

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

Universities and Research Institutes

Name of Institution	Abertay University
Reporting period	2024/2025
Date approved by governing body	22 nd April 2026 (by the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee)
Date published online	June 2026
Web address of annual report	https://www.abertay.ac.uk/research-overview/research-governance/
Web address of institutional Researcher Development Concordat webpage	https://www.abertay.ac.uk/research-overview/research-governance/
Contact for questions/concerns on researcher career development	Prof Nia White (Vice Principal for Research and Innovation) Dr Alison Elliott (Head of Research Degrees, Impact and Researcher Development)
Date statement sent to Researcher Development Concordat secretariat via CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk	May 2026

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 creation of a positive research culture is firmly embedded within our university and research strategies. These affirm our core purpose to develop and sustain an inclusive, healthy and supportive culture, welcoming and retaining staff and students from a range of backgrounds and inspiring them to achieve their full potential. We strive to create a sustainable, supportive and collaborative culture in which our researchers can thrive and develop as both researchers and individuals.

We are fully engaged with the principles of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*, the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, the *Concordat on Open Research Data*, the *Knowledge Exchange Concordat*, and the *Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research*, and use these to guide the development of our research culture.

We embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in our strategies, policies, operations, and strategic thinking, recognising and valuing researchers with different backgrounds, attitudes, experiences, and career paths who bring fresh ideas and perspectives to our Institution. We believe in the benefits that come from having a diverse population and are committed to facilitating the widest possible applicant pool into doctoral study.

Our compact campus fosters collaboration between researchers at different career levels and across Faculties. Our pan-University Graduate School is the central hub of our research activities and has transformed our research environment. The Graduate School (of which all academic research staff and postgraduate research students (PGRS) are members) provides an important dedicated space for networking, discussing research, training and development, sharing of good practice and supporting peer well-being. Our new dedicated Research Innovation and Enterprise Support (RIES) service is co-located in the Graduate School and provides support for staff and PGRS.

We promote a positive research culture through the implementation of supportive policies, processes and structures; strong leadership; quality infrastructure; efficient systems; and excellent researcher development opportunities.

Our commitment to development ensures our researchers have access to, and the time for, the development of skills needed for research, effectiveness, employability, and career progression. Our Graduate School offers a comprehensive range of professional development opportunities and support including a formal training programme (80 events annually) and one-to-one support (with funding applications, publications, research design, statistics, impact, business development, intellectual

property, public engagement, and outreach). We endeavour to develop our researchers to be adaptable and flexible to ensure that they can succeed in an increasingly diverse global research environment and employment market.

Our research culture is supported and enhanced through our memberships of Vitae, Scottish Graduate Schools, Scottish Research Pools, British Academy ECR Network, Universities Scotland (RKEC and RDCG), ScotHERD, and Scottish Research Integrity Network. These groups provide our researchers with access to additional networks, training programmes and internships, and ensure the sharing of good practice across the Scottish research sector.

Fostering a positive research culture and inclusive community is an ethos that threads through all that we do. We endeavour to inspire researchers to be innovative, collaborative, inclusive, caring, and committed to generating and mobilising knowledge across a range of scholarly, professional and public communities.

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)

We established a Researcher Development Concordat (RDC) working group to examine and monitor how the principles of the Concordat are embedded within our Institution, explore how policies and processes could be improved and oversee the implementation of changes. The group is led by the Vice Principal for Research & Innovation and supported by the Head of Research Degrees, Impact and Researcher Development. The group has representation from across the organisation, including academic staff (early-mid career researchers and a senior academic), and staff from our Graduate School and People Services.

We have chosen to implement the principles of the Concordat for all those engaged with research at Abertay. This includes research staff, academic staff engaged with the conduct, supervision or management of research, and Postgraduate Research Students (PGRS).

For each of the Concordat pillars, our strategic objectives are to:

Environment and culture

- Embed a positive research culture and promote a supportive, healthy working environment for researchers at all stages of their career to help them develop to their full potential and enhance their future career opportunities.

- Ensure researchers act in accordance with the highest standards of professional conduct, integrity and ethics.
- Support and promote equality, diversity and inclusion in all our strategies, policies and practices.
- Ensure that the culture for our researchers is inclusive, transparent, accessible and equitable.
- Ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities, expectations and opportunities particularly with respect to the Concordat, Research Integrity, and EDI.
- Invest in our research environment and infrastructure.
- Review and seek feedback on our research culture and environment, and use this information to improve our institutional practices.

