

# HR Excellence in Research Report 2017



All Key Documents and information about the University's implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers can be found at: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/hr-excellence-in-research-badge/>

## Context for the 6-Year Review

### Strategic Development

The 6-year review of the University's engagement with the Concordat principles follows on from a period of significant strategic change, during which the central status of research and the key role of all those who engage in research activity have been consolidated and reemphasised.

A strategic review and consultation was commissioned in late 2015 to inform the development of the new [2026 Strategy](#), within which the [Research & Impact Strategy](#) is embedded as one of the three key pillars for Liverpool's development over the coming period. In order to ensure a consistent focus on the experience of research staff within this process, the existing Concordat Implementation Group (CIG) was temporarily transitioned into a Research Staff Development Task & Finish Group (T&FG) in 2016, under the leadership of the then PVC Research & Impact and serviced by the then Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL). The T&FG terms of reference centred on ensuring that the support and development opportunities for researchers built into the existing Concordat action plan were embedded and enhanced in forward strategic planning.

This focus is clear within the Research & Impact Strategy, which is 'first and foremost about our people; creating the right environment and supporting our researchers at every career stage' ([p.10](#)). Indeed, Liverpool intends to solidify its position as a leading research institution by 'being the go-to place for established and aspiring research leaders through the quality of our environment and support' ([p.11](#)) in which we provide 'time for innovative research and impact and for developing researchers from postgraduates through to established staff' ([p.12](#)).

### Renewed Development Focus

In parallel to the development of the 2026 Strategy, the University embarked on a transformation of its leadership model, appointing new leaders across senior levels on permanent posts, as opposed to the fixed-term posts Liverpool had operated previously. This aimed to achieve a further step change in the way the University led its core functions and in our ability to realise our full potential in relation to both research and education

The new senior team recognised that in order to deliver on the 2026 Strategy, and within that the Research & Impact Strategy, we would require a renewed focus on developing our people, ensuring they had the skills, knowledge and support to realise our strategic ambitions.

As such, a full review and restructure of the central development functions of the professional services was initiated. The review recommended that these functions, including CLL and Organisational Development, be brought together and augmented to reconfigure the way Liverpool supports and enhances career development and professional practice.

As a result, the Leadership, Organisational, Academic and Staff Development Academy (The Academy) was established in August 2017, with the remit to redesign, renew and enhance all centrally coordinated people-based development within the University, while working to support the many local development initiatives that embody best practice across the institution. Moreover, the University is in the process of recruiting for a newly-established senior academic post, the Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for the Research Environment and Postgraduate Research (APVC (RE&PR)) who will work closely with The Academy. The APVC (RE&PR) role is dedicated to University's researcher development agenda and wider research environment activities.

### 1) The internal Review Process

This change provides the context in which Liverpool's engagement with the Concordat is now managed and operationalised, building on our initial award of the HR Excellence in Research badge in 2011 and renewal in 2014. The New PVC Research & Impact has taken over senior responsibility for the Concordat implementation and established a [Concordat Steering Group \(CSG\)](#) to build on the work of the previous Concordat Implementation Group and Research Staff Development Task & Finish Group. In addition, the Director of the Academy has placed Researcher Development as the key priority for 2017-18, appointing a Research Staff Developer to lead on this work and assume responsibility for servicing the forward action plan 2017-19.

The CSG membership incorporates representatives from across the three University Faculties, including the Research Leads and Associate PVCs Research & Impact, key Professional Service leaders, the Athena Swan Group and, most critically, two Post Docs from each Faculty. The intention is that the representatives of the Post Doc community will increasingly take a leadership role in the Concordat monitoring process, drawing on the collective views of Liverpool's existing Research Staff Associations.

The CSG reports to the Research & Impact Strategy Committee in terms of alignment to other R&I activities, and the Research and Impact Committee in relation to planning and resource allocation matters. The Academy Director ensures that Concordat related activities are reported to the People Strategy Board and wider Education and Academic Quality Committees as required.

In addition to the consultation on progress and future priorities enabled through the above processes, an internal Researcher Development Survey was launched to capture feedback directly from the researcher community, while also informing the Academy's work to redesign researcher development. The survey was cascaded through members of CSG, Departmental and Faculty Research Staff Associations and parallel networks. A response rate of 27.5% provided an important insight into the perceptions and experiences of researchers and will provide a benchmark for our participation in the CROS survey 2019

All Concordat materials and documentation are publicly available on the [University website](#). A new Researcher Development Intranet Resource area is currently being constructed as part of the Academy's online presence, and will form the central hub for future online interaction with the research community.

