

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

Universities and Research Institutes

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Statement on how the organisation creates, maintains and embeds a research culture that upholds a positive and inclusive environment for researchers at all stages of their careers (max 500 words)

Edinburgh Napier University is the #1 Modern University in Scotland (THE World University Rankings 2025) and we were named Higher Educational Institution of the Year (Herald Higher Education Awards 2024). We have over 21,000 students studying with Edinburgh Napier, across our three campuses in Edinburgh, as well as through international and online delivery of our programmes.

At Edinburgh Napier University we are committed to a research culture that is positive, inclusive, and supportive. We uphold integrity, collaboration, and continuous development, ensuring all researchers feel valued and empowered.

Edinburgh Napier University **received its first HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in December 2010** recognising our commitment to embedding the principles of the Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers and we became a formal signatory to the revised Concordat in December 2019. We successfully retained the HR Excellence award at our last external review in 2023 and are approaching our 15-year review point in January 2026.

Our **Concordat governance** is overseen by the University Research and Innovation Committee which is chaired by our Vice Principal (Research and Innovation), with strategic leadership provided by our Head of Research Environment and Services within our Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) department and our academic Head of Research Culture. Implementation of our Concordat Action draws on a range of Professional Services and through Academic School leadership groups.

Researcher Development

Aligned with the Concordat, we offer mentoring, training, and leadership development. Early-career researchers receive tailored support, while mid-career and senior researchers are encouraged to engage in leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration. To further support our postgraduate researchers (PGRs), we have established a Doctoral College, providing dedicated resources, training, and a supportive community to enhance their academic and professional development.

Inclusion

We actively promote equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) through fair recruitment, mentorship, and career development. By embedding EDI principles,

we ensure equal access to opportunities and resources for all researchers. The University is in the process of developing new Equality Outcomes covering the period 2025-29. This work sits alongside wider activities to reframe how the University supports equality, diversity and inclusion across the University community.

Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance

We prioritise researcher wellbeing through flexible working, mental health support, and workload management, gathering feedback to ensure a sustainable work environment.

Open Research and Integrity

We uphold transparency and integrity by supporting open research, data sharing, and reproducibility. Training in research ethics reinforces accountability and trust.

Collaboration and Impact

Through interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships, we foster knowledge exchange and real-world impact, encouraging collaboration over competition. We focus on expanding partnerships with industry and government to increase research impact and career opportunities for our researchers.

Continuous Improvement and Annual Reporting

We regularly evaluate our research culture via institutional assessments and sector benchmarking such as the CEDARS survey and internal staff surveys, ensuring policies evolve to meet emerging challenges. As part of our commitment to the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, we integrate this framework into our annual reporting through RIE, tracking progress on researcher support, professional development, and inclusion initiatives.

Through these commitments, Edinburgh Napier University cultivates a research environment where all researchers thrive, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to society.

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)

Our current University Strategy: Shaping Our Future launched in March 2020 has 'Build Careers: Create Opportunities' as one of our strategic objectives, illustrating our commitment to staff development across the university.

The Researcher Development Concordat action plan has connections to other strategic initiatives, including our KE Concordat Action Plan and our recently developed Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Funding (KEIF) Strategy, our Public Engagement Strategy, and the work of our Research Integrity Committee, as well as EDI in research activities. Our Researcher Development Concordat Action plan also connects to our new research strategy and its transformational action to 'Build Research capability and capacity'.

Environment and culture

Our Research and Innovation Strategy continues to drive our research environment and culture in which we operate. In the last three years there has been a strong focus on the establishment of research centres, bringing together researchers, students and academics with shared interests. The research centres are interdisciplinary and are creating supportive networks for our researchers.

The other key strategic development is the creation of our new Doctoral College in April 2024. The Doctoral College acts as a focal point for all activity relating to PGR students in the university and is working to integrate research staff as supervisors as part of its remit. Activity is underway with the Doctoral College to explore ways of diversifying the Doctoral College community through development of a recruitment strategy.

Employment

Employment within our institution is shaped by clear career routes and promotion pathways that support researchers at all stages. Work has been ongoing to provide in-person briefings to researchers as part of the annual promotions cycle helping to raise the visibility of the pathways. Researchers interested in promotions are now also signposted to our mentoring programme.

Our Knowledge Exchange Concordat Action plan and our new Knowledge Exchange Innovation Fund Strategy are both creating more opportunities for researchers to explore a wider range of activities that could support their career; both within and beyond academia. We have created a new series of events on KE, including how to get involved in CPD delivery, which is part of our strategy to deliver career development initiatives to researchers.

Professional Development of Researchers

This pillar is delivered through our Researcher Development programme which is available to all staff at the university regardless of career stage. We continue to run a range of workshops on research integrity, supervision, open access, and

knowledge exchange amongst other topics. We work to ensure a range of formats are available (online, in-person, hybrid) to make the programme as accessible as possible. We also continue to build external opportunities through partnerships with the BA ECR network, UK Research Integrity Office and reciprocal arrangements with other Scottish Universities.

