

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

Name of Institution	The University of Liverpool
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Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/hr-excellence-in-research-badge/concordat/
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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)

The Concordat is firmly situated as a core institutional strategic priority. The University Strategy 2026, refreshed in 2021, now specifies the University's commitment to the Concordat within the Research and Impact section (p.10), stating, *"To achieve our strategic goals we will enhance opportunities through Prosper and Cradle to Chair and endorse the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, recognising that a positive and inclusive culture that fosters personal and professional development is key to success."*

This focus on the aims and outcomes of the Concordat is reflected in our transparent approach to internal governance, led by the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Impact (PVC R&I) who chairs the Concordat Steering Group (CSG), in liaison with the University's Head of Researcher Development and Culture. The CSG has a diverse, targeted membership, including the Associate PVCs for Research and Impact, the University's Research Staff Association (UoL RSA), research-related professional departments such as HR, the Diversity and Equality Team, Research Support Office, the Open Research Team and the Academy. Most notably, there are 6 research staff representatives on the CSG, who ensure the Group's accountability to Liverpool's postdoctoral and early career researchers and ensure direct insights into the lived realities of research staff at Liverpool.

The Academy is responsible for coordinating the Concordat, enabling an inclusive approach to the development and implementation of our Action Plan, via 6-8 weekly formal CSG meetings. In addition, the Concordat is embedded within parallel activities, including the formal management of the Athena Swan Committee, the Technician Commitment and the Race Equality Charter, ensuring that the clear synergies and common aspirations between these activities are recognised and addressed. Furthermore, the Academy continues strategic collaborations with a range of stakeholders, including the N8 Research Partnership, Russell Group fora (Researchers14), European collaborators and business and third sector organisations. The Academy's Researcher Development Team actively

contributes expertise and leadership within the UKRSA, Vitae, Postdoc Futures (a postdoc collective that leads National Postdoc Appreciation Week activities), the European Educational Research Association (EERA), the UKRI Talent Team, and the UUK Policy and Research Team, enabling a broader knowledge base to inform our work.

Recognising implications of the pandemic on the unique needs and specific concerns of postdoctoral and early career research staff, the University initiated honorary positions for all fixed-term research staff for 6 months after their employment ended, allowing them to retain their University email addresses and access to all UoL development resources. Furthermore, the University's Research in an Inclusive and Sustainable Environment (RISE) Project, aims to better understand how we might collectively and positively address aspects of the research environment highlighted by the pandemic. Ensuring clear communication lines is key to all of these activities, and the PVC R&I continues to hold regular meetings with the co-chairs of the UoL RSA to provide a touch point between the University's Senior Leadership and postdoctoral researchers.

Concordat Action Plan: University of Liverpool

Audience (*direct beneficiaries of the action plan*)



RESEARCH STAFF: 1440

At the University of Liverpool, we have 920 staff on research only contracts and 550 PIs who are in receipt of grants. Staff on research-only contracts consist primary of those early in their research career. They play a vital role in the development of creative and life changing research and are considered an important asset to the university's culture and environment. PIs/Research Managers are also key beneficiaries of the RD Concordat. They provide steer and direction for the research activity and are role models to the postdoctoral researchers/associates and research fellows who work with them.



RESEARCH AND TEACHING STAFF: 990

There are a number of cross-overs between this number of research and teaching staff, and those PIs in receipts of grants.



TECHNICIANS: 660

The University of Liverpool is a signatory to the Technician Commitment, which segues with the Concordat's support for the diversity of staff roles engaged in delivering or supporting high-quality research.



OTHER

The primary beneficiaries of the Researcher Development Concordat at the University of Liverpool are those employed to conduct research - particularly those early in their career, including postdoctoral researchers, research associates, research assistants, early career research and tenure track fellows. However, as indicated above, we recognise that the benefits of the Researcher Development Concordat activities extend to other groups of individuals who actively engage in research within the University and who are expected to develop their research identity as part of their career progression. These include staff on teaching and research or teaching-only contracts, research-related professional support staff and technicians whom we include in representation on the University's Concordat Steering Group.

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*)

Environment and culture

Implementation of the Concordat: Faculties to appoint Concordat Champions / Ambassadors, who will be tasked with leading implementation of the Concordat. (Related to Concordat Clause ECI1)

Mental health and wellbeing strategies: Introduce a peer Mental Health wellbeing ambassador scheme for postdocs and technicians using Wellcome ISSF funding to support dedicated EDI & Wellbeing post for co-ordinating. (Related to Concordat Clause ECI3)

Highest standards of behaviour: All Faculties continue to raise awareness and encourage use of the University's Report+ Support reporting tool via staff meetings, handbooks, induction material and webpages (Related to Concordat Clause ECR4)

Employment

Researcher induction: Launch of the University's central Social Onboarding Hub for a seamless induction process. (Related to Concordat Clause EI2)

