR community are made fully aware of the support and opportunities available at Surrey. The Doctoral College will lead on delivering a Research-staff focused induction event and on ensuring that our ECR community can be identified easily from the data HR collect.

Success measures: an ECR and research staff-focused induction to be in place by summer 2024; attendance of at least 30% new starter ECRs at induction events across the academic year.

(7) integrating research staff more closely into the research culture of the university through bespoke inductions, inclusive scheduling, and ensuring our community of research staff are included in communications regarding development opportunities and events.

Success measures: 66% of researchers agreed they felt included in the university's research culture in CEDARS 2020. Target of 75% in CEDARS 2023. 12% of researchers in CEDARS 2020 reported pressure to compromise research standards. Target of 5% in CEDARS 2023.

(8) the roll-out of a learning management software system to allow research staff to record their professional development, which we are working towards by engaging in discussions with our colleagues in HR, Learning & Development, and IT procurement, to ensure that ECR needs are met in any software acquisition.

Success measure: having a learning management software system in place or incoming by summer 2024.

Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/PIs); Researchers]

Environment and Culture (max 600 words)

Institution

- The Doctoral College has rolled out a new, bespoke induction aimed at incoming ECRs (called 'Early Career Researcher Coffee Meet-Ups'), holding four instances between September 2022 and March 2023. Set in a relaxed and friendly environment and attended by a Researcher Development Training Officer, a Careers Consultant, and a Faculty Librarian, the sessions informed incoming ECRs of the support and opportunity available to research staff at Surrey and the university's commitment to the Researcher Development Concordat. Feedback from attendees has been universally positive, and the initiative features in [UUK's Researcher Development Concordat annual highlight report](#).

Academic Managers of Researchers

- The Doctoral College is working with colleagues in Learning & Development and Human Resources while they investigate investing in new staff platforms and HR software, so that it is possible to more easily identify academics responsible for managing research staff in a coherent manner.
- The Doctoral College will also develop a bespoke workshop aimed at managers of researchers, to outline the support available for them in their role as managers in helping maximise the potential of the researchers in their teams.

Researchers

- Prof. Emily Farran, a member of the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Committee, founded the Research Culture Steering Group in autumn 2022, to collaborate on pioneering a more positive research culture. It was accompanied by an official [launch event in February 2023](#) attended by over 300 people, raising awareness of the importance of embedding an inclusive research culture across the university.

<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p><u>Institution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a central review of appraisals and promotions, all researchers, whether on fixed-term or open-ended contracts, are now eligible to apply for promotion. • As part of the ‘Optimising Academic Achievement’ workstream, a roll out of a revised appraisal format helping reward a better balance of teaching and research responsibilities is also underway. • Undertake a review of training available for managers of researchers, identifying potential gaps and areas where more support is needed. • Ensure that all managers of researchers and those involved in the recruitment of researchers have undertaken the university’s compulsory race equity and EDI training. <p><u>Academic Managers of Researchers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see above, under environment and culture <p><u>Researchers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Surrey Future Fellows scheme, representing a significant investment welcomes its cohort of around 30 fellows in autumn 2023. The initiative offers a research post with the presumption of a permanent post afterwards. It is focused on maximising the potential of fellows and addressing the so-called ‘leaky pipeline’ between postdoctoral research and permanent roles. • ECRs can also access the Enhanced Bid Support scheme, which offers support for larger, strategic funding bids
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<p><i>Professional development (max 600 words)</i></p>	<p><u>Institution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the third year in a row, the Doctoral College’s careers consultants delivered the Early Career Researcher Career Management Module between February-April. A ten-week course, the programme aims to consolidate career development skills amongst a cohort of ECRs. • The Doctoral College’s careers consultants have presented on the narrative CV and the opportunities and challenges it poses for ECRs at both Doctoral College and faculty events. • Events and schemes supporting the professional development of ECRs are organised at faculty level across the year. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences’ fellowship academy, launched in May 2022, has since successfully managed its pilot cohort of 8 individuals looking to apply for early career fellowships. - The Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences held an ECR-focused event aimed at supporting fellowship applications and commercialization in April 2023, with invited speakers from the Royal Academy of Engineering and a series of lightning talks from current Surrey ECRs sharing tips for success and advancement. - The launch of a specific Arts & Humanities Impact Acceleration Account in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is aimed at supporting researchers at the start of their career to commercialise their research and broaden their skillset. <p><u>Academic Managers of Researchers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see above, under environment and culture. <p><u>Researchers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postdoc Appreciation Week (PAW) remains a key week in the university calendar, allowing the university as a whole to focus on ECRs, their contributions to the institution, and the importance of providing development and leadership opportunities. The popular ‘Cup of Coffee’ nomination scheme, where any student or staff member could nominate an ECR who has excelled in any way, resulted in 54 nominations in PAW 2022, up from 30 nominations in PAW 2021. • Now in its third year, Innovation Strategy’s ‘Commercialisation Fellows’ scheme included three ECRs in its 2022 cohort.
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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)