Within the Researcher Development programme, we have increased provision on Research Leadership, providing a new intensive workshop for new research leaders followed by 1:1 coaching opportunities to embed the learning from the course. Our Academic and Research Mentoring scheme also allows dedicated individualised support for researchers through pairing with an experienced mentor. This allows staff to work with someone outwith their discipline, gaining valuable insights to the wider HE sector.

Our measures of success include:

- Engagement of contract research staff with our current research strategy
- Evidence of progress in CEDARS data and internal YourVoice survey
- Increased engagement with an annual MyContribution review by research staff
- Successful engagement with our Research Career promotion framework by research staff
- Reduced precarity for contract research staff measured through career progression tracking
- Increased numbers of staff holding external research funding
- Increased research student numbers
- Increased completion rate for PhD students
- Increased external recognition of our staff through professional awards, memberships
- Increased number of partnerships and interdisciplinary collaborations
- Evaluation of our Researcher Development programme
- Increased use of Worktribe repository to share open data sets

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]

Please note: Some of the initiatives mentioned are crosscutting against all three pillars of the Concordat but are mentioned in the main pillar for brevity.

Environment and Culture (max 600 words)

Institution

Work was carried out during Feb-May 2024 to draft a **Research Culture Manifesto** which was created as a discussion paper to prompt debate on what culture we want to see at Edinburgh Napier. The discussion drew on researchers at all career stages to understand the different viewpoints within our research community. The paper was discussed at the June 2024 Research and Innovation committee meeting and was approved for further dissemination within Schools. A series of Subject group meetings were scheduled to gather further feedback, ahead of wider roadshow consultations in 2025.

In April 2024 we **launched our new Doctoral College**, aiming to bring together all activity relating to research degrees into a single structure. The Doctoral College has been reviewing policies and regulations relating to research degrees, including supervisory requirements which allows contract research staff to be supervisors on relevant student projects. The Doctoral College held its inaugural conference in December 2024 which brought over 120 participants together from across the university to discuss and share our research.

Aligned to our academic themes of wellbeing and sustainability, **we launched six new research centres** during AY23/24: Cardiovascular Health, Mental Health Practice; Policy and Law Research; Military Research, Education & Public Engagement; Child & Family Law and Policy; Transport Research Innovation; and Tourism Research. The research centres strengthen the university's visibility around research areas, both within the UK and internationally, and we are exploring opportunities for joint supervision, staff exchanges, and joint research bids with organisations in a wide range of sectors, as well as academic partners across the UK. The membership of each research centres draws on diverse populations and includes both contract research staff and PGR students, creating an inclusive space for our research activities.

We are one of the organisations **taking part in the People, Culture and Environment pilot for REF2029**. The pilot is creating opportunities to assess our achievements against the PCE indicators, to understand where our gaps are, and

	<p>help us establish better monitoring processes for key initiatives on PCE.</p> <p>Academic Managers of Researchers As part of our Mental Health and Wellbeing plan during 2024 additional resources for line managers were created: Mental Health in the Workplace for Managers. The course was for all managers to attend to gain a good understanding of mental health concerns and how they could best support their team. The course also considered the legal requirements around employee health and wellbeing and the expectations of managers.</p> <p>Researchers Our <u>Innovation Hub</u> has been instrumental in increasing engagement with industry partners, providing researchers with opportunities to collaborate on applied projects and knowledge transfer. In the last year we added a further 16 examples to our Innovation Hub which now has over 30 videos and case studies, some focusing on Knowledge Transfer partnerships (KTPs), others focusing on collaborative research projects. By showcasing various career paths within the research and innovation environment, we are offering researchers insight into roles outside traditional academia. This initiative not only promotes industry-academia partnerships but also helps diversify career trajectories for researchers, aligning with our goal to provide comprehensive professional development and broaden career options.</p>
<p>Employment (max 600 words)</p>	<p>Institution During 2024 Edinburgh Napier took forward a range of activities updating, refreshing and streamlining the <u>University's Equality Outcomes</u>. Alongside this, it was agreed that the Scottish Funding Council's National Equality Outcomes should be a central feature of future activity. An external organisation, Leading Kind consultants, were tasked with undertaking an Inclusion Insight Report that gathered information about how the University could improve inclusive outcomes across 6 areas: Diversity Confidence & Leadership, Employee Experience, Employee Resource Groups, Inclusive Communication and Conscious Scrutiny.</p> <p>In June 2024 the University Court agreed an infrastructure to support the delivery of strategic EDI priorities (including</p>

