

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

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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)

Heriot-Watt University is a research-intensive institution specialising in Science, Technology, Engineering, Business and Design. It attracts researchers from across the world to its campuses in Scotland, Dubai and Malaysia. The University's Strategy 2025 - Shaping Tomorrow Together has "Excelling in Research and Enterprise" which aims to use our research and entrepreneurial approach to place us at the forefront of academic endeavour while making an outstanding impact on society. We aim to address crucial world issues through our interdisciplinary approach and close collaboration with industry and business. This is exemplified via our business-focused Global Research Institutes in Robotics and AI, addressing Net Zero, in Earth and Environmental Science, and in Health and Care Engineering.

Researcher Concordat: Heriot-Watt University has around 2000 staff of which 450 are academic staff, 250 are Research Staff (postdoctoral researchers, research associates, research fellows) and approximately 1000 Graduate Students. In 2010, it was one of the first institutions in the UK to receive the 'HR Excellence in Research' (HREiR) award (European Commission). In 2020, it became a signatory of the "Revised Concordat to support the career development of researchers" and successfully completed a 10 year HREiR review.

In 2023, Heriot-Watt University decided to end its participation in the HR Excellence in Research award process to focus resources on a new Research and Enterprise Culture programme. The thematic aims of the programme and associated Action Plan are well-aligned with the aims of the Concordat.

Both the Heriot-Watt Action Plans (for culture and Researcher Concordat) are focused on institution-wide support for Research Staff. The plans were developed in consultation with key stakeholders, discussed at the Research Staff Forum, approved by the University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI), and led by the Deputy Principal for Research and Impact.

PGR students/Academic Staff: Activities since 2020 have focused on facilitating a positive/inclusive environment for researchers at earlier or later career stages. The Research Degrees Committee, Academic Registry and Students' Union for example, have led initiatives fostering PGR student experience, while Research Engagement and Human Resources have introduced new development programmes for academic staff, including research and enterprise culture activities and EDI enhancements overseen by the 'Global Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee'.

Recent HWU Enhancements to Research Culture beyond Concordat Action Plan.

- i) **Development and implementation of Academic Schools' Research and Enterprise Strategies:** To deliver the ambitions of Excelling in Research and Enterprise as part of

Strategy 2025, all Schools have developed strategies whose performance is monitored to ensure that the best environment exists for researchers to conduct high quality research and maximise impact.

- ii) Through an approach of Professional Partnering, an integrated team of Deputy Principals, Associate Principals, and Directors of Research work with the Research Engagement and Business and Enterprise Directorates to ensure delivery of the School strategies and support for people and culture.
- iii) A project to establish a global University Graduate School is underway. It will include recruitment, administration, training and skills development support for Doctoral Students and Postdoctoral Research Staff, to ensure a consistent and excellent experience. The Graduate School will be introduced from AY 24/25.
- iv) The Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group will oversee the coordination of alignment of HW research culture with the Researcher Development Concordat. Priority themes agreed by the Working Group in consultation with the Research Community are:
 - Research Integrity
 - Collegiality
 - Research Recognition
 - Research Careers; personal development
 - Open Research
- v) The University Executive has agreed that the Deputy Principal (Research and Impact) will use a proportion of the SFC Research Excellence Grant (REG) funding to strategically support people, environment and culture initiatives.

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*)

Research Culture Strategic Objectives.

The Research and Enterprise Culture work programme has identified 5 Strategic themes it will seek to deliver against (see Table 1). Mapping of Concordat activities against these 5 themes enables gaps to be identified to ensure alignment with the Concordat Action Plan and a balanced programme that includes all early, mid and senior career researchers at Heriot-Watt University.

Table 1: Mapping of Heriot-Watt’s 5 Research and Enterprise Culture Strategic Themes against 3 Researcher Concordat Principles.