While the University of Surrey has succeeded in rolling out induction events specifically for ECRs and research staff, raising awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat at pan-university events such as the Open Research and Research Culture Lecture in February 2023, and delivering sector-leading careers development and support to ECRs, there remain priorities that require continuing attention. These include:

- Developing our ability to identify and communicate with our community of ECRs has presented challenges, but working closely with our colleagues in Human Resources, IT Services, and Procurement, has been very productive, and from June 2023 colleagues in HR will have the capacity to auto generate a specific ECR email list from central staff data.
- After a scoping review led by the Doctoral College, much of the support and development opportunities aimed at ECRs across the university focuses around applying for funding and fellowships, and there is a need to think about supporting our research staff more holistically. The Doctoral College will work with our colleagues in the FRIOs and in central services to ensure that a holistic view is maintained when it comes to ECR development and that there is support for ECR wellbeing and support for ECRs looking to transition towards careers outside of academic teaching and research.
- A significant portion of our staff are still not necessarily aware of the Researcher Development Concordat and our institutional commitments to develop and support our research staff. This is a sector wide concern, with the Doctoral College raising [awareness of this issue and possible solutions on a national level](#). The Doctoral College will continue to raise awareness of the Researcher Development Concordat at its research-staff focused inductions and in its communications with all academic staff, and work with the communication channels established by the FRIOs to raise awareness of the university's commitments enshrined in the concordat within the faculties.

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

Our research staff will be invited to complete the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) between May and June, and the quantitative and qualitative insights gained from survey data will inform the objectives underpinning our delivery of our action plan in the next reporting period. In the meantime, key objectives include:

- Using our new ability (from June 2023) to compile lists of ECRs from central staff data to communicate more effectively with Surrey's ECR community.
- Overseeing a recruitment drive for ECR reps to revitalise the central ECR forum.
- Working with colleagues in HR to explore adding a reference to 10 days protected development time to ECR contracts.
- Given staff and structural changes within the university, we will refresh and revise the membership of the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Committee. We will continue to work on delivering upon our aligned HREiR and Researcher Development Concordat action plan before our biennial review led by Vitae in July 2024.
- Greater use of the Faculty Research & Innovation Offices (FRIOs), which have been created in 2022-23 to reach out to and engage with ECRs. This includes using their SharePoint and communication channels to attain greater reach into faculty, and adopting a more faculty-aligned approach in terms of ECR support and provision.
- The Doctoral College's Communication and Experience Manager will lead a review of Surrey's web platforms and communication channels to both streamline and make our communications with all of the Doctoral College's stakeholders (which includes ECRs) as effective as possible.

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (max 200 words)

This report will be presented to Doctoral College Board for discussion before being presented at the University Research & Innovation Committee (URIC) for discussion and endorsement. It will then be presented to Senate for endorsement and recommendation by Council. Subject to the approval of Council, the report will be signed by our Chair of Council.

Signature on behalf of governing body: 

Contact for queries: Clare Wunderly (c.wunderly@surrey.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