	<p>Equality Outcomes) and embedding EDI across the University to improve delivery of EDI aims. This infrastructure includes an EDI workplan/Task list and EDI Programme of Work including EDI enhancement activities outlined in the INCLUDE Series, a set of workshops aimed at raising awareness of EDI in all areas of the university. This context has laid the groundwork for initial development of Equality Outcomes for 2025-29 which will continue into 2025.</p> <p>Our work in this area has been recognised in the inaugural Higher Education <u>Honordex</u> report where Edinburgh Napier was named among the top 10 universities in the UK when it comes to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – ranking top in Scotland. The report reflects on several aspects such as pay disparities, leadership and employee satisfaction across different demographics, and echoes the positive response to EDI questions within the 2023 CEDARs report.</p> <p>Researchers</p> <p>During AY23/24 we hosted six sessions as part of a Demystifying CPD Training programme with over 160 registrations over the series. The aim of these workshops was to help researchers explore how to get involved in CPD delivery, which opens up additional career pathways and can help researchers build a diverse portfolio of activity for promotion applications. In addition, we ran sessions on KTP awareness and an overview of the Innovation Hub in industry events, alongside sessions on patents. Events have also been run from the University Social Innovation Network, encouraging researchers to explore how their research areas could connect to social innovations as an alternative form of KE.</p> <p>We also increased our provision of project management training based on requests from our research community. This was seen as a key transferable skill, supporting researchers who were considering alternative career paths.</p>
<p>Professional development (<i>max 600 words</i>)</p>	<p>Academic Managers of Researchers</p> <p>During 2024 HR launched a series of workshops aimed at line managers to help embed coaching approaches in line management conversations. The programme now covers four topics: Creating a feedback culture; Fuelling growth and learning; Supporting your team’s development through</p>

coaching conversations; The power of recognition. These workshops are designed to empower line managers to have more supportive, engaged conversations with their staff, including as part of a researcher's MyContribution annual development review. Uptake has been positive across the university, with a strong number of Line managers of contract research staff attending the workshops.

Researchers

Using data from CEDARS and internal staff surveys, we make sure the Researcher Development programme reflects and adapts based on the needs of our research community. As a result, we have increased our provision of:

Leadership training – developing a new intensive course supported by 1:1 coaching after the workshops to embed the individual's learning

Mentoring – by running introductory sessions and raising visibility through School leadership groups, we now have 80 people involved in our mentoring programme, pairing academics and researchers from across our five Schools.

Policy engagement – we added a series of training events helping researchers understand how to connect successfully with policymakers and politicians.

Research supervision – as part of the new Doctoral College, we have reviewed our development opportunities for staff involved in research degree supervision. We have also supported a Scotland wide writing group for supervisors developing an application towards UKCGE recognition for their supervisory practice.

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)

Key lessons from implementing our researcher development initiatives include the importance of clear communication and active engagement across our academic Schools. We have strengthened this by adding a contract research staff representative to the University Research and Innovation Committee, ensuring broader representation in a key committee. While there were initial challenges in coordinating feedback across departments, the introduction of more regular touchpoints between the Head of Research Environment and Services and Head of Research culture, as well as regular engagements with our Associate Deans for Research and Innovation have helped with this.

From our REF2021 results, staff focus groups and surveys we have identified that we need to continue to strengthen our research environment and culture. As a result, the work on our Research culture manifesto is part of our efforts to close the feedback loop between surveys and meaningful actions. We recognise there is a need for more open forums so we will be focusing on research culture roadshows to raise the visibility and opportunity to hear from our research community in different settings

Another lesson learned is the need for continuous adaptation of professional development offerings to keep pace with changing research priorities and the evolving landscape of academia and industry. Early-career researchers particularly benefit from tailored career support that extends beyond academia, so future action plans will prioritize greater focus on transferable skills and career diversification. We have also reviewed the delivery formats of our Researcher Development programme to reduce any barriers to engagement, by providing a balance of in-person and online delivery.

As part of continuous monitoring and learning from feedback, we are planning to re-run the CEDARS survey in 2025 to gather more detailed feedback from our research community. Modifications to the action plan will include the integration of external benchmarking to better measure our outcomes, and we will be preparing for our 15-year submission to the HR Excellence in Research Award and external review in January 2026.

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

For 2025, ahead of our external 15-year review we will focus on:

Research Culture Manifesto: we plan to run roadshows to gather views on the manifesto, before final approval at RIC. Research culture funding will then be available for the research community to run initiatives that will embed the principles of the manifesto into our research culture.

Lessons learned from PCE pilot: working with our REF team and Head of Research Culture, we will apply lessons learned from the PCE pilot to inform new culture initiatives, monitoring processes and areas of focus for the remaining REF cycle.

Support for line managers: we will roll out further support for line managers, building on the success of recent targeted workshops, to support line managers with their responsibilities and ways they can help researchers develop.

Navigating the use of AI in research – working with our Research Integrity committee we will develop resources to support researchers navigate the ethical, appropriate uses of Artificial intelligence tools within their research activities

Trusted Research – the university is establishing a Trusted Research Steering group which will provide support, advice and activities to raise the visibility of Trusted Research within our research culture.

Valuing Professional development - we need to ensure contract research staff and line managers understand the requirement for research staff to undertake 10 days of CPD per annum, and we need to raise awareness of different types of development for contract research staff.

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

The report was created by the Head of Research Environment and Services and first reviewed by the current Contract research staff representative, Head of Research Culture and the Vice Principal for Research and Innovation for feedback and approval. The report was then presented to the Research Innovation Committee (RIC) for further discussion and approval as a sub-committee of Academic Board.

Signature on behalf of governing body: Dr. Gráinne Barkess

Contact for queries: Dr. Gráinne Barkess, g.barkess@napier.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