Employment

- Ensure fair, equitable and transparent processes for appointing and re-grading academic research staff and managing workloads.
- Ensure that researchers work in accordance with Institutional policies and procedures as well as the requirements of their Funders.
- Ensure all new researchers are made aware of policies and practices relevant to their role through our induction processes.
- Ensure researchers and research managers actively engage in regular constructive management discussions.
- Regularly review and revise our training opportunities for research managers to ensure that they are equipped to provide effective line management and PGRS supervision.
- Ensure that researchers and research managers have a voice within the institution and provide opportunities for them to actively contribute to strategy and policy.

Professional Development of Researchers

- Provide opportunities, support and time for researchers to engage in professional development activities that will improve their employability and career progression.
- Encourage and support researchers to develop their research identity and broader leadership skills.
- Encourage researchers to develop their experience of the wider research system and support their move between different sectors where relevant.
- Encourage researchers to maintain an up-to-date professional career development portfolio of research skills and experience.
- Ensure that researchers engage with career development discussions with their line managers annually.
- Record, monitor and report on the engagement of researchers with professional development activities.

Measures for evaluating progress and success

We review progress against our action plan annually. This involves assessing developments under each of the pillars for each of the key stakeholder groups against our targets. We consider outcomes successful where changes to our policies and practices make us compliant with the Concordat. In areas where we are already compliant, success is determined by the implementation of strategies and processes that make our research culture and environment more efficient, effective, or inclusive for the relevant stakeholder group.

Our new action plan (2025-2030) identifies where we are already compliant with the Concordat and outlines our plans to improve policies and processes to better support our research culture and environment.

Summary of actions taken, and evaluation of progress made, in the current reporting period to implement your plan to support the three pillars in respect of each of your key stakeholder groups [Institution; Academic Managers of Researchers (Deans, Heads of Schools/Departments/PIs); Researchers]

Environment and Culture (max 600 words)

Institution

Our substantial researcher development programme, dedicated research pages and Abertay Research Community group ensures all researchers (staff and PGRS) are aware of Institutional policies and practices as well as relevant external policies and the National Concordats.

New staff have access to our dedicated *New Starts* research pages to support them in their first few months. New staff must attend sessions on *Concordats, Regulations and Researcher Responsibilities* and *Research Integrity (GDPR, Data Management and Research Ethics)* within their first year. PGRS are required to undertake a compulsory induction programme before starting their research.

We embed EDI in all our research policies and practices to ensure that they are inclusive, equitable and transparent. We continually monitor our research pages to ensure that all our strategies, policies and processes are up to date.

During the reporting period, we launched a new policy, guidance and information document on the ethical use of Gen AI in research. This provides specific guidance for researchers, supervisors and PGRS. New training on the responsible use of

Gen AI for research was also delivered as part of our Researcher Development Programme.

We established a new Research Degrees Committee during the reporting period to ensure our policies and processes for PGRS are appropriate, fair and effective. This has led to the review and revision of several processes, including recruitment and admissions, annual progression panels, transfer/upgrade process, and the introduction of criteria for PhD by publication and portfolio submissions.

We continue to seek feedback on our research environment, culture and policies through our staff engagement and PGRS surveys. During the reporting period, we conducted our PGRS survey and have used the feedback to improve our practices, develop new guides and introduce additional training.

We continue to invest in our research environment through refurbishment of buildings and upgrade of equipment. Plans for refurbishing our Graduate School were delayed but have now been approved for next year.

Our Research Innovation and Enterprise Support (RIES) service has grown this year and provides dedicated support for grant funding and enterprise activities for staff and PGRS.

We continue to promote a healthy working environment and hold an NHS Healthy Working Lives Gold Award. A new mental health course was made available to all researchers this year to better support them with their well-being.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Our Research Managers receive training on *Research Integrity, GDPR, Ethics, and Data Management* and are required to refresh this training every three years.

Our *Hybrid and Flexible Working Policy* ensure all our researchers are supported by their managers to work as flexibly as appropriate.

Research Managers continue to have the opportunity to contribute to policy development aimed at improving our research culture through general fora and formal committees.