Concordat Principles	HW Research Culture Strategic Themes, 1-5
Principle 1: Environment and culture	Strategy 1: Embedding Research Integrity Strategy 2: Building collegiality Strategy 5: Facilitating Open Research; Engagement
Principle 2: Employment	Strategy 3: Promoting Research Recognition
Principle 3: Professional and career development	Strategy 4: Support research careers; personal development

Implementation plans for each of the 3 Concordat Principles are outlined below:

1. Environment and culture

Objectives related to improving awareness of the Concordat, ensuring representation/engagement of early career researchers at local/institutional level, and developing better understanding of the research staff population from data analysis are included in the Research and Enterprise Culture Action Plan to be launched in 2024. In addition, new objectives on provision of training/resources on i) Ethics and Research Integrity, ii) Responsible Research and Innovation, ii) PURE data repository/enhancing citations were rolled out or are planned for delivery. These reflect three of Heriot-Watt’s Research Culture Objectives i.e. **Strategy 1:** Embedding Research Integrity; **Strategy 3:** Promoting Research Recognition, and **Strategy 5:** Facilitating Open Research.

2. Employment

Objectives related to developing a better understanding of research staff population, mobility and employment experience through improved data were agreed during the Research and Enterprise Culture task and finish groups and will be aligned with the Concordat Action Plan. In addition, new objectives on the provision of peer-networking i.e. Narrative CV community of practice, Research and Enterprise Culture consultations and feedback opportunities will be added to the workplan since they reflect two of Heriot-Watt’s Research Culture Objectives, i.e. **Strategy 2:** Building collegiality, **Strategy 3:** Promoting Research Recognition.

3. Professional Development of Researchers

Objectives related to i) presenting career pathways/opportunities online for Research Staff on the range of potential career paths, and ii) on improving reference to ‘10 days training’ for research staff in relevant policies/guidance were agreed in the Research and Enterprise Culture task and finish groups and will be implemented in 2024. The objectives on provision of Mid-Senior Career development, EDI training, scope for the new Graduate School, and delivery of ‘PI Development’ and

'Narrative CV' were added to the workplan and aligned with the Research and Enterprise Culture Action Plan to reflect **Strategy 4**: Supporting research careers personal development.

Evaluation of progress and success

Coordination of alignment of Heriot-Watt's Research and Enterprise Culture and Researcher Development Concordat Action Plans will be accomplished via the Research Engagement Directorate. Concordat evaluation reports will be prepared by Research Futures Academy for discussion/review of progress at the Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group. Summary reports will be prepared for Research Staff Forum, University Committee for Research and Innovation, and Universities UK (in the University's Annual Concordat Report).

Methods to be used by the Human Resources and Research Engagement Directorates to measure/analyse progress will include:

- Researcher Surveys (e.g. comparisons of Annual Staff, CEDARS, and HW Research and Enterprise Culture Surveys)
- Consultation/review of plans/progress with the research community (e.g. Research Staff Forum; Research and Enterprise Culture Focus Groups)
- Analyses of researcher data (to better understand career development, research grant application profiles, training needs)
- Measurement of engagement data to assess uptake of training provision.

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 <i>(max 600 words)</i>	See attached table (Appendix 1)
Employment <i>(max 600 words)</i>	See attached table (Appendix 1)
Professional development <i>(max 600 words)</i>	See attached table (Appendix 1)

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)*

1. **Concordat awareness and reporting** –Awareness-raising initiatives for the Concordat have been progressed via Heriot-Watt’s ‘Research Staff Forum’ and Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group, and through closer consultation with the Academic Schools and, once in place, the global Graduate School.
2. **Research and Enterprise Culture Programme** –In 2023, the Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group, through its Task and Finish groups, developed an Action Plan based on the findings of Stages 1) exploration with the HWU research community about what an ideal Research and Enterprise Culture at HWU should look like and 2) a diagnosis of the 'as-is' culture and sub-cultures that the HWU research community perceive and experience, with additional consultations on each university campus to co-create the final action plan with the HWU research community. In February 2024, the action plan will be launched as a living document, reviewed periodically every six months through the Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group and revised as necessary. Given the overlap with Concordat activities, delivery will be integrated.
3. Post-Pandemic initiatives have been developed for the completion of some of our original objectives, including a) researcher representation and networking e.g. Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group ; b)collation of data to track origin/destination of careers and better understand of the researcher population, e.g. CEDARS and staff survey; and c) creation of more online development resources, e.g., Impact and Engagement, Research Ethics and Integrity training, Research and Enterprise Culture Café Series Programme including Narrative CV training.

Digital skills and online resources –Heriot-Watt’s ‘Global Digital Skills Steering Group’ has provided a forum to consider actions to enhance digital competencies, while more opportunities for researchers to engage in online training have been provided by the Research Futures Academy (e.g. ‘Nature Masterclasses’ <https://masterclasses.nature.com/> and ‘Data & Software Carpentries’).

