



HR Excellence in Research Report 2020

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/>

The period 2015-19 covered by this report has seen Liverpool continue to enhance its reputation as a leading Russell Group University with research excellence at the heart of institutional strategy and practice. This success has, at its core, a continuous focus on the support available to staff, including the University's diverse and talented research communities. As a large institution with over 6000 employees, including approximately 880 Early Career Researchers and 550 research managers across a number of roles, this represents an ongoing investment in development that recognises our staff as our greatest asset.

This approach has foregrounded the principles of the Concordat and the mechanisms and structures required to effectively realise the benefits to research staff. Indeed, the 2016-21 Research & Impact Strategy makes clear that the University's work is 'first and foremost about our people; creating the right environment and supporting our researchers at every career stage.' ([Strategy 2026](#), p10).

In the two years since the 2017 HREinR review, Liverpool has continued to transform research and impact governance in order to prioritise research staff development and ensure the effective management of Concordat related activities. A new Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for the Research Environment and Postgraduate Research has been appointed and enhanced reporting structures, established since 2017, now provide a robust framework for the implementation and monitoring of support for research staff. The UoL [Research and Impact Committee \(RIC\)](#) oversees the development and implementation of strategies, policies and frameworks and the enhancement of the University research environment. RIC receives regular updates from the [Concordat Steering Group \(CSG\)](#) and, in turn, reports to [Senate](#) and [Council](#) and to the [Planning and Resources Committee](#). The PVC Research & Impact chairs both RIC and the CSG, ensuring close alignment between the two. The CSG provides the key operational mechanism for driving forward initiatives within our institutional Action Plan and is constituted to enable real, on the ground activity to happen, whilst ensuring support from the University's senior leaders. Critically, the CSG includes significant representation from the researcher community at all levels, ensuring a consistent reflection on the realities of the researcher experience at Liverpool. [Terms of reference and membership of the CSG](#) are reviewed on an annual cycle and the work of the Group is fully embedded within the operation of the University. Both the RIC and the CSG membership includes research staff representatives from across the University's three faculties and the UoL [Research Staff Association Steering Group](#).

Responsibility for managing the HREinR process sits within the [Leadership, Organisational, Professional and Academic Development Academy \(The Academy\)](#), which was established in 2017 as a centre of excellence in the development of practice at the University. The Academy receives significant investment from the University to support the effective coordination of development activities for all academic, research, professional and technical posts, enabling synergies and cross-overs between staff groups to be foregrounded. For instance, the Academy leads institutional initiatives on the [Technician Commitment](#) [intranet link], which segue with the Concordat's support for the diversity of staff roles engaged in delivering or supporting high-quality research. The Academy works in partnership with a range of stakeholders internally and externally, including the [N8 Research Partnership](#), Russell Group fora ([Researchers14](#)), European collaborators and business and third sector organisations. In addition, expertise within the Academy's Researcher Development Team has led to active leadership and engagement within the [UKRSA](#), [Vitae](#) and the [European Educational Research Association \(EERA\)](#), enabling a broader knowledge base to inform our work.

2. The Review Process

Having held the HREinR Award for eight years, effective internal review processes are embedded within organisational practices.

2.1 How the internal evaluation was undertaken

Centrally, progress against the 2017-2019 HREinR action plan is reviewed on a 6-8-week basis by CSG. In addition, 4 facilitated workshops were conducted with CSG, between May 2019 and December 2019, to directly inform the review of our current actions and the proposed actions for the forward action plan. Drafts of all documentation have been shared with CSG on a rolling basis, enabling all members, including research staff representatives, to support the on-going reiteration of our monitoring and to co-design our response to actions requiring further attention. Delivery on the 2017-19 actions and our ability to report on them has, of course, had to respond and adapt to a changing institutional context and wider drivers effecting UK Higher Education, including significant political uncertainty. Throughout, the University has worked hard to ensure that the impact of local and institutional initiatives focused on research staff development is maintained and effectively recorded.

2.2 How Researcher's views were taken into account

Evidence for the review has been drawn from a number of available sources. Data from the 2019 CROS (23.91% response rate), PIRLS (25.27% response rate) and the last UoL 2016 Staff Survey (completed by 1,219 research staff) has been utilised, alongside feedback from researcher development programmes and events. Key information has been sourced from the [UoL RSA](#), providing a realistic interpretation of progress to date. The latter is incredibly useful in shaping the 2020-2022 action plan and ensuring its focus on the principles and activities that genuinely require attention. In addition, two postdoc consultation events were undertaken in October 2018 and again in October 2019 to consider the impact of the plan on current UoL Postdoc Researchers, what has worked well and what could be improved during 2020-2022. These consultations provided research staff with the opportunity to explore topics in depth, complementing and contextualising the broader CROS 2019 results.