	<p>Researchers</p> <p>We encourage researchers to take advantage of the opportunities of our research environment and contribute to our vibrant community. We ensure all researchers are aware of the importance of positive research cultures. We also continue to support our research community to foster greater cohesion and peer support.</p> <p>In addition to being supported by their line managers, staff are mentored by senior research colleagues to learn best practice and ensure they are well supported in their research endeavours. PGRS are supported by supervisory teams and Graduate School staff.</p> <p>All researchers continue to receive training on <i>Research Integrity</i> and <i>EDI</i> and are required to refresh their training periodically.</p> <p>Progress</p> <p>We were already compliant with many of the Concordat principles in this pillar. We have continued to review our policies and practices in relation to the environment and culture, and implemented several initiatives to improve what we do.</p>
<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>Our recruitment and promotion policies ensure fair, equitable and transparent processes for appointing and re-grading academic staff. We hold an Athena SWAN bronze award, the Race Equality Charter Mark bronze award and are a DORA signatory. When considering appointments and promotions, we evaluate research on its own merit. All staff involved in recruitment are required to undertake <i>Recruitment</i> training, and we strive to ensure interview panels have appropriate representation. All researchers complete mandatory training in <i>EDI in Higher Education</i> and <i>Unconscious Bias</i>. We reflect annually on our recruitment and promotion policies.</p> <p>The vast majority of our academic staff are on core contracts and have both a teaching and research remit. We continue to be mindful of the challenges around employment insecurity and limit the use of zero-hours and fixed-term contracts to occasions where there is a genuine requirement for this type</p>

of flexibility. Our Recruitment Policy ensures that researchers on fixed-term contracts are not discriminated against in terms of access to career development activities and redeployment opportunities.

We continue to champion excellent people management through our *People Strategy*, transparent promotion criteria, workload allocation planning, annual Development Discussions process and our comprehensive researcher development offer. We have clear promotion criteria for our academic staff, which is available on our intranet pages, and we hold annual training sessions to help staff prepare for an application.

We are committed to a reasonable, fair, transparent and equitable allocation of workload for academic staff that supports the strategic objectives and priorities of the University, whilst recognising the importance of researcher development and our obligations as a Concordat signatory. All academic staff have researcher development time built into their workload allocations. Individual workload allocation plans are reviewed annually and published internally to ensure transparency.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Academic managers are required to hold an annual Development Discussion with their staff. The Development Discussions process is reviewed and revised annually and guidance is provided to ensure effective career development discussions.

We continue to review and revise training provision for our Research Managers as appropriate. During this reporting period, we have focused on increasing compliance with both our internal and external compulsory research supervisor training programme. Supervisors who are not compliant now have their supervisory status reviewed.

We have also developed new training and resources for our research supervisors to help them better support students with their continuing professional development and made changes to a number of our processes to provide greater clarity.

	<p>Researchers</p> <p>All researchers are required to work in accordance with institutional policies and procedures. Training on <i>University Regulations and Researcher Responsibilities</i> is now compulsory for new staff.</p> <p>The establishment of our new RIES service during the previous reporting period and its expansion during the current reporting period have led to continued improvements in our grant funding process to help researchers understand the terms and conditions of grant funding and work in accordance with them.</p> <p>All research staff are expected to have an annual personal Development Discussion meeting with their manager to discuss objectives, development needs, and general issues. Over this reporting period we achieved a 99.5% completion rate across the Institution.</p> <p>We continue to ensure that researchers have a voice within our institution and make sure they can actively contribute to institutional strategy, policy and decision-making by providing them with opportunities to contribute to formal committees, groups and open fora.</p> <p>Progress</p> <p>We were already compliant with all the Concordat principles in this pillar. We have continued to review our policies and practices in relation to employment to improve our approaches and maximise awareness of the relevant issues.</p>
<p>Professional development (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution</p> <p>The Graduate School provides a comprehensive researcher development programme (80 sessions annually). We review and revise our programme each year to update knowledge, introduce new advancements and respond to the needs of our researchers. The programme is entirely flexible to suit individual needs. Researchers are encouraged to develop discipline-specific and transferable skills suitable for academic and non-academic careers. We have ringfenced staff development time on a Wednesday afternoon to ensure all researchers can engage in development opportunities. We video-record training to increase accessibility and ensure</p>

researchers can review materials at the time most relevant to them. Over the reporting period we introduced new sessions on: *Practice-Based Research Methods, Effective and Responsible Use of Gen AI in Research, Grant Funding, Research Commercialisation, Effective Engagement with Non-academics and Conference Organisation.*

Research staff have annual Development Discussions with their managers. This includes a dedicated research section to support conversations about research planning, objective setting, and development activities. Time for researcher development is built into workload allocation plans to ensure all research-active staff have 10 days pro rata of development training time per annum. PGRS regularly discuss development with their supervisors and are expected to spend 3-4 hours per week on development activities.