4. **EDI alignment** – We continue to align and coordinate Concordat-identified EDI initiatives to maximise their impact. Heriot-Watt EDI activities have developed under our Global Equality Diversity and Inclusion ‘GEDI’ banner. Rather than a GEDI Strategy we have:
 - articulated our University strategic themes through an EDI lens which support embedding EDI into delivery of the University’s Strategy 2025
 - an annual GEDI Reporting cycle, which brings formal reporting on all aspects of GEDI through the University’s governance structures and fulfils a range of legal requirements
 - created a GEDI Tracker to support progress across all EDU related strands

A key theme of our work in the equality, diversity and inclusion space is to embed EDI into business as usual, while maintaining focus on specific ‘added value’ and strategic commitments. That means we continue to progress our Athena Swan ambitions preparing for our Bronze renewals in the

coming years; MACs in 2024, EPS in 2025, followed by University and EGIS renewals in 2026. We continue to progress GEDI related activities based on our 2021-25 commitments, more details can be found on our website.

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

The main purpose in delivering the Concordat Action Plan at Heriot-Watt University in 2024 will be to help enhance the Research and Enterprise Culture experience of our Research Staff population, and thereby contribute to the work we are undertaking to develop the Research and Enterprise Culture for all staff and students across the Institution. Key objectives will focus on the 3 pillars of the Concordat (environment and culture, employment, and professional development of researchers), as follows:

1. Environment and Culture

The Research and Enterprise Culture Programme will drive delivery of the Concordat action plan. The university will ensure representation of Research Staff at local and institutional level (e.g. School committees, Research Staff Forum and Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group) and develop a clearer understanding of the diversity and distribution of research staff population from improved data collection and analysis (e.g. PURE, Worktribe, ERP) so as to better provide support for them. New Impact and Engagement, Research Ethics and Integrity training, the Inaugural Impact and the Research and Enterprise Culture Café Series Programme including the Narrative CV training were developed and rolled out in 2023. Additional workshops related to academic publishing (e.g. "Getting Cited"; "Using PURE" Publication Repository) were delivered to help research staff enhance the visibility of their academic outputs.

2. Employment

Heriot-Watt University will continue with the actions carried over from last year's Concordat action plan related to better understanding of our research staff population focusing mainly through data analysis as part of the Research and Enterprise Culture WG priority actions, to gain improved knowledge of research staff mobility and employment experience through review of data on career origin and destination.

3. Professional Development of Researchers

Heriot-Watt University will aim to strengthen the support it provides to research staff across the Institution by encouraging further engagement with training and online resources focused on their personal/professional development and career planning (e.g. the 'PI Development Programme' on designing successful grant proposals). The importance of Managers of Researchers in facilitating the development of their research staff will be further emphasised through a new programme for mid-senior career research leaders. Greater skills and awareness related to EDI will be promoted through additional training opportunities for researchers (such as provided at Heriot-Watt through the Disability Inclusive Science Careers project). The opportunities for enhanced networking and

targeted support for the Research community will be further explored in the scoping of the new HWU Graduate School (due to launch in September 2024, and to include Postdoctoral Researchers).

Oversight of the Concordat Action Plan, 2023-24 – Heriot-Watt’s Research and Enterprise Culture Working Group will consider further development, expansion of the Concordat Action Plan in 2024 and beyond, guide its delivery and assessment (including Research Staff Representatives) and ensure alignment with the Research and Enterprise Culture future Action Plan.

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 has been compiled by the Research Culture Consultant in consultation with the Global Director of Research Engagement (Co-Chair of the Research Culture Working Group), Global Director of Human Resources (Chair of the Research Staff Forum), and Deputy Principal of Research and Impact (Chair of the University Committee for Research and Innovation).

The report will be considered at the next meeting of the Research Staff Forum which has Research Staff Representatives. It will be considered for approval at the next meeting of the University Committee for Research and Innovation on 18th January 2024, whose membership include Directors of Research and Enterprise. If approved, it will be considered at the University Executive and then go to the University Court for approval.

In future years, the report will also be considered by the Research Culture Working Group prior to approval being sought from UCRI and the University Court.

Signature on behalf of governing body: [Prof Steve McLaughlin, Deputy Principal for Research and Impact](#)



Contact for queries: **Research Futures Academy:** ResearchFutures@hw.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