## 2) Key Achievements & Progress

Against the backdrop of organisational change and restructure outlined above, Liverpool has made significant progress in delivering on the actions identified in the updated 2011-17 implementation plan (see appendix 1). Many of the areas that had previously been given specific focus are now considered as business as usual, showing an increasing enhancement and maturity in the way Liverpool supports and develops its research active staff.

Selected key indicators of our progress, capturing on-going priorities, are outlined below.

### Selected Key Indicators of Progress

#### a) Statement of Expectations (Principles 2, 3, 4 & 5)

The Research Staff Development Task & Finish Group successfully coordinated the drafting of a '[Statement of Expectations: Principal Investigators & Research Staff](#)', which was subsequently approved by Senate in June 2017. The statement aims to define expectations around responsibilities of research staff and principal investigators with an emphasis on embedding professional practice. PIs are tasked with supporting the career development of researchers through a focus on development, a concern for the research environment and via the PDR as a vehicle for discussing career development, with reference to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF). There has been a positive increase in PDR uptake and completion rates for contract research staff: 67.5% in 2016 to 84.53% in 2017. Researchers are similarly tasked with taking ownership of their career development by making the most of the support and opportunities the University makes available. The University's efforts to develop better workforce planning for the identification and retention of key researchers includes a Tenure Track Fellowship (TTF) scheme in order to nurture future academic leaders. As an example of this effective practice, the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences has appointed 54 TTFs over the past 6 years, 24 supported partially through Wellcome Trust funding. 29 of these TTFs have been confirmed in appointment, with more to follow. Some have progressed to SL and Professorial level already. Each fellowship is a five year appointment with assessment for transfer to a permanent post in year 3, protection of research time, initial research support costs and dedicated mentoring. Feedback from TTFs has shown they find the support, security and freedom provided by the scheme to be invaluable to career development. The Statement of Expectations presents a bold declaration of intent regarding our institutional commitment to supporting researchers. By virtue of being embedded within key processes such as PDR and, critically, across the 2017-19 Concordat Implementation Plan, the delivery and effectiveness of the Statement will be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis.

#### b) Mentoring & Coaching for Career Development (Principle 2)

Mentoring remains an extremely important and effective form of support and one that can significantly enhance the career development of research staff. Liverpool has placed an emphasis on developing practice around mentoring, with over 700 staff now registered on the mentoring database. At this time, 78 researchers have joined as mentees, 8 as mentors and 5 acting in both roles. In addition to the central scheme, a bespoke Early Career Researcher mentoring scheme has been introduced in the Faculty of Science and Engineering with support from the Academy's mentoring lead, with the intention of expanding this discipline specific model as appropriate. Similarly, a career-coaching scheme has been piloted during 2017 with the Institute of Psychology Health & Society. During 2017, 12 volunteer members of staff have been trained as career coaches and at least 5 coaching relationships have commenced. As an example of good practice, the Institute of Integrative Biology (IIB) has established a Staff Review & Development Group (SRDG) to advise and support staff on their pathway to promotion long before they feel ready to put themselves forward into the University process. The SRDG allows staff to informally submit their CVs to: (1) be considered for promotion this year or, (2) seek feedback on readiness of CV for promotion in 1-2 years. Consequently, there has been a sustained increase in % of female applicants for promotion: 0% in 2011; 17% in 2012; 43% in 2013; 50% in 2014; 33% in 2015; 25% in 2016. The Academy and the Athena Swan lead are now aiming to support other Institutes and Schools in replicating this model. Additionally, a bespoke arrangement for Early Career Research mentoring has been introduced by the Faculty of Science and Engineering and the University Mentoring Lead has delivered bespoke workshops and set up an online portal to support those acting in the capacity of mentor. 12 ECR mentors have been trained during 2017.

#### c) Equality & Diversity embedded within our practice (Principle 6)

The University's organisational practices in relation to equality and diversity are a significant strength that is reflected across the Concordat Implementation process. Whether in relation to the introduction of specific obligatory training modules, local induction processes, PDR discussions or the close alignment between the Concordat and the Athena Swan process, Liverpool remains determined to demonstrate fair and equitable practice that provides opportunities for all staff to develop their research careers to their highest potential. In 2013 an online obligatory training module, Introduction to Diversity and Equality, was launched. As of 31st October 2017, 78% of staff have completed D&E training or 91% of Managers/Team Leaders or 79.4% of Research ONLY staff or 85% of Teaching & Research ONLY staff. Furthermore, since 2016 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Training has been rolled out to staff / decision makers to ensure that they are prepared to completed EQIA's. The content includes the principles of Positive Action and a summary of the PA Guidance. 147 current staff have completed this training, including 79 (54%) manager, and 20 (14%), Research's or T&R staff. A recent success in relation to Athena Swan saw the University's

Institute of Integrative Biology (IIB) receive the Athena Swan Gold award. A colleague from IIB noted how departmental support combined with opportunities to develop, had helped her progress;

*"I have two mentors who have encouraged me to develop my skills in teaching, allowing me to shadow them during lectures and workshops. I have subsequently achieved a first level teaching qualification, am an Associate Fellow of the HEA, and am registered for the CPS in Higher Education. The Institute also financially supported my attendance on the 'WISE Career Development for Women' course in 2016. I can't stress how important the course was in developing my confidence for my Fellowship interview. The mentoring I have received within IIB has given me confidence in my own ability, and I nominated myself for the British Society for Rheumatology (BSR) Garrod Prize, which I was awarded in 2017."* **(IIB Athena Swan Gold Application)**

#### **d) Teaching for Researchers (Principles 3 and 4)**

As part of the University's continuing commitment to supporting the career development of postgraduate research students and research staff who wish to develop their teaching in Higher Education, the University offers the Teaching for Researchers Programme (TRP). It is a two-module Level 6 qualification aligned with Standard Descriptor 1 of the HEA UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. The modules offer PGRs and PDRAs participants the opportunity to discuss key learning, teaching and assessment theories, observe and experience teaching practice and explore issues relevant to assessment design and feedback. The timing of the sessions has been planned so as to make the course a viable option for researchers. The TRP also offers an opportunity for PGRs and PDRAs to get together, talk about teaching and discuss their career development. Between 2009/2010 and 2016/2017, 325 participants completed the TRP. Of these, 34 participants are currently engaged in career development activities progressing to Standard Descriptor 2 of the HEA UKPSF. An additional 10 participants have successfully achieved Fellowship of the HEA. In 2017/2018, 79 participants have been enrolled for TRP, which is on-going. As referenced in the 2017-19 Action Plan, the Academy now has plans in place to restructure the course and optimise resourcing as part of a full-scale review of its accredited and non-accredited Teaching Development portfolio.

### **3) Next Steps & Focus of the 2017-19 Strategy**

Liverpool's next steps seek to further embed high-quality support for the career development of researchers as an institutional norm, supported by robust internal processes and effective evaluations. Much of this work will focus on realising the practice captured within the Statement of Expectations. While Appendix 2 outlines priority areas in detail, the following examples indicate additional means by which Liverpool will build upon the strategic review process, new senior appointments and the launch of the Academy.

<b>Additional Next Steps</b>	<b>Broad Success Measures</b>
Jointly develop career-focused provision between the Academy and Liverpool Doctoral College (LDC) to create a seamless offer between Post Graduate and Post Doctoral communities.	Effective utilisation of LDC networks to ensure successful delivery and evaluation of development activities linked to enterprise, entrepreneurship and impact (See 3.2.2 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan).
Work with LDC and Faculty based partners to design a new PG Supervisor Programme and Resource point, enhancing career advice and guidance at the earliest stage.	Establishment of a mechanism by which PDRAs are able to access careers and employability advice, including at a local level and via peer networks (See 3.2.4 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan).
Launch a series of Concordat update and information sessions as part of the redesigned Researcher Development Framework. These sessions will be targeted at PIs, HoDs and key Professional personnel, beginning with a Senior Leadership Forum in Summer Term 2017-18.	Encouraging regular engagement of key research personnel who are identified by the APVCsR&I across the Faculties to participate in the Concordat Steering Group meetings as appropriate (See 7.1.1 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan).
Ensure that evaluations of the 'Making an Impact' week in June 2018 feed directly into the new cross-institutional Researcher Development Programme for launch in 2018-19.	Building on the 'Making an Impact' week of activities to provide additional development on communication and presentation skills (See 3.3.1 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan).
Take forward developments with the N8 Group in order to enhance opportunities for inter-university career development, while playing an active role in Russell Group researcher development activities.	Development of a steering group to create the network and facilitate developmental opportunities. (See 3.3.2 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan).
Expand career-coaching and disciplinary / role-based mentorship pathways.	Cumulative increase in % of researchers engaging in mentoring and coaching activity, local schemes and opportunities supported and effective. (See 2.6.3 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan).
Explore the potential benefits of the Academic Professional Apprenticeship Standard for further enhancing researcher development.	Utilisation of the Academic Professional Apprenticeship Standard to be factored into the review of Academic provision (See 3.2.6 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan)
Successfully support the launch of the cross faculty Research Staff Association as a key vehicle and voice for the research community.	Formation of a steering group of PDRAs supported to coordinate a pan-institutional RSA; a dedicated annual budget provided to RSA Steering Group to support community building; and consultation with the RSA to help inform future developments in supporting research staff. (See 4.13.1 and 4.13.2 of the 2017-2019 Action Plan).