We continue to identify and engage with initiatives to improve development for our researchers through Vitae, Scottish Graduate Schools, Research Pools and the British Academy ECR Network.

We recognise that working across employment sectors can bring benefits, and support opportunities for researchers to experience this through close working with KE partners and other employment sectors. We routinely advertise opportunities for secondments and internships and have a Sabbatical Policy which can be used to support such opportunities. We supported a Scottish Government secondment during the reporting period. We continue to provide staff and PGRS with access to information about career paths through career management workshops and our careers service.

We continue to support Leadership Development for our researchers. We ran a second cohort of our internal Leadership Development Programme in 2024/25 and supported staff to take part in the Advance HE Aurora Leadership Development Programme for women.

Academic Managers of Researchers

Research Managers hold an annual Development Discussion with their research staff to help guide them on relevant training and discuss career progression.

	<p>We have continued to review and revise our Research Manager training. During the current reporting period, we had a particular focus on ensuring that Research Supervisors were up to date with mandatory internal and external training.</p> <p>Additional training support for Research Managers will be further developed to address identified gaps.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>Researchers are encouraged to take ownership of their career, undertake professional development training and work towards career goals. We are a member of Vitae and promote the use of the Researcher Development Framework to monitor skills development.</p> <p>All research staff are expected to engage with career development reviews and 99.5% of staff had a Development Discussion meeting during this period.</p> <p>All researchers are encouraged to seek out opportunities to develop their research identity. In addition to our internal Researcher Development Programme, we routinely signpost researchers to relevant external bodies that can further support researcher development, networking and mentoring e.g. Vitae, Scottish Graduate Schools and the British Academy ECR Network.</p> <p>Progress</p> <p>We provide substantial professional and career development opportunities for our researchers and are fully compliant with the Concordat principles in this pillar. Whilst engagement with our researcher development programme has slowly improved in the last few years, engagement remains one of our biggest challenges (as it does across the sector). We will continue to work with researchers to identify barriers to engagement and explore ways to address this.</p>
<p>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)</p>	
<p>Although compliant with the Concordat in most areas we have continued to review our policies, processes and practices to improve them where possible.</p>	

Specific achievements over the current reporting period (2024/25) with respect to the planned activities set out in our previous report are:

1. Established a new Research Degrees Committee

To ensure our policies and processes for our PGRS are appropriate, fair and effective, we established a new Research Degrees Committee. The committee's remit is to a) monitor research degree programme provision, culture and environment, b) ensure quality and standards, and c) monitor processes. We have reviewed and revised several of our processes as a result of this new committee.

2. Rolled out practice-based research methods training

We developed a new series of sessions on practice-based research for our Researcher Development Programme as this was a gap in our provision. These complement existing sessions on quantitative and qualitative research methods.

3. Reviewed training provision for Research Managers

We continued to review and revise the training provision for our Research Managers. Over the current reporting period, we focused on ensuring that our Research Degree Supervisors were up to date with mandatory training. We will continue to revise training going forward to provide additional support for identified gaps.

4. Rolled out mental health and well-being training

To better support researchers with mental health and well-being, a new course on *Mental Health in the Workplace for University Staff* was rolled out and made available to all staff and PGRS.

5. Developed a new Gen AI in research policy and rolled out training

We launched a new policy, information and guidance document on the ethical use of *Gen AI in Research*. This provides specific guidance for researchers, supervisors and PGRS. Training on the responsible use of Gen AI for research was delivered as part of our Graduate School Researcher Development Programme.

6. New policy for *Trusted Research*

The development of a new University Policy on *Trusted Research* is still in development. This policy and associated training will now be launched in 2026.