The December 2019 Research Staff Association Conference included a dedicated consultation related to the Concordat. Delegates were asked to provide responses to four questions (below), in response to a keynote by the PVC Research & Impact. The response to these questions has directly informed the drafting of the UoL Concordat Action Plan and into the HREinR reporting process:

1. *Write three words which would characterise poor postdoc career development training for you.* (Responses included: 'too focused on academic skills'; 'stage-specific training as everyone has different background'; 'lack of transferable skills; no time and reduced networking opportunities')
2. *Write three words which would characterise useful postdoc career development training for you.* (Responses included: 'development resources help'; 'alternative careers; confidence building'; 'networking; experience in industries'; 'Time; mentorship; support')
3. *What is the next training opportunity you're going to seek out for your development?* (Responses included: 'workshop organisation'; 'Leadership & management training'; 'Tenure-track fellowship'; 'specific skills for my research'; 'finance/budget management');

‘Teaching qualification in higher education’).

4. *What might prevent you from exploring job options beyond academia?* (Responses included: ‘negative attitude of the PI - unwilling to allow time to develop as a researcher’; ‘being unsure how to access the non-academic job market and whether or not my skills would fit in’; ‘Employers culture & idea about postdocs’; ‘Gaps in skills required for roles’).

To triangulate these responses, delegates were asked, in a final session, for ideas on the development activities they would like to see the University prioritise. Their answers indicated three key areas of focus: (a) professional and career development opportunities within academia and outside of academia; (b) mentoring for researchers; and (c) information for researchers going on or returning from maternity, paternity, adoption or parental leave. As a result, these areas are reflected in the 2020-2022 action plan.

2.3 How the review links with existing QA and other monitoring mechanisms

Through the leadership of the PVC Research & Impact, 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 to the [Technician Commitment Action Plan](#) provides a number of future opportunities. Similarly, formal reporting on our Athena Swan agenda and to Research England, as required by the funded [Prosper Project](#), is designed to segue with the requirements of the Concordat, given the close relationship between these pieces of work. Finally, the imminent refresh of the University’s 2026 Strategy by the Senior Leadership Team, provides a further opportunity to embed the principles of the Concordat within both our cultural expectations and reporting mechanisms.

3. Key Achievements and Progress in Implementing the Concordat at the University of Liverpool

The university’s progress in implementing the Concordat over the preceding period 2015-19 ([Appendix 1](#)), is represented in the selected key indicators highlighted below against each Principle.

Principle 1: Recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers

- The TTF Scheme has been expanded from HLS into HSS. In 2017-2019, there were 31 TTFs appointed in HLS, 3 in S&E and 8 in HSS, indicating a 75% increase in TTFs across the three Faculties.
- Of the 77 TTFs appointed since 2012, 43 are women (56% female), which is in line with the over representation of women at PDRA.
- To date, UoL has received £6.25m from the [Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund](#) (ISSF) to support of high-quality researcher recruitment, retention, career development for research staff, and public engagement. ISSF funding has been used to fund short-term bridging for junior post-doctoral researchers; support the activities and events of postdoctoral networks; provide funds for public engagement activities that fall within the remit of the Wellcome Trust; and the University has also committed to contributing match funding for all fellowship posts
- HR provide a process by which individual researchers can bring forward their own cases for promotion. Information regarding the Annual Promotion and Reward Reviews (‘Annual Review’), including headline information, timetable, guidance and application documents is available via a dedicated web resource on the University’s intranet.

Principle 2: Researchers are recognised and valued

- In February 2018, the Academy facilitated the creation of the [University of Liverpool Research Staff Association \(UoL RSA\)](#) in partnership with the UKRSA and Vitae. The UoL RSA is a research community-owned and led initiative by a [Steering Group](#) consisting of 31 members representing all the University’s research institutes and departments. Upon commencement of their contracts, research staff automatically become members of the UoL RSA, which offers 6-weekly lunch and learn sessions, a Summer Wellbeing event and an Annual Conference. The UoL RSA coordinated activities marking [International Postdoc Appreciation Week 2019](#). The UoL RSA has representation on the University’s CSG and the RIC. The Research Staff Association Evaluation Reports for [2018](#) and [2019](#) captures their successes and future plans. (See [Appendix 3: Case Study](#)).
- The University has recently announced that Postdocs will be allocated 10 days personal development per year, as captured in the recently [revised Statement of Expectations](#). Clarity regarding this allowance and all other agreed duties and responsibilities, is provided to Postdocs by HoDs and PIs during induction and via the PDR process.
- Dedicated [Researcher pages](#) have been created that highlight career and development opportunities and resources and link to the [RSA](#) and internal and external staff materials. These pages also contain a searchable database of case studies that recognise the contributions and achievements of our research staff. Each month, an ECR is highlighted in the University’s [Research and Impact newsletter](#), and these [case studies](#) are added to The Academy’s Researcher pages.
- The [University mentoring scheme](#) [intranet link] is open to all staff. Of the 880 research staff at Liverpool, there are 151 researchers that are registered as mentees and 66 that are registered as mentors. This indicates a 25% engagement of researchers with mentoring activity.

Principle 3 – Researchers are equipped and supported for the increasingly diverse, mobile and global research environment

- The UoL flagship [Making an Impact](#) series, aligned with the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) is designed to respond to Liverpool’s research staff diversity and their ability to engage with development. Building on the [2018](#) success, in [2019](#), it took place over 7 weeks; 150 external and internal speakers provided 58 development sessions, with over 1300 registrations from 600 individuals who engaged to develop their multi-disciplinary research-impact related knowledge, skills, attributes and competencies. (See [Appendix 3: Case Study](#)).
- All three Faculties across the University have active local ECR and Researcher forums that offer structured support for those at an earlier career stage or on dedicated research contracts. Researchers representing the above-mentioned groups and other individual ECRs and postdocs across the University, are part of the University’s Research Staff Association (RSA) [Steering Committee](#). This enables a bottom-up approach, whilst also ensuring top-down cascading of relevant information from the RSA and Faculties within local contexts.

Principle 4 – A researcher’s personal and career development is recognised and promoted

- In 2019, the University was awarded £3.6M by from the new Research England Development Fund for the innovative £4.4M Prosper Project, the first award of its kind. [‘Prosper: Enhancing first-time postdoctoral career development and success’](#), will design a new model of Postdoctoral and PI development in collaboration with employers, funders and stakeholders from across HE and the wider economy. Prosper aligns with the People Strand of the UK Government’s Industrial Strategy and aims to ‘democratise’ access to development for all Postdoctoral researchers, enabling Postdocs, irrespective of background, to maximise their opportunities to succeed across multiple career pathways within and, crucially, beyond academia.
- Through the Academy, a range of teaching development routes are open to research staff, at all levels of teaching experience. In September 2018, the AFHEA accredited [FLTHE programme](#) was launched to provide an introductory award for those with limited teaching experience. The Programme, run multiple times a year, provides researchers and other relevant groups of staff with both formal professional recognition against the UK PSF (upon successful completion) and a network of peers with shared development goals. Since the launch of the programme, over 200 staff have either graduated, enrolled or are waiting to commence engagement with the FLTHE. Research staff can also engage with the

University's HEA accredited CPD Scheme, [ULTRA](#), which provides a more flexible, non-taught route to professional recognition for those with appropriate backgrounds and experience.

Principle 5 – Researchers share the responsibility for their own personal and career development

- A revised Induction framework was launched in September 2018 that encourages an early PDR to be held with staff to discuss development needs and goals. A local checklist was introduced for all PIs conducting induction with new researchers. Personal development planning (PDP) and career trajectory is discussed with all new research staff during their first PDR, scheduled within first 3 months of appointment. PDR completion for research staff stood at 82.8% in 2018 and increased in 2019 to 90.1%. Since 2017, the University's [Statement of Expectations](#) is actively signposted to both reviewers and reviewees through this process.
- The University's Research ethics policy was updated in October 2018, and awareness raising initiatives were undertaken to help notify researchers of the change and to help them enhance their practice. The University offers online modules on research integrity and ethics, which form a mandatory part of the University's induction training for all new research and related staff. There were 836 completions of this module between 2017-2019. In 2018, the University established a team to review all aspects of the University's approach to the [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#). The team produced a set of conclusions and recommendations on how the University's research integrity framework may be further optimised that are now being operationalised.
- An annual increase in the institutional Open Access fund from £300,000 to £400,000 was secured during the period 2018-2019. This institutional money is additional to the external grants researchers receive from the Research Councils and the Charity Open Access Fund. This fund is open to all researchers on a first come first served basis, regardless of career stage, discipline, or identity of journal.

Principle 6 – Diversity and equality

- All members of staff are required to complete the online mandatory Diversity & Equality Training as part of the induction process and to renew this training every 3 years. As of November 2019, 84.4% of academic staff had completed the module. (See 1.2.2 of 2020-2022 Action Plan)
- The University is committed to providing an environment which recognises and values people's differences, capitalises on the strengths that those differences bring to the institution and supports all research staff in maximising their potential to succeed. This commitment is made with specific reference to a person's individual characteristics. The University of Liverpool is a member of the following D&E charters: [Athena SWAN Charter](#); [Bambis Breastfeeding Mayoral Charter](#); [Disability Confident](#); [Stonewall Diversity Champion](#) [intranet link]; and [Time to Change](#) [intranet link].
- The University migrated from the Two Ticks Scheme to [Level 2 Disability Confident](#) in September 2016, the Government's new disability charter in employment. The University successfully renewed the charter in September 2017 for a further 2 years.
- There are a number of different ways that research staff can get involved in diversity and equality through committees, forums, [staff networks and groups](#). This includes the [Black & Minority Ethnic Staff Network](#) [intranet link], the [Disabled Staff network](#) [intranet link], the [Female Early Career Researcher Network](#) [intranet link] and the [Liverpool Women in Science and Engineering Society \(LivWiSE\)](#).
- The University received the [Athena SWAN](#) Silver Institutional Award in 2016. More recently, in August 2019, support from Advance HE was secured for the continuation of Athena SWAN Awards currently held by existing Institutes during the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences major restructure. Over the last five years the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences has been at the forefront of driving positive change for gender equality, winning the first of the University's Athena SWAN awards in 2015 and gaining an [Athena SWAN gold award](#) (in the Institute of Integrative Biology) in 2018.

Principle 7 – Undertaking regular review of progress in strengthening research careers in the UK

- The University participated in both CROS (response rate: 23.91%) and PIRLS (response rate: 25.27%) surveys which continue to inform local and pan-institutional research staff development initiatives.
- The last UoL Staff Survey was run in November 2016. A completion rate of 57% equated to nearly 3,500 staff. Of these, 1,219, (i.e. 35.4%) were research staff. The results from the last Staff Survey led to improvements key areas such as the 2018 development of an [online wellbeing hub](#) [intranet link] and the Academy's [online learning zone](#) [intranet link].
- The University's continued support for researcher development has been further evidenced by the appointment of a further permanent Research Staff Developer within the Academy and the long-term commitment to continue to maintain the outcomes of the Prosper Project, following the end of the funding period, including the continuation of two further research support roles.

4. Key Actions and success measures for 2020-2022/2024

Our strategy to support the career development of our research staff over the next two to four years is heavily influenced by the new [UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) (published in September 2019) and Liverpool will become a signatory of the new UK Researcher Development Concordat in early 2020. Many of the areas that had been given specific focus within previous action plans, are now considered business as usual at Liverpool, an indicator of the positive change that has occurred. The University's 2020-2022 action plan ([Appendix 2](#)) outlines in detail a range of interventions to further our support and development of research and related staff. Below are a selection of strategic actions and/or collaborative projects that we believe will positively impact on the culture of development at Liverpool and that resonate with new UK Researcher Development Concordat.

Focus/ Target Group	Strategic Objectives (by Principle)	Success Measure(s)	Achieved by
Researcher recruitment and employment	Research, design and publish 'effective practice' guidance on all aspects of Postdoc recruitment and employment (Inc. cultural transition, return to work, extended leave, parental rights) [Principle 1]	Guidance disseminated to 100% research managers / PIs and related roles through targeted communications. 100% research staff made aware of guidance via the UoL RSA and associated channels, including Athena Swan Faculty Groups. Ensure effective feedback loops from ECR Networks and Reps to monitor impact on practice. (See 1.2.4 of 2020-2022 Action Plan)	June 2021
Institutional policy and researcher engagement	Design & launch new obligatory role-related training module that explains the Researcher Development Concordat Principles & responsibilities for staff [Principles 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7]	Launch of the online Researcher Development Concordat module for all relevant staff groups (via targeted comms). Completion of obligatory role-related module by at least 20% new grant holders within six months of beginning grant. (See 1.2.5 and also 2.2.2, 3.10.2, 5.3.2 & 7.1.1 of 2020-2022 Action Plan)	May 2020 Rolling monitoring, with May 2021 assessment

Focus/ Target Group	Strategic Objectives (by Principle)	Success Measure(s)	Achieved by
Managers of Researchers	Review and enhance research leadership development offer as key strand of wider L&M development review (Phase2) [Principles 2, 3 & 4] (See of 2020-2022 AP)	A clear Research Leadership development pathway is articulated within the renewed Phase 2 L&M Portfolio. This explicitly links to the Statement of Expectations 10 Research Leaders identified within the Senior Leadership Induction and bespoke mentoring, planning and support made available Focus on the leadership of research practice embedded within the design of the Heilbron Executive Leadership Programme [intranet link] (See 2.3.1 and also 3.2.4, 3.5.2 & 3.10.1 of the 2020-2022 Action Plan)	December 2020 On-going in line with Senior Induction cycle February 2020
Researcher Careers	Prosper Project will be co-created with a broad range of employers will gather inputs on best practice in staff development from a range of sectors which will inform the development of the Prosper model and associated resources. [Principles 1, 3, 4, 5 & 7]	Prosper resources made available to 100% research staff within UoL and project partner institutions, with gradual roll out through N8 and wider sector 45 employers engaged in co-creation of career development activities as part of Prosper Project Phase 1 of portal delivered by June 2020. Numbers of users engaging with portal will be evaluated and feedback gathered to refine and improve its effectiveness before roll out across project partners at University of Manchester and Lancaster University by June 2021 (See 3.1.1 and 3.3.1 also 1.2.4, 3.2.1-3.2.4, 3.5.2, 3.10.1, 5.5.1 and 7.1.1 of the 2020-2022 Action Plan)	As per Prosper timelines June 2021 June 2020 and June 2021
Research environment	Ensure that the implications of the University's renewed Promotion Criteria are made clear to research staff, supporting their ability to effectively build their professional profiles and career planning [Principles 2 & 3]	Bespoke guidance on new Promotion Criteria for researchers disseminated via liaison with Faculty teams and Researcher Hub and RSA. Number of applications for promotion from relevant staff groups monitored following launch to establish a benchmark for ongoing effective practice. (See 3.5.1 and also 2.6.1 of the 2020-2022 Action Plan)	In line with 2020-2022 Promotion Project timescales
Dedicated time for researchers' development	Processes in place to monitor dissemination and implementation of the agreed ten days of development time for research staff [Principles 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6]	Faculty Research & Impact Committees will actively monitor the dissemination and implementation of the Statement of Expectations , reporting annually to RIC on time allocated to development and impact on local contexts Develop an online 'living' resource that research staff can access to explore what the ten days of development activities could include (See 3.6.1 and also 2.4.2, 3.10.2, 5.5.1 & 6.4.1 of the 2020-2022 Action Plan)	October 2020 onwards with agreed improvements via annual reporting December 2020
Researcher recognition and representation	Maximise opportunities for research staff to engage in formal and informal working groups, committees and organisational meetings, including those focused on policy development [Principles 2, 3 & 4]	Numbers of research staff engaging in the below activities will be audited on an annual basis to monitor engagement and enhance participation: - RSA and local research staff networks actively engaged in policy development through representation on at least two pan-University policy-making committees - At least one representative of the UoL RSA or local research networks directly represented at organisational meetings, as appropriate with each Faculty (See 3.13.1 and also 2.2.6, 2.6.1 & 3.3.2 of the 2020-2022 Action Plan)	June 2020 January 2021
Mentoring for Researchers and Managers of Researchers	Further develop and enhance centrally coordinated and locally embedded mentoring schemes and opportunities, to support the personal and professional development of researchers [Principles 3, 4 & 5]	Evaluate the take up of University-wide and local coaching and mentoring schemes and aim to increase researcher engagement with the mentoring schemes by 5%. Use university wide communication through The Academy / HR / RSA/ Faculty channels to promote the schemes (See 3.8.1 and also 3.10.2 & 5.6.1 of the 2020-2022 Action Plan)	October 2020 and then continuing increase

Recognising that engagement in professional and career development is an individual choice, UoL remains unequivocally committed to continue offering the best possible, high-quality support for all researchers, providing opportunities and developing initiatives that meet their aspirations.