People management: Faculties to roll out good practice in providing guidance and training for Managers / PIs on carrying out PDRs for research staff to ensure they provide a comprehensive, clear and fair PDR. (Related to Concordat Clause EI5)

Recruitment and promotion: Raise awareness amongst PIs of the opportunity to include in their grant proposals the appropriate funding to support the promotion of the research staff, where appropriate and eligible, working on the grant. (Related to Concordat Clause EM2)

Performance review discussions: Researchers to provide detailed documentation in support of performance review reflecting on key achievements and highlighting any barriers to the achievement of objectives. (Related to Concordat Clause ER3)

Professional Development of Researchers

<p>10 days professional development: Cultivate the University’s provision for supporting researchers to balance the delivery of their research and their own professional development. Researchers to be provided with information reiterating that Professional Development takes a variety of forms. (Related to Concordat Clause PCDI1)</p> <p>Exploring and preparing for a diversity of careers: Prosper Project Participants will be monitored throughout the cohort journey including mandatory reflective journal entries, attendance at focus groups and pulse surveys that will provide insights into the experience of participating in the cohort. (Related to Concordat Clause PCDM2)</p> <p>Research identity & leadership skills: Develop a context-based hybrid leadership offer that provides high quality opportunities for research leaders to engage in targeted development alongside their peers. (Related to Concordat Clause PCDM5)</p> <p>The wider research system: Build on the successful ‘Making an Impact Series to offer further high-quality development to all research and related staff and further develop its Research and Innovation capacity-building sessions (Related to Concordat Clause PCDR6)</p>	
<p>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]</p>	
<p>Environment and Culture (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution: A celebration event for researchers took place on 7th July 2022. Principal investigators, managers of researchers, postgraduate researchers and research staff peers nominated individual researchers to celebrate their achievements, successes and strengths as researchers, appreciating and recognising their contributions. 43 researchers were invited, out of which 36 attended. The event involved a morning workshop followed by a BBQ social on campus. The event was to celebrate the achievements, successes and strengths of researchers at the University of Liverpool. It provided an opportunity for those that attended to connect and engage with other researchers and to explore the strengths, motivations and contributions, researchers bring and to become further aware of how to articulate and build on them. Nominations spoke of the important</p>

contribution the researchers make to University life and the inspiration and support they provide to others. The nominations can be found at:

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/celebrating-success/time-to-shine/> The morning workshop began with a video from Professor Anthony Hollander, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact where he spoke of his pride in the commitment and dedication of researchers at the University and thanked them for all their amazing work. The rest of the workshop involved short presentations and activities to help everyone engage with one another and connect. Buddy pairs and group discussions enabled the researchers to reflect on who they are at their best, what helps them to be at their best and how they can best recognise and appreciate all that they do. The feedback from those that attended were extremely positive. Details of the day and testimonials were part of an article in the 3rd edition of Pathfinder <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researcher/documents/Newsletter,3rd,edition,Final.pdf>

Academic Managers of Researchers: The Research in an Inclusive and Sustainable Environment (RISE) Project was initiated in September 2020. The Phase 1 report was produced in March 2022, and looked at the differentiated impact of the pandemic upon individuals and communities within our research population. Currently the RISE working groups are meeting and prioritising 3 workstreams led by academic managers of researchers: narrative statement, reading programme., teams-based research approaches.

Researchers: A Postdoc Buddy Scheme was piloted in March 2022. Further details and a report about the scheme can be found at <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/researcher/uol-rsa/buddy-scheme/>. The scheme offered postdocs and early career researchers (i.e. staff on research-only contracts) the chance to meet new colleagues, expand their networks and enrich their experience of the University's research culture in an informal setting. The Buddy Scheme was promoted as an opportunity for postdocs and early career fellows (ECR's) to meet peers at similar career stages across all faculties and to

	<p>build connections outside of their research group and to enhance their professional, research and social frames of reference. The scheme was advertised via the RSA weekly e-bulletins and the University of Liverpool RSA twitter account and participants were asked to complete a simple expression of interest form. The questions on this form included: name, department, email address and why you want to participate in the buddy scheme. 62 colleagues signed up to take part altogether, and their feedback includes:</p> <p><i>“It was amazing to connect with someone who could say, let me know if you need anything for your research from my end!.....” and “I really enjoyed hearing views from other parts of the University, but also making connections with someone from my own department who I'd simply never met before!”</i></p>
<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution: The RISE project is overseen by the Research and Impact Strategy Committee (RISC) and delivered by a Project Group working across the faculties and with a range of representatives from across our staff networks. These include the <u>BAME Network</u>, the <u>LGBT+ Network</u>, the <u>Disabled Staff Network</u>, the <u>Research Staff Association</u>, <u>Athena Swan</u>, <u>The Academy</u> and others. The RISE project board and all three RISE working groups includes a mix of colleagues from all three faculties, all career stages and from all the staff networks. 11 PDRA representatives continue feeding into developing policies as the project evolves.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers: By way of a local example, the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences’ Management Office has rolled out standardised job description template to be adopted by all institutes. The Faculty’s induction review group is also in the process of seeking direct feedback from postdocs appointed within the last 6 months to identify where additional targeting maybe required at departmental, institute and faculty level.</p> <p>Researchers: The RSA co-chairs continue to rotate annually and are recruited from all different faculties. Currently there are 11 members of the RSA, 4 co- Chairs (1 from HSS, 2 from HLS and 1 from S&E), 7 deputy co-Chairs (5 from HLS and 2</p>

	<p>from S&E). <u>Terms of Reference for the RSA</u> were reviewed with the RSA in July 2022 and continues to be updated annually.</p>
<p>Professional development (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution: The Academy’s annual series of development opportunities, Making an Impact, is designed to support and enhance research impact for academic, research and research-related staff across the University. The Series has been recognised nationally as Making an Impact was shortlisted for the <u>prestigious national PraxisAuril KE Award</u> for Academic Engagement of the Year in 2021. More recently, in October 2022, the Series has been showcased as the sector exemplar for engaging academics during Universities UK (UUK)’s <u>Knowledge Exchange Concordat Implementation Series</u>. In 2022, taking place over 5 weeks, Making an Impact 2022 sessions were delivered by Vice Chancellors, the Metro Mayor of Liverpool, Chief Executives, leading academics, professional bodies, equity and diversity specialists, University of Liverpool alumni, research impact leaders, external and internal facilitators and consisted of a mixture of workshops, webinars, keynotes, masterclasses, panel discussions, and 1:1 career consultations. Over 100 external and internal speakers provided 66 development sessions, 60 of which were delivered live, with over 1320 registrations from 700 individuals. The Making an Impact Resource Hub is themed by key research-impact objectives which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Boost your academic research impact and knowledge exchange potential.</u> • <u>Capture and share information and evidence relating to research impact.</u> • <u>Develop the reach of your research activity, interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration.</u> • <u>Contribute to a positive and inclusive research culture.</u> <p>Further information can be found in the annual report: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researcher/documents/Making,an,Impact,2022,Report,FINAL.pdf</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers: The Research Support Office have created in excess of 300 pages of the Research Ethics Handbook to date, and plan to release a draft version, of the work completed so far, for initial comment in</p>

November/ December. A fixed term post, to 31st July 2025, has been approved in order to drive forward the delivery of training and policies within the area of Ethics and Integrity. This post will encompass the completion of the handbook.

Researchers: The RSA have facilitated several sessions for postdoctoral researchers on how to get the most out of their Professional Development Review (PDR). The following information is shared in the weekly e-bulletins during the 3-4 months before and during PDR season:

- “Getting the most from your PDR/appraisal” (recorded workshop)
- Postdoc Career Conversations (Prosper portal resource accessible to all LivUni research staff – including 5 minute video on how to have a career conversation with your PI)
- It’s all about you: making your PDR fit with your personal and professional goals (recorded webinar)
- A Researcher Hub blog post on Difficult Conversations – are you ready? , written for postdoctoral and early career researchers by a career development and leadership coach, provides advice on how to have a difficult conversation with a manager.
- ‘How to Manage a Tricky Conversation with your Manager’ (recorded workshop)
- All research staff PDR conversations should be underpinned by the University’s Statement of Expectations for PIs and Research Staff and the University’s comprehensive Guidance for the Researcher Annual Professional Development Allowance.

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)

The implementation of the Concordat has been facilitated through 5 dedicated workshops with CSG members during 2022. These workshops supported members to review progress, collate input from key stakeholders, share effective practice across Faculties, ensure alignment, accelerate decision making and enable efficient communication around research staff experiences. These collaborative processes

have been integral to ensuring clear oversight of our performance against our actions and mean that we can report 100% engagement with the progress reporting and consultation in relation to our Jan-Dec 2022 progress report and Jan-Dec 2023 forward actions, from 16 UoL academic departments, across all three Faculties. Consequently, we will continue to embed this approach and model of Concordat planning and consultation across the institution.

Data from the 2020 and 2021 CEDARS surveys (35% and 32% response rates respectively) indicated that research staff identified effective communication as the main opportunity for further improvement. As such, the UoL RSA continues to provide a critical forum for discussion of researcher development and research culture progress and priorities. All weekly RSA e-bulletins contain a separate section on Concordat-related updates and information, including signposting resources related to wellbeing, EDI, bullying and harassment, HR policies and guidance for research staff on using their 10 days of professional development, for instance. We will continue to draw on the outcomes of these institution-wide consultation processes to encourage conversations with the research staff community.

The RSA organises annual Concordat consultation sessions with its 920 postdoc members. In May 2022, a Lunch and Learn session on ‘What does the Concordat mean for me?’ featured an interactive panel session of postdocs. The panel discussed their role in the Concordat at Liverpool and how it helps improve the research environment with examples of key Liverpool Concordat initiatives. A [recording](#) (intranet access only) is available on the Researcher Hub and promoted via the weekly RSA e bulletin. Specifically signposted was the [Module on The Researcher Development Concordat for University of Liverpool Staff](#). This new development module is the first of its kind in the Higher Education sector nationally and further embodies the University’s focus on sector-leading researcher development. It aims to further enhance the career and professional development of researchers, managers of researchers and professional colleagues supporting our researcher community. It serves to foster conversations that nurture a positive and inclusive culture in which researchers take responsibility for the development of their personal and professional practice

Moving forward, the University will continue centralised inclusion of the Concordat Module in the PDR form and on the training website which is obligatory for 100% of PDR reviewers. This will be carried forward at local levels through inclusion of the Concordat module in the PDR handbooks for managers. The new Concordat module will also be signposted to all new staff / grant winners via the Research

Support Office, and a link to the Statement of Expectations will continue to be provided in the RSA weekly e bulletin and welcome email to new starters.

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

The impact and engagement of the Academy's Researcher Talent Development activities continues to grow exponentially year after year from less than 40 registrations and 8 activities in 2017 to 5000+ individuals and 100+ sector-leading activities in 2022. The numbers capture annual engagement figures across all central RD activities and the growth is evidence of the success of the synergies we have been able to realise, by interweaving our researcher development and research culture enhancement activities and embedding 'joined-up' thinking at the heart of our Academy RD approach. The numbers above are also indicative of the increasingly note-worthy reputation that the RD Team continues to garner across the University as it engages all research-related staff to embrace new ways of learning, novel technologies and giving individuals agency over how they learn and how they can continue to look beyond existing institutional silos.

There are a huge range of Concordat activities and priorities being driven at more local levels. Specific faculty examples include:

- The Faculty of Health and Life Sciences is developing APP (Academic Portfolio Planning) to facilitate better management of workload balance, how the introduction of workload model for standard T&R and T&S staff, what that means to postdocs and how it will impact them, possibly additional question on PDR about workload and mental health reviews. Also will highlight the option that if they feel for whatever reason their mental health is affected because of their workload, then that should be flagged to mental health and wellbeing ambassador.
- School research leads in the Faculty of Science and Engineering are to undertake the role of Concordat Champions. This is being embedded into the role descriptor for the school research leads. They will report progress quarterly into the Faculty Research and Impact Committee and annual into the Faculty Management Team. Nominated PS colleague in each school will support the Concordat Champions, either research team leader or Head of Operations, in particular with progress reports.
- The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences continues to build on it's successful Derby Fellowship tenure track scheme by exploring retention

and development opportunities across faculty for staff nearing end of contract on fixed term positions. Ongoing work includes effective use of Faculty Research Development Fund for supporting large, ambitious bids, involving postdocs as named researchers for those coming to close of contract; open advertising of postdoctoral opportunities via Faculty bulletin and newsletters; and external funding leverage to support those on fixed term contracts, e.g. Unilever Archives funding support for postdocs.

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*)

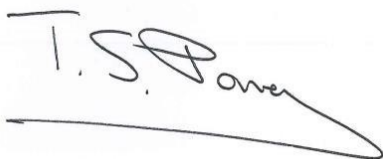
The Concordat Steering Group (CSG) reports to the Research and Impact Committee, creating alignment to other R&I activities and, in turn, reports to the Planning and Resources Committee and Council (the University's governing body). Additionally, through the leadership of the PVC R&I, the authority of the CSG, and the Academy's coordination, the outcomes of the review and the implications of the forward action plan will continue to be aligned to parallel QA and monitoring mechanisms. In particular, close alignment with our Athena Swan Award renewal in 2022, Technician Commitment Action Plan, the University's Race Equality Charter submission and reporting to Research England, as required for the Prosper Project, is designed to segue with the requirements of the Concordat, given the close relationship between these pieces of work and the direct responsibility that CSG members have for these QA mechanisms.

Since the University became a signatory to the revised UK Concordat in July 2020, Council has received and agreed the University's Concordat documentation annually at its meetings on the following dates:

- 9th February 2021
- 10th February 2022
- 9th February 2023

The unreserved minutes of the University of Liverpool Council's recent business meetings, including information about approval of the Concordat reports and forward action plans are available at [this page](#).

Signature on behalf of governing body:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. S. Jones', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Professor Tim Jones, Vice-Chancellor

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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