7. Undertook our PGRS survey

We conducted our bi-annual survey of PGRS to gather feedback on our research environment, Graduate School community, research culture and policies relevant to the PGRS experience. We will use feedback to improve our institutional practices, develop new guides and introduce new training.

8. Internal peer review process for grant applications

Plans to revise our Internal Peer Review process for grant applications were delayed while we established our new RIES team. We will update this process in 2025/26 to ensure it best supports researchers with their grant development needs.

9. Liaise with the new Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager

We have worked closely with the Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager to explore best practice with respect to research culture and capitalise on Scotland-wide collaborative opportunities.

Our new action plan (2025-30) has been developed to reflect on progress to date and take account of lessons learnt over this period, as well as ongoing challenges.

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

In the coming reporting period (2025/2026), our key objectives are to:

1. Launch our new University RKE&I Strategy

We will develop and launch our new University Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Strategy (R-LINCS30) to set out our plan, vision and aims for RKE&I for 2025-2030. All staff will be invited to provide feedback on the strategy during a consultation period.

2. Revise our Research Ethics Policy and roll out training

We will launch a revised Research Ethics Policy to ensure all research conducted at the University meets the highest ethical standards, protects the rights of participants, and upholds legal compliance. Training on the revised policy will be delivered as part of our Researcher Development Programme.

3. Revise our Intellectual Property Policy and roll out training

We will launch a revised Intellectual Property Policy to establish a clear framework for the ownership, protection, and commercialisation of intellectual property created by University staff and students. Training on the revised policy will be delivered as part of our Graduate School Researcher Development Programme.

4. Develop a new Trusted Research Policy

We will develop a new Trusted Research Policy to provide clear guidance on the principles of Trusted Research and ensure all researchers understand their responsibilities within this area.

5. Launch our new University People Strategy

We will develop and launch our new University People Strategy to set out our priorities for people, culture and organisational development for the University for

2025-2030. This will draw on our University values of being Inclusive, Caring, Innovative and Collaborative. All staff will be invited to provide feedback on the strategy during a consultation period.

6. Revise training provision for Research Managers

Additional training support for Research Managers will be developed to address identified gaps. This will include further training on equitable workload allocation planning and additional guidance on how to support academics with their research careers.

7. Review the Development Discussions Process

We will explore how our Development Discussions process could be optimised to improve research plan development, objective setting and prioritising training and development needs.

8. Introduce a new Departmental Research Lead role

As part of the development of our University RKE&I Strategy for 2025-2030, we will scope out the remit for a new Departmental Research Lead role. These new posts will work closely with Heads of Department and REF champions to better support academic researchers.

9. Revise Internal peer review process for grant applications

We will update our peer review process for grant submissions to ensure it best supports researchers to develop competitive grant applications.

10. Implement changes in response to the PGRS survey

We will use feedback from our PGRS survey to improve our institutional practices, develop new guides (e.g. thesis submission guide) and introduce new training (e.g. career and employability workshop).

11. Work with external colleagues to promote a positive research culture

We will continue to collaborate with the Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager and colleagues across the Scottish sector to promote best practice and embed a positive research culture across our Institution.

Please provide a brief statement describing your institution's approval process of this report prior to sign off by the governing body (*max 200 words*)

This report was drafted during February to April 2026 by the Head of Research Degrees, Impact and Researcher Development and discussed with our Researcher Development Concordat group which has responsibility for the development and review of our Concordat Action Plan. Our new Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan for 2025-2030 was reviewed and agreed at the same time.

This report and our new Action Plan were submitted as papers to the Research Knowledge and Exchange Committee for review and approval in April 2026. The report was introduced by the Head of Research Degrees, Impact and Researcher Development. Committee members had the opportunity to discuss the report and raise questions or make suggested changes. No changes to the report were requested by the committee.

The report was approved by the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee on 22nd April 2026.

The final version of the report was submitted to Universities UK in May 2026.

Signature on behalf of governing body:

Contact for queries: n.white@abertay.ac.uk or a.elliott@abertay.ac.uk

This annual report will be analysed by Universities UK, secretariat for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, to identify good practices, themes for development and information to improve national research culture policy and practice.

If you have any questions, or suggestions on how the reporting process could be improved, please contact the secretariat at CDRsecretariat@universitiesuk.ac.uk

www.researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk