

Researcher Development Concordat Annual Report March 2021-22

(prepared by the Researcher Development (ECR) Steering Group)

This report details our progress against our [Concordat Implementation Plan](#) as part of our Concordat governance. Additional details and a fuller overview can be found in our [10-year HR Excellence in Research Award](#) review.

Changes over the last 12 months: During 2021 we recruited a Dean for Research Culture, Dr Catherine Davies. This has been followed by the publication of our [Research Culture Statement](#). Dr Davies has recently taken over as chair of the Steering Group from the Dean of the Doctoral College, and therefore oversees our implementation of the Concordat. This move sends a strong signal that Research Staff and the Concordat are at the core of our Research Culture work.

Effects of Covid-19: Many of our professional services continue to work remotely, with some moving to a hybrid model. This has impacted on the progress of some of our actions, but it has also opened benefits to how we, and our researchers, engage with development. Our provision is being delivered in an online synchronous and asynchronous format, allowing greater numbers of attendees, and expanding our audience to include all researchers and those working in research support. By creating self-guided learning resources in addition to scheduled workshops or events we can provide a more flexible range of opportunities and be more effective in providing timely access to development at the point of need. As hybrid working becomes established, we will review our delivery model ensuring we can fully realise the benefits of providing a flexible approach, encompassing programmatic development opportunities combining synchronous and self-paced learning, just in time self-paced development resources, and regular events or workshops which foster and support communities for research practice to sustain connections, collaborations, and sense of belonging.

Key Achievements over the last 12 months:

- **Demystifying Student Education** – in April 2021 we held one of our open meetings with senior leaders, our then interim Deputy-VC (Student Education) Professor Peter Jimack. Researchers were encouraged to submit questions in advance on the topic of the University Student Education Strategy. The session was attended by 47 researchers and the [content written up as an article](#) that has been read 219 times.
- **Careers Summer grows into BOOST** – between June and September 2021 we ran our [careers summer programme](#) consisting of 22 separate events on all aspects of career development. The programme has been viewed 1830 times, with workshops ranging between 15-46 attendances. Feedback has been incredibly positive, but the timescales were tight and unsustainable. In December 2021 we launched [BOOST](#), a career development programme expanded and running throughout 2022, offering 2-4 workshops a month.
- **Global Challenges addressed** – the Researcher Development and Culture team in OD&PL (Organisational Development and Professional Learning) were awarded an Association of Commonwealth Universities Early Career Research Training Award to run a [PGR/ECR Research Crucible programme](#). Taking an established programme for researchers and adapting the style and content to fit our early career researchers. It ran in Summer 2021, in partnership with our Global Research Development Team bringing together researchers from Leeds with those from our Global South partners. We are exploring ways to run further Crucible programmes.
- **Culture, front and centre** – in addition to a new Dean for Research Culture and a Research Culture steering group, we have continued to grow the research culture community (now over 300 members) including ECRs. We continue to run our Research Culture cafes, to hear about successes and to raise issues and challenges.

Challenges over the last 12 months:

Several of our actions have progressed slower than anticipated because of COVID and associated changes in working, and some staff changes, however we have completed some ahead of plan and added new ones in in response to emerging priorities.

- **Updated Guidance for Researchers** – publication of this document sits against several actions in our plan. We have completed the updating to align it to the new Concordat Principles, but further work is needed. Our recruitment, promotion, reward and recognition processes are currently being reviewed and we have ongoing work on the use of responsible research metrics that will also feed into this document. We plan to publish the updated version, with a note that further updates are in progress.
- **Online fatigue** – there has been a drop-off in engagement with our community and team spaces. We are looking at how we can better use these, so they become active places to support development and discussion. One suggestion is to automatically add new researchers to our community and use this as the primary means of communication, development opportunities and activities.

- **Managing expectations** – increased provision for career development has led to increased demand for 1-2-1 support. Supporting the breadth of academic practice across all career stages means we do not have capacity to provide this. We are taking the approach of creating guides, videos, and monthly Careers with Peers drop-in sessions.

Looking forward:

As we look ahead to our 12-year external HR Excellence in Research Award review (December 2022) we will be prioritising the actions that have been delayed over the last 12 months:

- **Recognising the contributions researchers make to supervision** – our action states 'defining and implementing of the PhD Advisor role.' This has met several challenges, then we were offered the opportunity to take part in the UKCGE Associate Supervisor programme, however it has yet to be launched. We are now looking at a whole new programme of Supervisor Development, open to all researchers that will feed into the recognition pathways for both UKCGE and Advance HE.
- **PI and Research Leadership development** – a new programme of development across all career stages will be launched in Feb/March 2022. This includes implementation of the Concordat at the project planning and recruitment phases and encourages meaningful career conversations and opportunities for development throughout.
- **Research staff survey** – numerous surveys have been conducted over the last few years and we have struggled with survey fatigue. Our CEDARS response rate was 7% despite a significant push, reinforcing our plans to consider how we approach this going forward. Options could include an institutional research staff/research culture survey or more regular short pulse surveys throughout the year.