

## Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan 2023-2026

This action plan was developed by the Developing Excellent Researchers (DER) committee in open consultation with researchers across the institution, principal investigators and line managers from all three faculties and professional services colleagues, meeting in-person and online between October 2022 and March 2023.

Enhancement of the Researcher Development Concordat lies within a wider body of work to improve the Research Culture for the entire Newcastle University research community. University-wide consultations with the community were conducted in 2021, including a first institutional Research Culture Survey (2022). Researchers and their managers contributed significantly to the consultation, and their experiences and ideas fed directly into the Newcastle University Research Culture Action Plan (RCAP) creation. This Action Plan was constructed around five primary pillars – broad experiences that we want every member of the research community to be exposed to:

- Have the time, space and opportunities to be creative and enjoy discovering new things;
- Be supported in your career aspirations and decision-making, as well as your continuing personal and professional development;
- Feel part of an inclusive, supportive and safe research environment, where you and your ideas can flourish;
- Be encouraged to embrace best practices and new ways of working to improve the quality and reach of research, either your own or that of others; and
- Be recognised and valued for your diverse contributions to research.

Our commitments to the development of our researchers align with our five pillars of research culture. By embedding this work within our goals for research culture, we ensure a focused approach across the institution that benefits our researchers and the wider research community.

Final approval of the plan was given by the University Research and Innovation Committee (*month*) 2023

Priorities key	
Green	Topics that the DER would like to address
Yellow	Faculties will co-ordinate
Blue	Existing projects

Have the time, space and opportunities to be creative and enjoy discovering new things					
Defining Concordat Principle: Professional and Career Development					
Aim	Action	ID	Timeline	Responsibility	Milestones (M)/Measure of success (S)
Provide equitable access for all researchers to relevant funding opportunities to develop their own research identity and direction.	Bring together and/or regularly promote relevant funding opportunities (particularly discipline hopping awards, conferences, and small project grants) to raise awareness of what's available for developing research ideas.	CAP01	Y2	Research Funding Development Managers (RFDMs)	M: Signposting to funding opportunities are in place and well signposted in each faculty e.g. opportunities are flagged to Directors of Research and Research Managers at FRIC meetings. S: Increased awareness through regular checks with researcher networks (and where awareness is lacking, increase promotion as appropriate).
	Develop an Undergraduate Vacation Scholarship style scheme (undergraduate assistant) open to all researchers.	CAP02	Y1	Vacation scholarship Team, Research Culture Team, DER, Researcher Network	M: UG Vacation scholarship scheme launched and evaluated. S: Case studies of positive outcomes (e.g. data underpinning fellowship applications, co-authorship of output with undergraduate).
Work with funders to include time for creativity and developing ideas by researchers within project grants.	Consultation with researchers, principal investigators and funders will be undertaken by researchers and presented to funders by researcher representatives. To consider: (1) if time can be included in projects at the point of application; and (2) researchers can take 'time out' of current project.	CAP03	Y3	Organisational Development (OD), Research Culture Team	M: Consultations completed, with meeting/s between funders, principal investigators and researchers on how best to create time within a standard 'post-doc' to develop ideas for future career development. S: Scheme(s) set up and supporting new ideas and career development, evidenced through case studies.
Provide and promote networking opportunities across disciplines.	Promote opportunities for existing cross-disciplinary thinking (e.g. Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs), special interest groups, academies, seminars via induction and researcher networks). Be clear on what is on offer and how researchers can get involved to create a welcoming environment for researchers.	CAP04	Y1	Skills Academy, faculty researcher leads, NUCoREs, Academies, OD, RFDMs	M: Production of an appropriate information pack incorporated into induction materials and regularly presented at researcher meetings. S: Increased awareness and take-up of opportunities by researchers (measured through specific groups e.g. NUCoREs).

Improve signposting for expertise and equipment availability in the institution.	Use a campaign such as 'Tech Tok' short 20-second videos introducing parts of the University and/or available facilities.	CAP05	Y2-3	Skills Academy, cross-faculty technical teams	M: Delivery and engagement with the campaign. S: Evaluate awareness via researcher, PI and technical networks, analytics and address gaps.
Provide research leadership and management training for researchers.	Develop one-day intensive training (e.g. 'bite-sized' Principal Investigator Development Programme') linked to the researcher leadership framework.	CAP06	Y2	OD, Skills Academy	M: Design and delivery of University-wide leadership training for researchers, with evaluation feeding future development. S: High awareness and positive feedback, including case studies of personal impact.

**Be supported in your career aspirations and decision-making, as well as your continuing personal and professional development**

**Defining Concordat Principle: Environment and Culture**

Aim	Action	ID	Timeline	Responsibility	Milestones (M)/Measure of success (S)
Increase awareness across all colleague groups.	Develop a cross-faculty communication strategy with clear and consistent messaging about the Concordat's commitment for different stakeholders. This will promote: the value of career development for researchers, their managers, and the institution; the '10 days' (what it can be used for, who 'pays' for it, and how it is recorded). Messaging to be embedded in advertising and recruitment of researcher posts, induction, training, and ongoing career development conversations.	CAP07	Y1	DER, Internal Comms and Marketing, People Services, OD. Include on Conversations & Priorities. Induction and Periodic items on Faculty Research and Innovation Committees.	M: Key messages identified and promoted widely through University-wide campaign. S: Regular checks in researcher networks to assure awareness, where awareness is lacking, increase promotion as appropriate
	Hold a prominent celebratory launch event for the new Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan that reinforces key messages and increases awareness.	CAP08	Y1	DER, Faculties	M: Organise event. S: Well attended event by researchers and managers, positive feedback.
	Embed Concordat principles and career development for those employed on grants (researchers and technicians) into projects at the planning and application stages, e.g. in guidance for applicants, Project Initiation Form (PIF) checklist.	CAP09	Y1	RFDMs, Funding Teams	M: Consideration of staff development and awareness of 10 days embedded in guidance and PIFs. S: Time and funding for staff development activities more routinely included in grant applications

	Clear governance and leadership of Concordat for Researchers at University and Faculty levels (including an agreement on communications for 10 development days to be accessible and inclusive for all research community), including identified Professional Service support for Research Associate/assistant networks and networking.	CAP10	Y2	DER Faculties	M: Cross faculty communications agreed and promoted, and available support (including PS support) identified S: Researchers and Managers aware of concordat governance and support available
<b>Defining Concordat Principle: Professional and Career Development</b>					
Know how many researchers and managers engage with relevant training.	Review good practice in the sector and internal systems to develop and implement a process to monitor take-up of the 10 annual career development days by researchers.	CAP11	Y2	Skills Academy, OD	M: Simple system implemented that minimises unnecessary bureaucracy. S: System is used by researchers and of value for recording and reviewing training undertaken. Summary reports generated for DER and faculty use.
Promote a wide range of dedicated training available for researchers towards a wide range of careers.	Deliver Prosper, including mapping skills for different career pathways and promoting the value of careers in and beyond a university research environment (e.g. celebrating alumni, career journeys by alumni). Pilot Prosper cohort delivery with coaching to consider wider adoption.	CAP12	Y2	Skills Academy, Enterprise Academy	M: First cohort completes Prosper and evaluation undertaken. S: Improvement in researchers feeling supported in their career development through surveys and researcher network.
	Deliver Skills Academy as a 'one stop shop' for curated research-related training and development opportunities.	CAP013	Y1	OD (Research Culture Action Plan)	M: Skills Academy delivered and available to all with dedicated space researchers. S: Awareness and uptake of Skills Academy development opportunities.
	Ensure managers support career development opportunities for researchers across the life cycle of a project. Active support (e.g. encouragement and permission to explore available opportunities) or, where appropriate passive (e.g. signposting to relevant information).	CAP014	Y2	OD	M: Managers know where to direct researchers to development opportunities and understand how such opportunities can benefit the researcher, research, manager, and the institution. S: Managers are regularly encouraging researchers to explore opportunities and are doing so themselves (role modelling).

	Evaluate how we promote and support career development mentoring and coaching conversations and build on existing schemes (e.g. NU Mentoring, Career Service, Enterprise Academy Mentoring) to better-fit researcher career development needs and provide safe spaces for career conversations.	CAP015	Y1-3	OD mentoring schemes	M: Establish what mentoring/coaching would be most useful to researchers and feed this back into guidance or change in approach within existing schemes. S: Mentoring/coaching is understood as a valuable tool for researchers, and we see an increase in uptake and encouragement of uptake from managers.
	Embed appropriate guidance and training for managers and researchers in Conversations and Priorities to ensure that conversations are framed to be of value to researchers and, subsequently, to managers. This should include information about promotion processes and career development. Consider ways to promote this, as the existing documentation (92 pages) is a barrier to engagement.	CAP016	Y2	Faculties and unit-level, OD	M: Guidance and training created with appropriate consultation. S: Conversations & Priorities are regularly carried out (across the institution) and considered a genuinely valuable part of the research process for both researchers and managers.
<b>Defining Concordat Principle: Employment</b>					
Consider new career pathways that reduce precarity and retain core skills.	Explore: 'experimental contracts'; and roving researcher scheme.	CAP017	Y1-2	People Services, Grants and contracts, Faculties	M: Evaluate new contracts in use inside and outside the University in relation to how they reduce precarity and build career progression and identify pilot. S: Positive evaluation and sustainability of new models.
	Gather information about the demographics of our researcher community, particularly in relation to years of service to better understand what interventions may be most beneficial.	CAP018	Y2	Research Culture Team, People Services	M: Data collected and analysed from People Services. S: Understanding from the analysis is used to inform interventions.
Reduce precarity for researchers where it is in our gift to do so.	Develop a harmonised NU bridging policy, making it easy for researchers and managers to understand and use.	CAP19	Y2-3	People Services, Faculties	M: Harmonised bridging policy established, and funding routes identified. S: Increasing numbers of researchers across all faculties supported through bridging or based on other actions reduce the need for bridging.

	Offer more security for research fellows to increase creativity and talent retention. Consider when more permanent contracts can be offered to long-term employees.	CAP20	Y2-3	People Services, Newcastle University Academic Track (NUAct) Team, Faculties	M: Evaluate existing fellowships and contract provisions with this goal in mind S: More permanent contracts put in place as appropriate.
	Explore a NE Universities or N8 redeployment register.	CAP21	Y3+	Research Culture Team, People Services	M: Agree with the N8 or North East Universities that this is a joint project across the institutions. S: Delivered and effective (timeline permitting).
	Clarify wording in the letters when moving to an Open-Ended contract after 4 years and work to see if this deal can be improved.	CAP22	Y1	People Services	M: Improve wording where appropriate. S: Updates letters and deal (if possible).
Be honest and open about career opportunities.	Ensure the reality of academic contracts is well communicated to promote wider skill acquisition.	CAP23	Y1-3	Skills Academy, Enterprise Academy, Faculties	M: Messaging agreed and embedded into induction. S: Increased engagement with relevant training and development opportunities.
Improve recruitment practices for researchers to make them fairer, transparent and inclusive.	Include researcher recruitment in a values-based recruitment project to improve practice and have consistency across appointment processes led by Principal Investigators. Consider the use of narrative CVs or alternative mechanisms.	CAP24	Y3	People Services (Recruitment)	M: Current practices evaluated, and issues highlighted. S: Increased confidence in decision-making, more diverse cohort of researchers applying for posts and equal likelihood of success for minority and majority groups.
	Review how starting salaries are agreed for researchers and fellows to help tackle any pay gaps at this early career stage.	CAP25	Y2	People Services (Recruitment)	M: Inconsistencies and best practice identified and addressed. S: Process consistently applied, and no evidence of pay gaps.
Work across the university to ensure a consistent and strong induction programme, including awareness of policies, practices, training and support.	Identify what information is already provided at University and local inductions, and build and co-ordinate content most relevant for researchers. Share best practices across units.	CAP26	Y1-2	Skills Academy, Faculties	M: Content curated and consistent, with buddying opportunities in all units. S: Researchers report positively about induction through surveys.
	Promote buddying for researchers in all units to help orientation in the first few weeks.	CAP27			

	Ensure that information about the promotion process is made transparent and widely available.	CAP28	Y2	People Services, Faculties	M: Information about promotions embedded into induction and openly available and accessible on internal Sharepoint pages. S: Researchers are aware of their options; promotions applications are more successful.
<b>Feel part of an inclusive, supportive and safe research environment, where you and your ideas can flourish</b>					
<b>Defining Concordat Principle: Employment</b>					
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>ID</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestones (M)/Measure of success (S)</b>
Ensure that policy changes are well communicated, clear, and transparent.	Map internal comms to improve communication with existing colleagues (e.g. using networks, newsletters, 'bitesize' updates).	CAP29	Y1	Internal Comms, Policy, Integrity and Governance Manager, People Services, Faculties, Academic Group Leads	M: Map of internal comms with identified areas for improvement, this could include updating the role descriptors for group leads. S: Internal comms and existing networks used more efficiently to improve the sharing of policy changes.
Apply and evaluate Equality Analysis to ensure that EDI impacts are identified, mitigated or eliminated in policies affecting researchers. Appropriate training must be identified.	University policies approved through the University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC) to have accompanying Equality Analyses (EAs).  Spot checks on existing policies affecting researchers to check that EAs are being implemented.	CAP30  CAP31	Y1-2	URIC Secretariat, University or Faculty EDI Teams. Researcher Networks	M: All University Policies submitted to URIC have accompanying EA. S: Spot checks reveal EAs are being implemented from the researcher's point of view.
Review and report on research culture in line with our values: be equally open about our successes and our mistakes.	With DER, agree on the methods and measures to track progress against the action plan. These will likely use existing routes, e.g. Research Culture Action Plan, Pulse Surveys, CEDARs. Report annually to URIC and other relevant groups.	CAP32	Y1	Research Culture Team, OD	M: Agree on measures of progress and how to track them. S: Measures of progress keep this action plan within the stated timeline.

	Work with our researcher community networks (new and existing) to gather diverse perspectives on key issues and co-create solutions together.	CAP33	Y1-3	Research Culture Team, Faculties Researcher networks	M: Active engagement with researcher community networks as issues arise, including participatory activities. S: We have a continuous researcher's perspective on issues, and solutions are co-created.
Deliver a University-wide 'Behaviours Matters' Action Plan and promote existing relevant training e.g. Active bystander training.	Positive About Inclusion (PAI) report and Research Culture Survey findings will be the foundation for University-wide action plan to tackle inappropriate behaviour. This will include manager training, reporting routes and support mechanisms.	CAP34	Y1-3	Delivered through the Research Culture Action Plan.	M: Behaviours Matters Action Plan delivered and communicated to researchers and managers. S: Researchers and Managers actively engage in the actions within the plan and inappropriate behaviours reduce as a result.
Improve training for Managers to equip them better to manage diverse teams.	Review management training to ensure project management training and expectation setting for people and projects and relate successes to the team (avoiding focusing on Principal Investigator).	CAP35	Y2-3	OD	M: Management training reviewed and updated. S: Management training routinely carried out and well-attended.
	Build on Leading Through Values to develop values-based leadership programme to foster research thought leadership and professional development of individual team members.	CAP36	Y3	OD, Research Culture Team	M: Leading Through Values training programme is developed with the community and delivered. S: evaluation of training is positive with a broad uptake.
	Delivery of the EDI Toolkit for research(ers) and promoted widely among managers and those who lead research at any level.	CAP37	Y1	EDI Team	M: Delivery and promotion of online Toolkit. S: High engagement and increased confidence in understanding EDI issues.
	Develop mental health training around issues specific to researchers, e.g. create 'life stories' around mental health/health diagnosis/neurodiversity and the impacts of your behaviour on others. Promote support available around Mental Health and wellbeing, including through 'It takes all of us' campaign.	CAP38	Y2-3	Wellbeing Teams, Faculties, Principal Investigator Networks	M: Researcher-specific mental health training developed. S: Researchers and managers are aware of and undertake training.

	Destigmatise 'failure' and being unsuccessful' amongst researchers and managers, e.g. by celebrating learning through 'failure', open talks and conversations, 'resubmitting your idea' support.	CAP39	Y1-3	Faculties, RFDMs, Research Culture Team	M: Create materials to enable 'failure' conversations. S: Materials are widely available and regularly used across the institution.
Ensure people management is evaluated and good management is recognised.	Visibly celebrate good management through community nominations, and embed into appraisals and promotions.	CAP40	Y1-3	Research Culture Action Plan (People Services, Faculties)	M: Consult with the community to define 'good people management'. S: Good people management is celebrated informally, as well as appraisals and promotions.
	Trial manager evaluation through feedback (e.g. 360, 'Trip Advisor').	CAP41	Y2-3	People Services, OD	M: Consult with the community how a manager evaluation would work. S: Implement manager evaluation and check impact for improvements in managerial capacity.
<b>Be encouraged to embrace best practices and new ways of working to improve the quality and reach of research, either your own or that of others</b>					
<b>Defining Concordat Principle: Environment and Culture</b>					
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>ID</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestones (M)/Measure of success (S)</b>
Ensure managers and researchers are aware of and trained in accordance with the highest standards of research integrity.	Promote UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) Local Network Lead and associated activities to colleagues via appropriate Teams channels/newsletters/ mailing lists/event days e.g. open research awards and new starters via induction materials.	CAP42	Y2-3	Library, Faculties Research Culture Team, Principal Investigators	M: Work with UKRN Local Network Lead and other open research representatives to create regular content for dissemination. S: Researchers and managers, institution-wide, are familiar with the events and expectations associated with open research, with an increase in engagement with open research practices.
	Develop and promote new Open Research training to all colleagues to enhance transparency, reproducibility, and quality of research.	CAP43	Y2-3	Library, Faculties Research Culture Team, Principal Investigators	M: Training is developed and promoted S: High uptake from the research community.

	Promote and monitor engagement with new online research integrity training and encourage local discipline-specific activities that support improving research practices, including those proposed through the QR Enhancing Research Culture fund by providing extra QR funds where necessary or linking teams with similar aims.	CAP44	Y1-2	Faculties, Research Culture Team	M: Set Research integrity training threshold and monitor across the institute. S: Increased number of local activities focussed on research integrity.
<b>Be recognised and valued for your diverse contributions to research</b>					
<b>Defining Concordat Principle: Employment</b>					
Clear merit-based recognition and reward/promotion pathways that recognise diverse contributions to research.	Evaluate how opportunities for advancement (e.g. spine point) are considered at appointment and during a project, and ensure all researchers are aware of promotion criteria and process at induction and Conversations & Priorities.	CAP45	Y2	OD (for Conversations & Priorities), People Service, Researcher Networks and ECR Leads	M: Updated guidance on career pathways and reward. S: Researchers are aware of promotion criteria across the institution, which is discussed in Conversations & Priorities.
	Clarify (and potentially broaden) criteria for promotion along Research Associate -> Senior Research Associate -> Principal Research Associate pathway and the progression opportunities.	CAP46	Y2	People Services Reward Team	
	Discuss with funders (and People Services) how to write potential researcher promotions into grant applications and implement them where possible.	CAP47	Y2	RFDM, DER, Faculties, Research Culture Team	M: Discussion between the research community and funders undertaken. S: Implementation of any outcome reached through funder discussions.
Researcher feedback is used to develop plans and actions to improve our research environment. Consider researchers and their managers as key institutional stakeholders and provide them with formal opportunities	Evidence how researchers can improve thinking and decision-making and actively promote researcher representation on committees where decisions are made that influence them.	CAP48	Y1-3	Faculties Researchers Networks, Early Career Researcher Leads	M: Collect examples of existing researcher representation and 'added value' use these examples as case studies to roll out more broadly. S: Active researcher representation and engagement at all relevant committees across the institution.
	Maintain dialogue and co-creation of solutions with the researcher community through DER, relevant Faculty and Unit committees, and researcher networks.	CAP49	Y1	OD, Faculties, Researcher Networks	M: Agree DER new Terms of Reference and regular meetings with appropriate wider community inclusion. S: DER actively engages and is consulted on relevant discussions across the institution.

to engage with relevant organisational policy and decision-making.	Actively seek views from researchers from diverse backgrounds in all research culture consultations and evaluations, e.g. surveys, research culture cafes, and invite them to join community action groups.	CAP50	Y1-3	Research Culture Team, Researcher Networks, Faculties	M: Establish regular communication channels with researcher networks and work with these to broaden membership as widely as possible. S: Strong, active, and diverse researcher networks exist and are engaged with the Research Culture Team.
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